

**The man who would be king:
The Challenges to Strengthening Governance in Uruzgan**

Susanne Schmeidl, The Liaison Office

November 2010



Desktop publishing: *Nicole den Heijer*

Netherlands Institute of International Relations
'Clingendael'

Clingendael 7

2597 VH The Hague

Phonenumber: +31 (0)70 3245384

Telefax: +31 (0)70 3282002

Email: cru-info@clingendael.nl

Website: <http://www.clingendael.nl/cru>

© Netherlands Institute of International Relations *Clingendael*. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright holders. Clingendael Institute, P.O Box 93080, 2509 AB The Hague, The Netherlands.

Contents

Contents	3
Executive summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Research questions and main issues	3
3. A short overview of governance in Afghanistan.....	5
4. A short description of Uruzgan province	9
5. A short history of leadership in Afghanistan and Uruzgan.....	11
6. Key actors in Uruzgan’s political marketplace	17
6.1 Structural continuity of leadership attainment in Uruzgan:	
the continuing importance of landed elite and jihadis	22
6.2 Bargaining chips in the political marketplace: access to human (networks) and financial resources	25
6.2.1 Political Networks	25
6.2.2 Financial and other resources	32
6.2.3 International actors as a resource	33
6.3 Generational rivalries.....	35
7. Emerging opportunities: sub-national governance programmes in Uruzgan.....	37
7.1 IDLG-supported sub-national governance funds.....	38
7.2 MRRD-supported programmes	41
8. Conclusion	45
Abbreviations and acronyms	55
References.....	57

Executive summary¹

After the expulsion of the Taliban in 2001 Afghanistan was presented with an opportunity to rebuild the state and its governance institutions. Yet despite concerted international efforts, and funds, to promote good governance, this remains one of the key challenges the country is facing today. This report tries to explore the difficulties of strengthening governance in a conflictual context where the limited reach of the Afghan central government combined with people's lack of trust in the fledgling state has enabled individual actors in Uruzgan to continue their strongman practices, build constituencies, and realize their own ambitions.

Many actors – traditional elders, *ex-jihad* commanders and provincial and district authorities – often engage in multiple activities and alliances in order to ensure their own political and economic survival. This frequently means holding government positions while at the same time trying to undermine the state. The Taliban insurgency has capitalized on the inability of the Afghan state to prevent predatory behaviour by key actors; at the time of writing, the opportunity for communities to affiliate with the government is rapidly narrowing and at present there seems little benefit in either affiliating with or opposing any party.

Uruzgan province was chosen as a case study because it represents an interesting context for analysing the interplay between structural continuity of leadership and new bargaining rules in a marketplace that has become increasingly monetized. It also is indicative of the inherent instability of the political marketplace, which historically has responded to changes in market conditions, and of the availability of different bargaining chips. Although it was clear that the importance of landed elite and *jihadi* leaders persisted, thanks to a certain degree of structural continuity, new leaders were certainly able to access the marketplaces if the environment enabled this. Furthermore, members of smaller tribes were able to outmanoeuvre those of bigger ones, contrary to the traditional formula according to which the power of individual leaders tended to be linked to the size of a tribe and its collective landholdings (farmland property) or wealth (trade, including smuggling).

¹ "The title of the report refers to Matiullah Khan, to whom the local people frequently refer as the "King of Uruzgan".

The presence of different international actors (US, Dutch and Australian) allows for an assessment of different engagement philosophies regarding local leadership and governance. It is important to emphasize here that there are limits to the monetization of the political marketplace in Uruzgan and the degree to which “political loyalty is for sale and will go to the highest bidder” (Anten 2009). Not everybody can be simply ‘bought’; otherwise the insurgency would have been sold by now.

An analysis of the background of the key actors in Uruzgan as well as their sources of power shows that leadership arises out of two interrelated factors:²

- The **structural continuity that characterizes the attainment of leadership**, imposing restrictions on who is allowed to enter the political marketplace. There are clearly limits to the ‘free exchange’ of loyalties in the political marketplace. Not everybody is able to compete; basically, this is restricted to those who have an elite background and/or have achieved *jihadi* elite status –even if only through family association.
- The **rules of the political marketplace** and what leverage can be applied in order to get ahead in the game and outmanoeuvre rivals. Here, the acquisition and control of resources seem to be crucial.

Essentially two types of sources of power form the structural foundations for leadership in Afghanistan, with most key actors in Uruzgan combining various sources of power which reinforce each other:

- **Inherited** (membership of a landed elite family), reflecting the Weberian ideal type of traditional authority;
- **Achieved** (mostly during the *jihad* through commander status, but also through acquired wealth and education).

Within these leadership categories, personal (leadership) skills, which correspond to Weber’s “charismatic authority”, matter a great deal when it comes to which leaders prevail over others. The holding of government positions, in theory linked to Weber’s legal–rational authority, does not represent a source of power on its own, as actors access government positions by leveraging their inherited or achieved status and associated networks and not necessarily as a result of possessing a specific set of characteristics (e.g., education, skills).

As to the rules of the political marketplaces, two key factors stand out, both revolving around resources, the one human and the other financial: political networks, and access to government and international development and security funds. One of the key networking resources is having connections with President Karzai (indicating that central government links are very personalized, a fact that needs to be acknowledged), with other national, regional and provincial key actors taking second place.

² I am grateful to my colleague and friend Astri Suhrke who has helped clarify this to me during numerous discussions.

The role of international actors is discussed as a resource on its own, as here the networking aspect strongly overlaps with that of access to, and gatekeeping of, international financial resources.

The report concludes that sub-national governance programmes based on western assumptions of merit-based appointments and performance rewards as well as presumed responses to financial incentives are inappropriate in the context of Uruzgan, where the political marketplace is awash with money and key actors are able to make bigger gains from security contracts and/or collaboration with international military actors, not to mention through the syphoning of international development funds, or through illicit activities.

This suggests a ‘less is more’ approach,³ such as supporting grassroots-level, bottom-up programmes (such as the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development’s National Solidarity Programme), which ultimately are more effective than public administration reforms at the provincial level. Alternatively, international actors could consider the ‘withdrawal’ of funding sources and of other forms of support as a better incentive than continually ‘upping the ante’.

If we accept that the current system in Uruzgan is based on the logic of patronage networks, more creative thinking is needed on what could work instead of western-style reform programmes, such as using social pressure to either reward good government officials or shame corrupt and predatory ones. This, however, is probably easier to achieve at village and district level, if the aim is to reduce the interference of strongmen.

Furthermore, international actors should also consider the importance of maintaining even-handedness in their own engagement, otherwise local strongmen may feel little inspired to take the necessary steps towards achieving better governance in the province. They need to cease working in ways that are incompatible with each other: for example, political and development actors trying to promote good governance while military actors are working with anyone able and willing to be allies in their fight against the insurgency, regardless of their governance record. The ultimate quandary here, which this report was unable to address, is how to focus on strengthening good governance in a context where insecurity prevails and the temptation is to work only with actors that are good security rather than good governance providers.

³ I am borrowing here from my colleague and friend Astri Suhrke, who has argued this elsewhere.

1. Introduction

Although a great deal has been written on governance in Afghanistan in general, there have been only a few case studies on sub-national governance. The present paper, looking at Uruzgan province (with a specific focus on Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud), tries to fill this gap and contribute to a larger research project on ‘Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States’ conducted by the Conflict Research Unit of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael”, within the framework of its cooperation with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first phase of this project constituted an analysis of current international academic thinking and practical lessons learned, identifying the main areas addressed by international efforts to restore governance after conflict (Anten 2009). The second phase consisted of five country studies, of which this paper is one; the others are Pakistan, Guatemala, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Kosovo. Together, the five cases studies serve three purposes:

- First, to support national and international actors interested in strengthening governance, by identifying suitable entry points and approaches within the relevant (political) context in each country.
- Second, on a more conceptual level, the studies aim to gauge the extent to which the concepts developed and the lessons learned, as set out in the Issues Paper *Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States*, are applicable in concrete country situations.
- Third, all five individual case studies feed into a Synthesis Report which is designed to rework and update the original Issues Paper with the new field evidence.

The Uruzgan case study builds on research carried out by The Liaison Office (TLO) since 2006 and on 40 semi-structured interviews conducted in February and March 2010 in Uruzgan province with individuals from Tirin Kot (30 men, 10 women) and Deh Rawud (10 men, 9 women). In addition, the author and two colleagues conducted ten additional interviews (all men) and one focus group discussion with four female healthcare workers for the purpose of triangulating information in Tirin Kot (8 interviews plus one focus group discussion) and Deh Rawud (2 interviews). Follow-up interviews with several of the key actors were also conducted in June and July 2010 by the lead author.

The insight presented in this report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the local researchers hired by TLO, local communities in Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud, and several of the key actors who were all willing to share their insights, as well as comments from colleagues at TLO (Nick Miszak, Masood Karokhail and Tjitske Holtrop) and the Clingendael Institute (Louise Anten and Bob Deen). Furthermore, I would also like to acknowledge the insights gained from discussions with and input from my friend and colleague Astri Suhrke, who has helped me crystallize some of my thinking. I thank them all. The views expressed in this paper, however, are those of the author, as are any errors.

2. Research questions and main issues

In order to assess to what extent the Issues Paper *Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States* is helpful in the analysis of the governance challenges in Afghanistan, this case study focuses on Uruzgan province in general and the two most populated districts –Tirin Kot (capital) and Deh Rawud – in particular. These two districts, together with Chora, were the focus of the four-year (2006–10) Dutch engagement in Uruzgan. Despite the relatively short time span, the Dutch brought positive change to the province through a comprehensive ‘3 D’ engagement approach (development, diplomacy/governance, and defence/security), which emphasized ‘development where possible’, ‘force where necessary’, capacity-building of Afghan National Security Forces, and engagement of key community leaders. This led to Uruzgan being considered in much of the aid community as a ‘model’ province within the increasingly insecure South. Despite achievements in development (especially service delivery) and also security, however, good governance in Uruzgan remains problematic, with savvy political entrepreneurs dominating and controlling sub-national appointments and local administrations as well as much of the aid money channelled through it (The Liaison Office 2010).

In order to understand the difficulties in reforming governance in Uruzgan, the following questions guided the analysis:

- Who are the leaders in the province (district) who influence governance the most (positively or negatively)?
- What is the extent of the influence of each of these individuals, what resources are at their disposal and what are their agenda and aspirations?
- Is good governance a key interest of these leaders, and if not, what conditions or disincentives (sanctions) would discourage them from spoiling or what rewards would encourage them to strengthen governance?
- To what extent can sufficient institutional incentives be created or reinforced through Afghan sub-national governance programmes?
- Could the Provincial Council play a role in monitoring government performance or is there a need for a provincial-level monitoring or consultancy shura?

To answer these questions, the context of Afghanistan (Chapter 3) and particularly Uruzgan province (Chapter 4) is presented, especially factors linked to governance as identified in the Issues Paper. An analysis of the changes that conflict has brought to the traditional leadership system in Afghanistan is presented (Chapter 5), with a specific focus on Uruzgan. Chapter 6 analyses key actors in Uruzgan, especially the ‘recipe’ that determines their status (Chapter 7), at both provincial and district level. Chapter 8 assesses the impact of provincial and district strongmen and governance, while Chapter 9 looks at the ability of sub-national governance programmes making headway in Uruzgan, exploring also opportunities for governance reform. Finally, Chapter 10 offers some conclusions.

3. A short overview of governance in Afghanistan

“We currently have a conflicting approach to Afghan governance. The United States and the international community support Afghanistan’s central government and civil service, and yet in the interest of immediate results they regularly bypass the government in favour of key local powerbrokers, favored actors, and local militias outside of government who provide them with intelligence, security assistance, and aid project implementation” (Cookman and Wadhams 2010, p. 34).

Afghanistan’s most recent history in general and that of Uruzgan in particular has suffered from a constant interference of non-state (armed) actors in political affairs. While the monarchy had managed a mutually beneficial arrangement with traditional leaders, the relationship between new strongmen and the state became dysfunctional during the *mujahideen* war against the communist government, continued with the fighting between the *mujahideen* parties and later their battle to oust the Taliban. The consequent disruption of the relations of governance between local elites and the central state has complicated the establishment of uncontested state structures and prevented the possibility of the emergence of the ideal type of governance signifying a “nexus of state-society relations where government and citizens interact” (Brinkhoff 2005).

After the expulsion of the Taliban in 2001 Afghanistan was presented with an opportunity to rebuild the state and its governance institutions. The process, assisted by the international community, started with the 2001 Bonn Agreement and included basic building-blocks of democratic governance, such as the writing of a new Afghan Constitution (2003/04) and first presidential (2004) and parliamentary elections (2005). Furthermore, the Bonn Agreement and subsequent accords stipulated reforms in the security sector, justice system, and public administration. Unfortunately the Afghan government, tasked with implementing the Bonn Agreement, was dominated by military factions from the *mujahideen* and civil war period. Under pressure, President Karzai ushered in what was later called a “‘big tent’ approach to government”, (Wilder and Lister 2007, p.88) which meant the inclusion not of civil society but of strongmen with a *jihadi* past, who in the end held far more power than a fledgling state could potentially manage.

As a result the Afghan state-building project was hampered by the contradiction between the ambition to create a modern democratic state structure while at the same time accommodating pre-existing power structures very much focused on clientelistic political support.

In many ways one could argue that the military intervention in 2001 laid the foundation for this contradiction by enlisting the help of – and subsequently empowering – *mujahideen* leaders and local strongmen (regardless of their good governance record) to defeat the Taliban and continue with counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. Rather than integrating fully under the state-building mandate of ISAF/NATO, the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) thus compounded the situation further by creating a conflicting logic of power and governance and alienating demobilized Taliban members.

Incongruity and contradictions continued to characterize international action, with emphasis on the top-down strengthening of central government structures, ignoring the fact that “the vast majority of Afghans interact with the state institutions at the provincial and district levels” (Wilder and Lister 2007, p.85). At the same time, however, international aid organizations commissioned projects for millions of dollars to be spent on rural areas. Given limited Afghan government capacity, the central government was increasingly bypassed and international donors began to work with national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as other parallel, often ad hoc, sub-national governance structures (such as the said local strongmen) in order to “get things done.”

These interventions have created what has been coined “hybrid political orders” (Anten 2009; Boege et al 2008), basically indicating a mismatch between *de jure* and *de facto* state power. This mismatch is one of the reasons why, nearly nine years into the Afghan state-building project, Afghanistan is still considered to have one of the weakest state structures in the world.⁴ The building of strong and credible governance institutions at all levels continues to be a huge challenge as well as a key priority.

The fact that the Afghan administration is still unable to deliver basic services to the population, least of all security, and the fact that many Afghans have insufficient access to district and provincial government, has led to a decrease in popular support for the current government. The allegations of fraud in the 2009 presidential and 2010 parliamentary elections further weakened the legitimacy of the state and only seemed to confirm that the current government is less concerned with the good of the Afghan people or with democratic governance than in serving the complicated patronage networks around strongmen and top government officials.

⁴ According to the quantifiable index of state failure, tracking the performance of 177 countries on four social, two economic and six political and military indicators. Fund for Peace, *The Failed State Index 2008*, Washington, DC: The Fund for Peace and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008; www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4350&page=0

In the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan, the Taliban insurgency has capitalized on the inability of the Afghan state and pro-government strongmen to “protect the citizens and support them in their economic efforts without preying on them” (Anten 2009, p.4). At the time of writing, the opportunity for communities to affiliate with the government is rapidly narrowing and at present there seems little benefit in affiliating with or opposing any party.

4. A short description of Uruzgan province

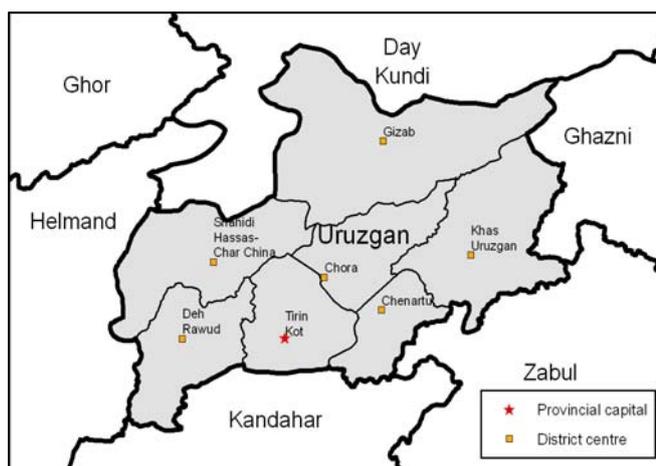
Uruzgan is one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan and borders with Daykundi to the north, Kandahar to the south, Helmand to the south west, and Zabul and Ghazni to the east (see Map 1).

Although it is located in the centre of Afghanistan it belongs tribally and culturally to the southern region and is influenced by Kandahar. Nevertheless, the Hazara communities of Khas Uruzgan

and Gizab, and especially their leadership, have begun to orient themselves towards Gizab and Daykundi respectively.

Uruzgan's current boundaries and ethnic/tribal composition is the result of

historic and more recent population policies. As we know it today, the province was created on 28 March 2004 prior to the 2004 presidential elections, when President Karzai gave in to a long-term Hazara demand to create a second Hazara-majority province (Daykundi) by separating the Hazara majority districts located in the north of the province from the Pashtun districts in the south. The split was not perfect, with two Uruzgan districts – Khas Uruzgan and Gizab – remaining with Hazara minorities (27% and 21% respectively). Gizab initially was made part of Daykundi, but was returned to Uruzgan in 2006; something that a number of Hazara leaders and communities of a area are actively trying to reverse.⁵



Map 1: Uruzgan province (Source: The Liaison Office)

⁵ A local strongman and army commander, Sayed Etimadi, was able to obtain a vice-presidential decree this year that promised to return Gizab to Daykundi in the future. TLO was also surprised to learn that the Central Statistics Office, as well as the National Solidarity Programme of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, treat Gizab as already belonging to Daykundi and during the 2010 parliamentary elections the district was also counted to

Historically, the ethnic and tribal composition of Uruzgan has been shaped by the population policies implemented by Afghan kings who, in efforts to consolidate the state, all used tribes and ethnic groups against each other when it suited their needs. Before the 18th and 19th centuries, the Hazara ethnic group had inhabited most of Uruzgan until Afghan kings saw this group's independent 'kingdoms' as a threat to building an Afghan empire under Pashtun rule. They therefore enlisted the help of loyal Pashtun tribes to defeat the Hazara and drive them out of most of Uruzgan.⁶ Land was given to Pashtun tribes in compensation for their efforts. Thus, the majority of the population in Uruzgan today is Pashtun (91%) and the Hazara and other ethnic groups (Sayed, Tajiks and Quraish) make up only a minority (8% and 1% respectively).

The population policies, however, did not end there. The Pashtun tribes that were initially brought to Uruzgan came largely from the Ghilzai confederation (Tokhi, Hotak, Niazi, Andar and Taraki). As most Afghan rulers, however, had come from the Durrani confederation (mostly Mohmadzai/Barakzai), which at times had clashed with Ghilzai tribes, Amir Abdur Rahman brought Durrani tribes to Uruzgan in order to weaken Ghilzai dominance. This is why parts of Uruzgan, such as Chora, hardly have any Ghilzai population left (see Appendix I for a detailed tribal and ethnic breakdown of Uruzgan). Only in Tirin Kot were the Durrani tribes unable to fully expel the Ghilzai Pashtuns, and the two groups have co-existed there ever since.⁷

While this history provides "ample material" for ethnic (Hazara–Pashtun) and tribal conflict (between different Pashtun tribes and confederations), communities in Uruzgan (as in the rest of Afghanistan) had worked out a *modus vivendi* that only broke down in recent years. Notably, the coup d'état carried out by the Khalqi faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in April 1978 set in motion a process that led to lasting changes in the traditional social order, renewing old and creating new tribal rivalries, many of which began to change the historic narrative of tribal and ethnic relations in Uruzgan and also in Afghanistan in general.

that province causing Commander Etimadi to go on the Daykundi ticket (and lost), while a woman from Daykundi ran in Uruzgan (and won).

⁶ Ahmad Shah Abdali (locally also called Ahmad Shah Durrani or Ahmad Shah 'Baba' – the father of Afghanistan) expelled the Hazara from Deh Rawud, Tirin Kot and parts of Shahidi Hassas during his empire-building efforts in the mid-18th century. Later, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan continued the process by driving Hazara out of the remaining areas of Shahidi Hassas, Chora, Khas Uruzgan and Gizab in the late 19th century.

⁷ It is worth noting here that the Panjpai Pashtuns initially belonged to the Ghilzai tribes, until they were annexed to the Durrani confederation in the late 18th century, but are in many ways still considered second-class Durrani, particularly by the dominant Zirak Durrani confederation. The Nurzai in particular, one of the largest tribes in Uruzgan (accounting for 17.5% of the total population), are still regarded as Ghilzai Pashtuns in some parts of Afghanistan (such as neighbouring Zabul).

5. A short history of leadership in Afghanistan and Uruzgan

Leadership throughout the world, with rare exceptions, has always been at least to some degree negotiated. However, the rules of the game (or marketplace) enabling an individual to become a leader, vary from one country to another. In Afghanistan, leaders' power and influence are closely linked to relationships and patronage structures. Overall, the sources of power that form the structural foundations of leadership in Afghanistan in general, and in Uruzgan in particular, fall into three categories, but there is never any clear division between these categories, and in fact they often overlap and reinforce each other:

- **Inherited** (membership of a landed elite family);
- **Achieved** (mostly during the *jihad* through commander status, but also through acquired wealth and education);
- **Appointed** (either selected by the population as their representatives vis-à-vis the district authorities, and/or holding a government post) status.

Two of these power bases correspond to the three ideal types of authority (or legitimate rule) proposed by the influential sociologist Max Weber: inherited, reflecting traditional authority, and appointed, in theory linked to legal-rational authority. The difference in Afghanistan, however, is that in most cases the appointed status is still strongly dependent on the two other status groups, with actors accessing government positions by leveraging their inherited or achieved status and associated networks, and not necessarily through holding a specific set of characteristics (e.g., education, skills).

Personal (leadership) skills, corresponding to Weber's "charismatic authority", where authority comes from the personal qualities in relation to important social functions, also matter. It could be argued that perhaps most of those within the appointed and achieved leadership groups excel in this area. Within wealthy landowning families, for example, not all members necessarily achieve prominence, but only those who have other skills to consolidate their power convincingly.

Oratory and negotiation skills are important in securing positions of prestige in the community, since rhetoric and persuasion are crucial to getting others to accept one's opinions, especially within the traditional ruling mechanism – the *jirga*. Other skills include:

- Knowledge (e.g., different aspects of customary law – *pashnunwali*, or religious knowledge such as *sharia* in order to deal with conflicts); also, increasingly, knowledge of how to access or 'win' resources from international bodies or the government;
- Mediation skills and the ability to solve disputes peacefully;
- 'Good reputation' as a source of moral authority and power;
- Military skills (e.g., leadership skills during conflict).

Traditionally, in Afghanistan, the importance and influence of tribes and individual leaders was derived predominantly from their inherited status and ability to control resources (land, water) and mobilize support (population, armed fighters). The last three decades of violent conflict, especially the communist coup d'état and *jihad*, however, have significantly influenced how political power and authority in Afghanistan and Uruzgan is attained. New leaders emerged and began to challenge inherited leadership.

Although at one time belonging to the landowning tribal elite carried considerable weight, with *khans* and *maliks* capitalizing on government patronage and resources to consolidate their leadership locally (for example, showing hospitality to guests), the PDPA government made it its mission to challenge and break down traditional elite structures through a policy of radical land reforms and redistribution.⁸ As a result, *khans* were no longer able to play their part as distributors of government resources to their client groups and, as symbols of the old order, in many cases they were arrested, assassinated by pro-government militia or forced into exile.

During the *jihad*, especially with the breakdown of the state's monopoly over the use of force, new actors (i.e., military commanders affiliated with *jihadi* factions) at times without an elite background were able to enter the political marketplace by proving their worth on the battlefield and using their command over fighters, weapons and equipment to not only win battles but also amass resources (including diverse international funds supporting *mujahideen* parties in their struggle against the Soviet army). Rivals at this point were not just politically outmanoeuvred but also either killed or forced into exile. Furthermore, religious actors were able to participate in the political bargaining process through the strategy of several *jihadi* factions to enhance their legitimacy by bolstering their ranks with clergy.

⁸ In most of Uruzgan, the land distribution did not last long, however, since the PDPA regime lost control in most areas shortly after coming to power, and elders were able to reclaim their land.

After the communists came to power in 1978, the PDPA government quickly lost control over most of the countryside in Uruzgan, although it was able to hold on to district centres for somewhat longer, “after having detained and executed a large number of local leaders” (Van Bijlert 2009, p.156). The exceptions were the districts of Deh Rawud and Tirin Kot; in the case of the latter, because it was the provincial centre and in the case of the former, largely because it had a sizeable pro-government support base, falling to the *mujahideen* only a few months before Tirin Kot (1991), a year before the end of the Najibullah regime (1992). During the *mujahideen* government *jihadi* commanders achieved almost total political and social supremacy in the province.

Political loyalty to specific *mujahideen* parties was not fixed, however, and it was not unusual for good commanders to migrate (often with their fighters) from one *jihadi* party to another, using each to advance their own status and power. This illustrates the flexibility of ‘achieved leaders’ who rose through a range of military posts and who were willing to ally themselves with whoever was the most powerful – even, much later, with the Taliban.

Thus, not only did new actors begin to compete for power, but the bargaining rules of who was allowed to compete (and with what) also changed slightly, increasingly reflecting a monetization of the political marketplace (Anten 2010). In addition to controlling means of violence, new achieved status is very often linked to wealth, and political power is often maintained by wealth, as the distribution of resources is crucial for not only maintaining but also establishing new patronage networks that ensure clientelistic support. In order to compete, the landed elite had to ‘up their ante’ by joining the ranks of the *mujahideen* in an attempt to protect or regain their land resources and maintain status and power.

During the short-lived *mujahideen* rule (1992–94), however, the system became dysfunctional. With the Soviet army defeated, a key enemy providing an ideological reason for cohesion had vanished, and with the Soviet empire crumbling, international financial support to the *mujahideen* parties also dried up. With no government to speak of that could be tapped for resources, leaders began to prey on the Afghan population with widespread illegal taxation and extortion at checkpoints.

With a large part of the Afghan population tired of the predatory and abusive behaviour of ‘their’ leaders, who attended more to their own personal power rivalries than to reconstruction and establishing order after years of war, a vacuum emerged for new leaders to fill – those who would ‘rescue’ Afghanistan from chaos and disorder.⁹ This allowed the Taliban to take over parts of the country, including Uruzgan, almost without a fight; often by allying themselves with former *jihadi* leaders who had been sidelined by rivals. In 1994, the Taliban who had emerged in Kandahar appeared on the doorstep of Uruzgan and faced little resistance,

⁹ Or from ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’ for that matter, as the Taliban initially tried to bring back notions of vice and virtue to Afghanistan.

allegedly taking Tirin Kot in two hours (Van Bijlert 2009). Its leader Mullah Omar,¹⁰ who belonged to the Hotak sub-tribe of the Ghilzai and was most probably born in Deh Rawud, mobilized support from two commanders who had become alienated from a former *jihadi* leader and *jihadi* provincial governor – Jan Mohammad Khan.

Taliban rule for a short period reduced the power of military leaders, with prominent figures during the *jihad* either being defeated and retreating voluntarily into exile, or entering into some form of political bargaining with the Taliban by joining their ranks. In order to become powerful under Taliban rule (1996–2001), individual leaders had to buy into the ruling ideology and/or broker co-existence agreements, which was not uncommon in Uruzgan and elsewhere. “Many of the top figures in the Taliban military hierarchy were from Uruzgan and several local commanders landed positions in the Taliban administration.” (van Bijlert 2009).

Uruzgan took centre stage when Hamid Karzai launched his armed uprising against the Taliban in the autumn of 2001 from the mountains between the districts of Deh Rawud, Tirin Kot and Nesh (Kandahar). The fall of the Taliban in Uruzgan in 2001 created a power vacuum, which was quickly exploited by returning *jihad* commanders who, as happened under the *jihad* rule (1992–94), grabbed as much political power and resources as they could. Furthermore, the US-led intervention in the autumn 2001, somewhat inadvertently, introduced a new bargaining chip into the Afghanistan political marketplace when Coalition Forces during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) allied themselves with militias belonging to the loosely connected group called the Northern Alliance “who had been engaged in fierce inter-factional fighting after the defeat of the Soviet-backed government in 1992” (Schmeidl 2007). While this may have made sense from a strictly military operational perspective (minimizing troop casualties and enhancing the prospects of military success), (Andres, Wills and Griffith Jr. 2006) it significantly influenced political developments in Afghanistan and who were to be the new leaders in the country.

No longer was the ability to use influence to get hold of government resources an important bargaining chip in the political marketplace; what was important was the ability to obtain the support of international actors, both military and development. Pro-government strongmen could utilize international military forces to extend their political power and marginalize and eliminate old rivals, for example by branding them as Taliban. Those in government positions could benefit from the reconstruction funds coming into Afghanistan by channelling them to their own clientele. With continuing insecurity, mafia-style behaviour emerged, with leaders able to make money from protection rackets and security contracts.

With the political marketplace now opening up to all pre-2001 actors – except for the Taliban – former communists also managed to rejoin the ranks of the government and police, such as the current chief of police in Uruzgan, Juma Gul. The Taliban, however, was forced to withdraw from the ‘official’ post-2001 political marketplace but returned soon to once more exploit weaknesses in the newly formed built government and engage those actors – mostly from the

¹⁰ Mullah Omar fought under the Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami and was Afghanistan’s de facto head from 1996 to 2001.

Ghilzai but also from their rival Durrani tribes – who had been excluded, marginalized and abused by key provincial power-brokers (van Bijlert 2009). It is here where the rivalry between the two main Pashtun confederations (Durrani vs. Ghilzai) really became relevant, as tribal origin began to matter when it came to who was allowed to compete in the political marketplace. One could almost argue that many who were excluded from competing in the ‘official leadership game’ joined the insurgency so as to be able to access a different form of power, arising from the potential to upset the new establishment to create an alternative to the conventional marketplace.

All this history has changed the nature of the political marketplace in Uruzgan into a more divisive, confrontational and perhaps monetized form of political competition. Despite concerted efforts by international actors to improve sub-national governance, political entrepreneurs continue to compete for power according to their own set of rules, out-manoeuvring merit-based and elected appointments.

6. Key actors in Uruzgan's political marketplace

There are numerous actors currently haggling for power in Uruzgan's political marketplace, with no actor fully "managing to reach enduring bargains and contain[ing] violence" (Anten 2009). The motivations of actors are varied, driven by either grievances or greed (or a combination of both). Strongmen engage in opportunistic behaviour, unafraid of switching alliances or of shifting the balance towards either stability or instability whenever needed. In a situation where few rules apply, predatory behaviour is encouraged and may become the norm (Anten 2009, p.4). The aim of this section is to provide an overview of key individual actors at provincial level (and in one district: Deh Rawud) who are currently allowed to compete in the political marketplace in Uruzgan, and analyse their structural power base and access to bargaining chips.

Table 1 presents a brief overview of the 14¹¹ most influential actors in Uruzgan province with greater detail presented in Appendix II.¹² This list was derived from numerous interviews that The Liaison Office has conducted with different actors over the past four years in Uruzgan, and it was verified during interviews conducted for the present study. This means that only those individuals who were consistently referred to by a majority of all respondents were considered for inclusion in the list. The people eventually included were those who, in the opinion of the interviewees, were most able to:

- shape politics and political appointments in Uruzgan;
- profoundly influence resource allocations in the province, including obtaining resources from the Afghan government and international actors, but also preventing other actors from doing so; and/or
- mobilize armed groups for security provision.

¹¹ Daoud Khan was added to the initial list of 13 actors because he had taken over the position of his father Rozi Khan within the Barakzai tribe.

¹² While all men interviewed in Tirin Kot had knowledge of these leaders, most women knew about only some of them, with Ghulam Nabi Khan, Haji Naqibullah Khan, Haji Niamatullah Khan, and Commander Sayed Etimadi not recognized by any of them; this could be explained with women only having knowledge of key actors from their area, while men have a broader province-wide understanding.

Table 1: Key actors in Uruzgan (full list in Appendix II)

Confederation	Tribe	% of provincial population	% of Key Actors	Key Actors			
				Total Number	Inherited Status	Jihadi Background	Holdings/held Govt/ Official Position
Zirak Durrani	Barakzai	9%	29%	4	3	3 (plus one father)	2
	Achekzai	35%	21%	3	3	3	1
	Popalzai	10.5%	21%	3	1	2 (plus one uncle)	3
Panjpai Durrani	Nurzai	17.5%	7%	1	1	1	1
Non-Pashtun	Hazara	8%	7%	1		1	
Ghilzai	Babozai ¹³	5%	7%	1	1	1	
	Tokhi	2.5%	7%	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	7 tribes	87.5%	100%	14	10	14 (2 relatives)	8

Table 2 presents an overview of the key actors at district level, who were selected in much the same way as the Uruzgan key actors, except that their influence needed to be only at district and not at provincial level. This was done in order to test whether the important elements for leadership attainment were the same on a macro (provincial) level as on a micro (district) level. The fact that Deh Rawud district has ten more key actors than Uruzgan province indicates that competition at district level is fiercer, and it is even harder for key individual actors to dominate the marketplace.

¹³ Often the Babozai are seen as being outside any of the major Pashtun confederations. Their status overall is unclear.

Table 2: Key actors in Deh Rawud (full list in Appendix III)

Confederation	Tribe	District %	% of Key Actors	Key Actors			
				Total number	Inherited Status	Jihadi Background	Holdings/held Govt/Official Position
Zirak Durrani	Popalzai	15%	42%	10	6	7 (3 JMK sub-commanders)	5
	Alkozai	5%	8%	2	1	1	1
	Barakzai	5%	4%	1	1	Father	1
Panjpai Durrani	Nurzai	30%	29%	7	7	4	2
	Alizai	1%	4%	1	1	1	
Ghilzai/Other	Baboza	30%	13%	3		1	2
TOTAL	6 tribes	86%	100%	24	16	15 (1 relative)	11

Inclusion among both sets of key actors does not necessarily signify an outstanding reputation within the local community (which was very important in the past), as some individuals may have gained power through political, military or economic means that are not generally considered integral to a good character. With exceptions, such as Jan Mohammad Khan (JMK) or Matiullah Khan (MK), the influence of most of these actors is limited to the tribal/ethnic/district territory that they can control. Nonetheless, their ability to channel resources to their constituencies provides them, for the time being, with a tribal support base and hence they need to be taken into account by international actors engaging in Uruzgan, as most (if not all) have the potential to be spoilers of peace.

An analysis of the background of the key actors who were named by respondents, as well as the factors that were cited as reasons why these actors are powerful, help improve our understanding of how power and influence in Uruzgan derive from a combination of:¹⁴

¹⁴ I am grateful to my colleague and friend Astri Suhrke who has helped clarify this to me during numerous discussions.

- The **structural continuity of leadership attainment** that determines who is allowed to enter the political marketplace. There are clearly limits to the ‘free exchanges’ of loyalties in the political marketplace. Not everybody is able to compete, but basically only those with either an elite and/or an achieved (*jihadi*) background (even if only through family association).
- The **rules of the political marketplace** and what leverage can be applied to ‘get ahead in the game’ and outmanoeuvre rivals. Here, the ability to acquire and control resources seems to be crucial.

Before discussing these two factors in more detail, three important observations must be made about the composition of the list, concerning limitations on the monetization of the marketplace and the degree to which “political loyalty is for sale and will go to the highest bidder” (Anten 2009; de Waal 2009). Not everybody can be simply ‘bought’; otherwise the insurgency would have been sold by now. There is an old saying that one can only ‘rent’ and never ‘buy’ an Afghan, as his/her loyalties may still lie elsewhere (e.g., tribe, faction).

First, **there is no proportionate representation of tribes/key actors in Uruzgan**, which disadvantages those tribes that lack key actors, as the more key actors in a tribe the greater the access to resources for the community. Belonging to a certain tribal or ethnic group also allows a key actor access to the power of other strongmen at the regional or national level, such as the links between JMK/MK and Ahmad Wali Karzai (Popalzai), and Commander Sayed Etimadi with Hazara strongman Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq in Kabul.

In the past the individual power of a leader was often linked to the size of a tribe and its collective landholdings (farmland property) or wealth (trade, including smuggling). However, the list of key actors indicates that some smaller tribes, such as the Popalzai (especially this tribe), were able to exploit other factors (e.g., central and regional power) to gain the upper hand in Uruzgan, particularly vis-à-vis the larger Achekzai. On the other hand, both JMK and MK have actively tried to manipulate internal division within other tribes (e.g., the Barakzai) in order to divide and weaken their leadership.

Three Zirak Durrani tribes (Achekzai, Popalzai and Barakzai), which account for nearly 55% of Uruzgan’s population, account for 71% of all key leaders. The Barakzai and Popalzai in particular have proportionately more leaders than other tribes at a provincial level and the Popalzai have more in Deh Rawud. This can be explained as follows:

- Afghan rulers since Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747) traditionally have come from the Zirak Durrani confederation; and President Karzai comes from the Popalzai tribe.
- Both Popalzai and Barakzai dominate at regional level, with influence from Kandahar, providing them further support.

- The Popalzai is President Karzai's own tribe, which is why it dominates at the level of province and Deh Rawud. Some Alkozai from Deh Rawud, for example, were quite disappointed to receive little in the way of political rewards, despite having helped Karzai.

The Panjpai Durrani, dominated by the Nurzai (17.5%) are only represented with one leader at the provincial level, and although at the Deh Rawud level they are doing better, they still have three leaders fewer than the Popalzai. This is indicative of the 'underdog' status of the Panjpai, who were originally Ghilzai tribes and were integrated into the Durrani confederation in the south only slowly over the centuries.

The Ghilzai Pashtuns, who have been stigmatized and marginalized post-2001 as the confederation that supported the Taliban, are also under-represented, with only one leader from the smaller Tokhi (2.5%) tribe among the key actors at provincial level (two if one includes the Babozai whose confederation status is too often unclear).¹⁵ Although they are faring somewhat better in Deh Rawud, with three leaders, they are the only tribe with proportionally fewer leaders in the district. This suggests that JMK has been successful in "collectively brand[ing] the Babozai as Taliban supporters because of family relations to Mullah Mohammad Omar" (The Liaison Office 2010, p.44).

The Hazara minority ethnic group are represented by only one leader, which is adequate for their population share, 8%, but it also reflects their 'external' status in Uruzgan's political marketplace, which is largely dominated by Pashtun tribes. Commander Etimadi, the sole Hazara representative, recently ran for parliament as a candidate in neighbouring Daykundi province, and this further illustrates the fact that Uruzgan's Hazara leaders are increasingly looking outward. The fact that he lost, however, shows the very localized nature of his support-base.

Second, despite the long reach of the Taliban (who wield influence over about 45% of the province, especially outside of Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud) in, for example, Char China (all but the district centre), Chenartu (about 70%), Khas Uruzgan (over 80%), Chora and Gizab (over half), (The Liaison Office 2010, p.44) **no Taliban leaders are included in either list of key actors** and only one, with alleged links to the insurgency, is included as provincial key actor. In other words, **all identified actors are pro-government strongmen and opposed to the insurgency**. "No one of the mentioned leaders work for the interest of the Taliban because they are afraid of them. They say that if we come to the areas the Taliban will kill all of us and they mostly, therefore, work for the interest of foreigners in order to reach their own goals and interests."¹⁶

¹⁵ The larger Hotak (4%), however, has no representative among the key actors.

¹⁶ Head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010.

When the absence of Taliban key actors was raised during interviews, respondents suggested that either there was fear of naming a member of the insurgency as a key actor, owing to the fact that JMK, during his governorship, engaged in a witch hunt aimed at anybody remotely associated with the Taliban, or else that the exclusion reflected an overall dislike of Taliban in Uruzgan. Moreover, many key Taliban in Uruzgan are from neighbouring northern Helmand. So it should come as no surprise that the four tribes that are either excluded from the list of key actors (Hotak and Kakar) or only weakly represented (Babozai and Achekzai), have a particularly strong role in the current Taliban structures. The Hotak's and Babozai's link to the insurgency is based on tribal/extended family relations, as Mullah Omar is a Hotak and married to a Babozai. The Achekzai from Uruzgan have several high-ranking former Taliban officials among them. The Kakar had a strong presence in the lists of key actors through a number of military commanders answering to Mullah Dadullah and Mullah Fazel. The role of the Kakar in the insurgency is said to have decreased, however, since the arrest of Mullah Fazel and the killing of Mullah Dadullah in 2007.¹⁷

Last but not least, apart from Matiullah Khan and Daoud Khan, **there are no young leaders among the key actor group in Uruzgan province**, and none among the key actors in Deh Rawud. This is in contrast to a relative weakening of the role and authority of elders over the younger generation in recent years. The growing generational gap and partial breakdown of social and normative bonds can be explained both as an outcome of war and by the general weakening of tribal society at the hands of external forces (such as the insurgency). Especially among the insurgency forces, as older leaders are killed, new leaders rapidly emerge.

6.1 Structural continuity of leadership attainment in Uruzgan: the continuing importance of landed elite and jihadis

Most **key actors combine different sources of power** (or ideal types of leadership), with no leader having come to power solely through a government appointment. Thus government appointments are not so much a structural factor allowing entry into the marketplace as a bargaining chip deployed to reinforce and maintain power through access to government and (by default) international resources.

While the **importance of a *jihad* background** (a key element of achieved leadership) seems to prevail – with all but two leaders at the provincial level meeting this criterion (and the two who do not have such a background have relatives who do)¹⁸ and two-thirds at the district level – the majority of the *jihadi* leaders also have an **inherited background**. This indicates that inherited

¹⁷ Reports from Helmand suggest that the killing of Mullah Dadullah is linked to a conflict between Ishaqzai and Kakar about smuggling routes and revenge killings. According to the same sources, Mullah Dadullah was 'ratted on' to the Americans by Ishaqzai.

¹⁸ Matiullah Khan, however, emerged also as a military leader when he helped Karzai defeat the Taliban in Uruzgan while his uncle JMK, an *ex-jihadi* commander, was still in a Taliban prison.

power has not lost its importance, as it helped in becoming a *jihadi* commander, mostly because it provided the ability to mobilize fighters from among the tribesmen.

Inherited leadership usually meant coming from the **landed elite**. For Pashtuns, land is not only a cultural status symbol, it brings **economic benefit from agricultural production and support from clientele working the land**. Thus, tribal support for key actors from elite families comes with birth, while achieved leaders have to obtain tribal backing through the channelling of resources to their tribesmen. The PDPA government, understanding the source of power of khans, specifically targeted the landed elite system through land appropriation. Hence much of the traditional leadership had to join the *jihad* to protect what in some cases were extensive landholdings and clientele base.

Today, however, with many other sources of wealth available to achieved leaders (see later discussion), membership of an elite family is a necessary but no longer sufficient factor for competing in the political marketplace in Uruzgan. Since achieved leaders, especially those with a strong *jihadi* background, are often much better at controlling means of violence, they can make use of that ability to provide security for their clientele and hence eclipse inherited leaders. In Deh Rawud, for example, two-thirds of all identified key actors seem to have access to weapons, and are reported to be still running checkpoints, showing the importance of other forms of income for amassing wealth. Furthermore, tribal support for inherited leaders can also decline if they bring ‘shame’ onto their family, for example through involvement in land conflicts during the *jihad*.

Tribal backing is equally important for all key leaders. Despite a weakening of tribes in the south, they remain the main solidarity group, and tribal affiliations continue to play a central role in shaping political and social loyalties. Any leader needs to have the support of his tribe, and inherited leaders do not necessarily have stronger tribal support or a better reputation than achieved status-holders.

The reason for the importance of a *jihadi* background for key actors might be explained by the fact that after the communists came to power in 1978, the PDPA government quickly lost control over most of the countryside in Uruzgan, although it was able to hold on to district centres for somewhat longer, “after having detained and executed a large number of local leaders” (van Bijlert 2009, p.156).¹⁹ Thus *jihadi* leaders had a long time in which to foster clientele and political networks in Uruzgan. Furthermore, during the *mujahideen* government *jihadi* commanders achieved almost total political and social supremacy in the province.

A *jihadi* background allows for access to (political) factional networks that hold power in the region/Kabul, such as the link between Commander Etimadi and Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq

¹⁹ The exceptions were the districts of Deh Rawud and Tirin Kot; the latter because of being the provincial centre and the former largely because it had a sizeable pro-government support base, falling to the *mujahideen* only a few months before Tirin Kot at the end of the Najibullah regime (1992).

who was prominent in Khalili's *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami*. JMK can also access the political network of the Northern Alliance, which once dominated Kabul politics.

As noted earlier, the fact that international military forces allied themselves with *ex-jihadi* fighters in 2001 to defeat the Taliban laid the foundations for a new political system based on *jihadi* actors.

In addition to the factional networking that comes with a *jihadi* background, the continued control of/access to means of force (weapons, militia) is crucial as it allows a leader to control territory and to provide (forced) protection of population groups, trading routes and back-up support. Moreover, it also ensures reluctance on the part of the local population to oppose strongmen out of fear of reprisal. This control can also be exploited in order to obtain wealth via road security contracts such as that gained by MK for the Tirin Kot-Kandahar road as well as the Chora-Gizab road (although he recently suspended this contract because he had not been paid), and Daoud Khan together with his uncle Shah Mohammad and Nabi Khan Tokhi for the Tirin Kot-Chora road.²⁰ The ability to offer employment opportunities to young tribesmen further helps to generate patronage and support.

The ascent of Jan Mohammad Khan (JMK) to become one of the top two key actors in Uruzgan illustrates the importance of a *jihadi* legacy, even though historic narratives are spun to suit his image. Although JMK is often credited with having rustled Tirin Kot away from the PDPA regime, in fact he was only one of the eight most prominent local *mujahideen* commanders belonging to various factions who joined forces to capture the provincial capital. Of this group of eight, four still occupy key positions in Uruzgan today – JMK (Popalzai, *Harakat, Ittehad, Jabha*), Haji Zaher Khan (Barakzai, *Ittehad*),²¹ Malem Rahmatullah (Popalzai, HIK), Mohammad Nabi Khan (Tokhi, HIG) – while Mullah Shafiq (Hotak, HIK) and Haji Zaher (Taraki, Jamiat-e-Islami) later joined the Taliban.

What JMK did do was capture the governor's compound – a symbol of power – which subsequently enabled him to obtain the support of powerful figures in Kabul after the PDPA regime collapsed and the *mujahideen* government was established. Current President Hamid Karzai then worked as Deputy Foreign Minister and allegedly succeeded in appointing JMK, a fellow Popalzai and *jihad* combatant, as Provincial Governor (PG) of Uruzgan. This also illustrates how achieved leaders try to increase and reinforce their power by obtaining government appointments, an issue that will be discussed in detail later.

It is furthermore interesting that while the provincial-level leaders of the two biggest tribes – the Achekzai and Nurzai – and of the marginalized Tokhi and Babozai, exclusively come from prominent landed elite families, none of the three Babozai leaders at the district level in Deh

²⁰ Several also hold smaller security contracts, and Jan Mohammad Khan is part-owner of the private security company that guards the Dutch/Australian Provincial Reconstruction Team (Asia Security Group) and is alleged to also work with American Special Forces.

²¹ Haji Zaher (Barakzai) left Tirin Kot when the *mujahideen* captured the city, as he allegedly did not want to damage his reputation by participating in the looting.

Rawud does. Achieved status-holders also seem to dominate among the Popalzai and Barakzai, at both provincial and district level.

The 'class' dimension among key leaders, however, can lead to tensions between leaders vying for tribal support. Within several tribes in Uruzgan, there are rivalries between leaders from different social backgrounds, i.e., inherited and achieved status-holders (for example, in the case of the Popalzai: Jan Mohammad Khan vs. Malem Rahmtullah Khan).

6.2 Bargaining chips in the political marketplace: access to human (networks) and financial resources

Basically there are two key bargaining chips in the political marketplace, both revolving about resources, the one human and the other financial: political networks, and access to government and international development and security funds. As noted, inherited and *jihadi* backgrounds already provide access to tribal and factional networks respectively. Discussed here are three key networks that can be exploited in the marketplace: relationship to President Karzai (indicating that central government links are very personalized), other key provincial and national actors, and international actors. All provide access to funds that reinforce an individual's power. The role of international actors is discussed as a resource on its own, as here the networking aspect strongly overlaps with that of the access to and gatekeeping of international financial resources. How these individual bargaining chips are utilized in combination with the structural background of actors, especially the ability to 'hog' and gatekeep resources, requires careful analysis.

6.2.1 Political Networks

Networking among key actors, but also with sub-national, regional and central government actors (and other influential individuals) is key in order to access resources, obtain positions and stay in power. **On top of the list are direct relations with President Karzai**, followed by other central government and regional government actors. At the district level of Deh Rawud the linkage to provincial level actors, especially Jan Mohammad Khan and Matiullah Khan are crucial. All these linkages are personal, showing that politics and also government in Afghanistan is far from institutionalized.

This reflects very much "a fundamental inconsistency that runs through the arrangements for sub-national governance", with appointments more often based on the politics of relationships than merit (Anten 2010, p.6). Karzai is known to micro-manage government appointments. "He appoints one-third of the upper house of parliament, provincial governors, district governors, the mayor of Kabul and all other municipalities, and the heads of a number of independent offices of commissions. All in all, Karzai controls more than a thousand direct appointments and many

more indirectly controlled positions countrywide without any parliamentary oversight” (Cookman and Wadhams 2010, p.7) The previous governor of Uruzgan, Hamdam, once lamented that he lacked powers to change provincial department heads (such as Malem Rahmatullah, a Popalzai who used to be the head of the Education Department and after some recent manoeuvring was kept on as the department’s adviser), because many of them would simply call up the president to protest. This, however, also means that a change in the presidency could have a dramatic impact on the power structures in Uruzgan as in other areas in Afghanistan.

As a result, those individuals who know President Karzai personally, especially those who assisted him either during the *jihad* (above all, Jan Mohammad Khan) or in 2001 to defeat the Taliban (above all, Matiullah Khan) have an edge over other local leaders and continue to strongly influence decisions relating to the province. Other key actors who helped Hamid Karzai launch his armed uprising against the Taliban in 2001 were the late Rozi Khan (Barakzai, father of Daoud Khan), Malem Rahmatullah (Popalzai), Matiullah Khan (Popalzai)²² and Haji Zaher Khan (Barakzai).²³ Haji Naqibullah Khan (Achekezai) even managed to get released from US custody with the help of President Karzai and his brother Ahmad Wali Karzai, despite suspected links to the Taliban insurgency.

The politics of relationship to President Karzai even hold true at a district level, with 11 Deh Rawud key actors reporting good relations with Karzai, and four Popalzai (Mullah Mohammad Anwar, Ahmad Khan, Sher Mohammad, and Haji Zahir Aka) being described as strong. Hamid Karzai even stayed at the houses of Sher Mohammad and Haji Zahir Aka when he first came to Deh Rawud in 2001 – which added to their ‘fame’.

Both Popalzai strongmen Jan Mohammad Khan (JMK) and Matiullah Khan (MK) have capitalized on their strong links with President Karzai and are currently monopolizing other networks as well (see Table 3). Therefore, one could argue that they belong to the current ‘in crowd’ with whom others anxious to increase their influence feel they need have a connection. Other than the Taliban, which does not openly compete with these actors, only Daoud Khan (Barakzai) and Mohammad Nabi Khan (Tokhi) can be considered as forming a somewhat interesting alliance against these actors.

Furthermore, JMK and MK are related to each other (JMK is the uncle of MK) and to the then acting PG Khudai Rahim (previously deputy PG), who is a cousin of JMK and maternal uncle of MK. While MK is clearly the ‘new kid on the block’ and has benefited from the status of his uncle and associated relationships, he has managed to carve out a place for himself in Uruzgan’s political marketplace, largely by playing the ‘international network’ card better than has Jan Mohammad Khan (see discussion below).

²² His uncle Jan Mohammad Khan was still in a Taliban prison then.

²³ Haji Zaher Khan, Nabi Khan Tohki and Malem Rahmatullah were all also part of the *mujahideen* conquest of Tirin Kot.

Table 3: The networks of Jan Mohammad Khan and Matiullah Khan

	Jan Mohammad Khan (JMK)	Matiullah Khan (MK)
Regional/national	<p>Close to Qayum Karzai (former Kandahar MP) and Ahmad Wali Karzai, who heads the Popalzai tribe at the regional level and is the provincial council head of Kandahar.</p> <p>Aside from Karzai in Kabul he is also close to the Head of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), Rashid Popal.</p>	<p>Good links to Ahmad Wali Karzai as well as the IDLG and the Ministry of Interior (the latter because of his ability to provide security).</p> <p>Helped Hilla (Ahmadzai from Khas Uruzgan who lives in Tirin Kot) and Hajji Amanullah Khan's (Popalzai from Tirin Kot) to be nominated from the provincial council to the upper house of parliament (<i>Meshrano Jirga</i>).</p>
Provincial	<p>Of the 25 or so government departments, he is linked to 16, and he is also said to be involved in most district governor appointments.²⁴ Two of his sons are also married to two daughters of Haji Aziz Agha (Alkozai from TK), the previous Head of the Agriculture Department.</p> <p>He is close to half of the elected Provincial Council.²⁵</p>	<p>Although he only has links to the Head of the Department of Public Works (Hajji Naik Mohammad, Tokhi from Tirin Kot), he is more involved with a majority of the members of the provincial council.²⁶</p> <p>It is also said that he managed to get a puppet elected into parliament: Hajji Obaidullah Barakzai, who had been district governor of Khas Uruzgan and Chora in the past.</p>
Other key actors	<p>Uruzgan MP Mohammad Hashim Watanwal who recently re-elected, allegedly with JMK's help, and local strongmen Akthar Mohammad (Barakzai from Chora) and Haji Ghulam Haider Khan (Nurzai from Char China)</p>	<p>Both Haji Zahir Khan (Barakzai), Haji Ghulam Haider Khan (Nurzai) and Shah Mohammad (Barakzai) were members of his Reform Shura until he disengaged with the latter, as well as the son of Ghulam Haider Khan. The brother of Mohammad Nabi Khan also used to be the deputy of the shura.</p>

²⁴ **Close friendships/appointments (9):** Chief of Police (Juma Gul Hemat, Babozai from Deh Rawud); considers JMK as his father; Counter-Narcotics (Dost Mohammad, Kakar, originally from Kandahar but has lived for a long time in Tirin Kot); Water and Power (Nematullah, Mohammadzai from Tirin Kot/Ghulam); Hoqooq (linked to Justice; Abdul Mohammad, Popalzai from Tirin Kot); people say that JMK considers him as his son; Municipality (Hajji Mullah Ubaidullha, Popalzai from Tirin Kot); Prosecutor (Abdullah Salehi, Popalzai from Tirin Kot/Pai Nawa); Statistics (Amanullah, Popalzai from Tirin Kot/Sar Chaghlo); brother-in-law of JMK; Public Health (Dr Khan Aqa, Miakhail from Miya Khail, Nangarhar); JMK considers him as his son (ex-provincial governor Munib once fired him but he was re-hired by JMK); and Martyrs and Disabled (Abdul Qodos Khan, Popalzai from Tori Tirin Kot). **Other appointments and links (7):** Irrigation (Eng. Mohammad Kabir, Barakzai from By-e Nava village, Tirin Kot); Rural Development (Eng. Mohammad Hashim, Nurzai from Deh Rawud); Communications (Abdur Rashid, Popalzai from Tirin Kot/Sar Morghab); Religious Affairs & Hajj (Hajji Ubaidullah, Barakzai from Shash Barji village); Women's Affairs (Freshta, Tajik from Kabul); Public Works (Hajji Naik Mohammad, Tokhi from Tirin Kot); and Information and Culture (Ghulam Nabi Ulfat, Popalzai from Chalamgar, Tirin Kot)

²⁵ Hajji Amanullah Khan (PC Head; Babozai from Deh Rawud), Haji Mohammad Ibrahim Akundzada (sub-commander of JMK; Popalzai from Deh Rawud), Jan Mohammad (Popalzai from Chenartu); and Haji Naeem (Nurzai from Char Chinno; son of Ghulam Haider Khan), allegedly having also had a hand in getting Hilla (Acheckzai) elected even though he later opposed her appointment to the *Meshrano jirga*.

²⁶ Hajji Amanullah Khan (PC Head; Babozai from Deh Rawud), Haji Mohammad Ibrahim Akundzada (Popalzai from Deh Rawud), Mohammedullah (Popalzai from Chenartu), Jan Mohammad (Popalzai from Deh Rawud).

Compared with the networks of JMK and MK, those of the other key actors are of very modest size:

- **Malim Rahmatullah** (Popalzai) basically maintains links with all Popalzai actors who oppose JMK. Among the department heads he is close to, the Head of Transport (Hajji Ahmad ‘Shah Khan, Achekzai from Tirin Kot/Sarkhom), and also maintains relations with Haji Mohammad Ibrahim Akundzada (Popalzai from Deh Rawud) on the provincial council. Following the Taliban’s collapse, Karzai first appointed Malem Rahmatullah as PG, but replaced him later with Jan Mohammed Khan in 2003, which explains his rivalry with JMK.
- **Mohammad Nabi Khan** (Tokhi) has links with Daoud Khan through the road security contract in Chora and also with Daoud Khan’s uncle Shah Mohammad. His relations with Matiullah Khan and Jan Mohammad Khan have recently soured. Among the department heads he is related to Head of Agriculture (Sardar Mohammad, Alkozai from Tirin Kot/Sar Morghab).
- **Shah Mohammad** (Barakzai) has links with Mohammad Nabi Khan through the road security contract in Chora. Since his relations with Matiullah Khan and Jan Mohammad Khan soured as a result of taking justice into his own hands, he has tried to mend his relations with his estranged nephew Daoud Khan. He has regional links to Gul Agha Sherzai, Kandahar Barakzai strongman and governor of Nangarhar.
- **Mohammad Daoud Khan** (Barakzai) has close links to Mohammad Nabi Khan Tokhi, with whom he collaborates on the security for the Tirin Kot-Chora road, and in many ways forms an anti-MK alliance. He also maintains links to Sayed Momin (Tokhi) who is currently a rival of Mohammad Nabi Khan. His father Rozi Khan fought alongside Karzai in 2001, but he was unable to ‘inherit’ this linkage.
- **Commander Akhtar Mohammad** (Barakzai) has links with JMK and his son used to be on the provincial council but was not re-elected.
- **Sahed Comander Etimadi** (Hazara) has good links with his sub-commander Commander Shafaq in Gizab, other Hazara commanders in Day Kundi and Ghaniz, and also *ex-jihadi* Hazara commanders in Kabul, such Mohammad Karim Khalili, who is vice-president to President Hamid Karzai, and Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq who was prominent in Kalili’s Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami.

The political networks above already show how important it is to key actors to get ‘their’ people into government positions and/or link up with those who are. This re-emphasizes that a government position, including dominating and manipulating ‘merit-based’ appointments, is not an independent source of power, but functions as a bargaining chip in line with the logic of the political marketplace, reinforcing and strengthening an individual’s already existing status. Jan Mohammad Khan, with the closest links to Karzai, even though no longer Governor of Uruzgan, in turn has managed to control most political appointments at the sub-national level in

Uruzgan. Thus, in Deh Rawud district, for example, 16 key actors were closely networked to him and only 13 to Matiullah Khan, who is still focused more on the provincial level.

Just over half of all key actors at the provincial level hold (or have held in the past) **government positions** (mostly at provincial or district levels), while only 45% of the district-level key leaders do or did so. This hints at the lesser importance of government in the periphery, or simply the limited ability to access government resources via district-level government appointments.

Wanting to access and/or manipulate government positions, however, does not signify that key actors appreciate and support the idea of government as promoting good governance and service delivery to the general Afghan population, other than their direct patronage networks. Currently the political marketplace in Uruzgan is shaped to serve the interests of local strongmen and their political advancement, as the holding of a government position means easy access to national and international resources.

Take three of the Popalzai key actors who hold government positions: Jan Mohammad Khan, the previous PG and current presidential adviser, Matiullah Khan, the head of the *Kandak-e Amniyat-e Uruzgan*,²⁷ and Malem Rahmatullah, the previous head of and current adviser to the provincial education department. All three are said to have used their government positions to improve their personal power base and wealth by, for example: charging others for getting them appointed to lower-level government positions (or for getting rivals out); accessing and gatekeeping international development assistance, including taking cuts and kickbacks; and enjoying privileged access to private security contracts, despite the fact that this in theory should be a government service, free of charge.

This has led to the conclusion expressed by most men and women interviewed that a fundamental problem is that none of the key leaders was really concerned with building strong government institutions focused on service delivery in Uruzgan: “[Generally most] key leaders don’t want a strong government in Uruzgan province as this would threaten their power, influence and associated benefits.”²⁸ Most respondents were of the opinion that under a strong central government, local strongmen would slowly vanish, as they would have served their purpose, particularly as security providers.²⁹ “If there was peace, professionals would come to this province and would surely replace them [local strongmen] which would be a great reform and a positive change.”³⁰ Another interpretation, however, is that the power aspirations of Uruzgan key actors are very much focused on Uruzgan and not at a national or even regional level. This may also explain why neither Jan Mohammad Khan nor Matiullah Khan has ever aspired to run for parliament.

²⁷ Formerly the Highway Police and now the Operational Police which is technically under the command of the Chief of Police and lies within the Afghan National Police structure.

²⁸ Head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010; This was echoed by others: Employee Governor’s compound, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010; Adviser in Governor’s compound, Tirin Kot, 10 February 2010

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Employee Governor’s compound, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010.

Even Jan Mohammad Khan only reluctantly, and under international pressure, was moved to Kabul, and still continues to concentrate on influencing politics ‘at home’.

Of all the key actors, only three, all of whom were considered to be weaker – Malim Abdul Khaliq, Achekzai from Chora, Hajji Naqibullah Khan, Achekzai from Khas Uruzgan, and Hajji Ghulam Haidar Khan, Nurzai from Char China – were credited with trying to work for strengthening government institutions.³¹ All three come from the two largest tribes in Uruzgan that have been marginalized by pro-government strongmen. This may explain why they were seen as standing to benefit from a strong government with checks and balances, especially one that might bring security to their areas (Khas Uruzgan and Char China are among the most insecure in Uruzgan).

It comes as no surprise to find a strong belief among respondents that key actors are anxious to stay in their government position, or to acquire one, given the benefits that clearly ensue from using government positions to enhance personal power (see Table 4). A woman from Tirin Kot gave an example of active lobbying with the central government: “It was broadcast through TV that JMK sent 100 people to President Karzai with the proposal that he should be governor of the province, Mohammad Nabi deputy governor and MK Chief of Police, but luckily President Karzai did not accept such a proposal.”³² Others say that this was actually organized by MK, or at least that he paid for the travel funds, while he himself alleges that the leaders who went to Karzai made these proposals independently.³³ This again shows that some political transactions in Uruzgan’s marketplace are rather obscure, with backroom trading going on.

Table 4: Government posts that key actors aspire to

Position	Who is aspiring to it
Provincial Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan Mohammad Khan, Popalzai, Tirin Kot • Malem Rahmatullah Khan, Popalzai, Tirin Kot • Matiullah Khan, Popalzai, Tirin Kot • Mohammad Nabi Khan, Tokhi, Tirin Kot/Darafshan area • Malem Abdul Khaliq, Achekzai, Chora • Shah Mohammad, Barakzai, Chora
Deputy Provincial Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mohammad Nabi Khan, Tokhi, Tirin Kot/Darafshan area
JMK for Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commander Akhtar Mohammad, Barakzai, Chora
Chief of Police of Uruzgan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matiullah Khan, Popalzai, Tirin Kot • Mohammad Nabi Khan, Tokhi, Tirin Kot/Darafshan area • Shah Mohammad, Barakzai, Chora (or of another province) • Commander Akhtar Mohammad, Barakzai, Chora • Daoud Khan, Barakzai, Chora (within next three years)

³¹ High school graduate, Tirin Kot, 16 February 2010; Tribal elder and mediator, Tirin Kot, 24 February 2010.

³² Female high school graduate, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010.

³³ Interview with Matiullah Khan, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 1 July 2010.

Position	Who is aspiring to it
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sahed Commander Etimadi, Hazara, Gizab
District Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commander Akhtar Mohammad, Barakzai, Chora • Daoud Khan, Barakzai, Chora • Sahed Commander Etimadi, Hazara, Gizab
Run for parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malim Abdul Khaliq, Achekzai, Chora • Hajji Naqibullah Khan, Achekzai, Khas Uruzgan • Hajji Ghulam Haidar Khan, Nurzai, Char China • Son of Malem Rahmatullah Khan, Popalzai, Tirin Kot

The fact that the aspirations of most key actors seem to be confined to government positions in Uruzgan, with only Shah Mohammad being happy to become the Chief of Police of any province, is another indication that strongmen understand very well that power does not come from government positions per se, but from from the way it can be used as a lever within one's own area of influence. This is also the reason why it has been so hard to find an outsider to become an effective governor in Uruzgan after the removal of Jan Mohammad Khan. Since Hamdam was released, the only person to have been offered the post has turned it down, despite a personal request from President Karzai.

Owing to the inherent competition among key actors, there are multiple candidates for the same position that strongmen aspire to, with governor (either provincial or district) and chief of police topping the list of desired positions. At least six actors aspire to become either the next Chief of Police or Governor of Uruzgan, but only one would be content with the deputy PG position, and only one would prefer someone else to take the PG post. Two want to become governors of their respective districts, and one would like to stay in that position.

Even MK, the strongest key actor in Uruzgan, aspires to become Chief of Police, a position he in many ways holds already *de facto*; at any rate he is more influential than Juma Gul who in theory is his superior. Although in the past he denied having his eye on this post, he recently admitted he was interested, given that he had frequently been asked to take it on.³⁴ This indeed is true, as most respondents saw it as nothing but beneficial if MK were to become Chief of Police in order to extend his role as security provider under a government umbrella.

³⁴ Ibid.

6.2.2 Financial and other resources

Wealth based on (inherited or purchased) property (commercial and agriculture) and other economic resources, is a crucial bargaining chip in Uruzgan's political marketplace. Both make for less dependence on daily work and the ability to gain clients through distribution of assets. As hospitality is ranked high within Pashtun society, wealth provides the ability to host a large number of guests and serve them well.³⁵

- **Land** is a traditional status symbol among Pashtuns as it provides income from agricultural production and support from clientele working the land. While in the past, land was inherited from forebears, achieved leaders either purchase or grab land. Both JMK and MK have purchased and/or grabbed land and built impressive houses. Commander Akhtar Mohammad (Barakzai) was known to own at least 200 *khawar* of land (half being almond and apricot orchards) and Shah Mohammad (Barakzai) and Commander Etimadi were also said to own land. While Haji Zahir Khan (Barakzai) inherited land, he also grabbed land during the *jihad*, something that harmed his reputation, suggesting a traditional checks-and-balance system, which has slowly eroded. In Deh Rawud, however, only 9 of 24 key actors seem to possess great wealth through ownership of land.
- **Other forms of income** include business (both licit and illicit); security contracts (mostly for roads but also site security, some for international actors) or checkpoints; ownership of construction companies; or corruption such as syphoning off funds from the the salaries of teachers and police by government officials, demanding pay-back sums for getting people appointed to government positions, and taking percentages from development projects. These last mentioned examples of corruption is alleged to be practised by several of the key actors.

The ascent to power by Matiullah Khan, coming from neither an inherited or a *jihadi* background (although he did help drive the Taliban out of Uruzgan in 2001) is a good example of the clever use of financial resources to gain power and enhance personal influence. He is known as very generous and every Thursday night numerous widows line up on his doorstep to receive support.³⁶ He also stated that he was supporting university students from Uruzgan in Kabul.³⁷ This shows the importance of money in the political marketplace in Uruzgan.

The Chief of the Australian Defence Forces recently justified working with Matiullah by stating that he “is very generous in some circumstances. For example, a family lost a father and Matiullah provided support to that family in the absence of the father, and I’m familiar with other similar acts that he has been behind before.”³⁸

³⁵ For example, Matiullah Khan served an impressive lunch on china (the latter a clear status symbol) during an interview .

³⁶ Observation during a visit to MK's house on 1 July 2010.

³⁷ Interview with Matiullah Khan, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 1 July 2010.

³⁸ Dan Oakes, “Military chief defends warlord ally”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 October 2010; <http://www.smh.com.au/world/military-chief-defends-warlord-ally-20101029-177iv.html>

This illustrates that in line with the logic of establishing patronage networks, Matiullah is literally ‘buying’ his influence and position in Uruzgan’s political marketplace, as he has no inherited or *jihadi* status to use as a lever. The fact that Matiullah is trying to distance himself from the ‘bad image’ of ex-*jihadi* leaders (especially that of his uncle Jan Mohammad Khan) and to align himself more with the status held by traditional landed elites is reflected in the judgement of a woman from Tirin Kot: “He wants to ... have a good image and has started making an effort for this purpose. For instance, he supports the poor people and also he pays expenses of Uruzgan actors when they travel to other provinces. Last year, he distributed fuel to the farmers for generators for irrigation purposes. In this way, he was able to build more trust among the people than the provincial governor and police chief. At present, people listen and accept words of the Matiullah more than the provincial governor in Uruzgan province.”³⁹ He himself in interviews likes to demonstrate that he is both important and well liked, which suggests that he is not yet confident that he has become either.

Owing to his lack of a *jihadi* past and landed elite status, Matiullah has had to acquire wealth in recent times. One of his biggest sources of income is providing security for the Kabul–Kandahar highway, something which, in theory, government officials should provide for no payment. “He is paid at least \$US1,700 (\$2,385) a truck to ensure each convoy arrives at its destination safely. With about 200 trucks a month heading to Tarin Kowt, it’s a profitable sideline.”⁴⁰ Matiullah also had another security contract for the road between Chora and Gizab, but withdrew his men when he was no longer being paid by one of the many sub-contractors under the original USAID contract.⁴¹ There are also rumours that he has provided men for a private security company securing the Kandahar–Kabul highway. In addition to these activities in the security business he also owns at least one construction company and is alleged to have obtained contracts for the reconstruction of government buildings. While his income might be considerable, so are his expenses, because without his ability to channel resources to his clientele – largely said to be young men from various tribes to whom he provides employment – he would be, in the words of some, a nobody.

6.2.3 International actors as a resource

As noted earlier, the return of Western international actors on to the Afghan scene post-2001 (in Uruzgan the United States, Australia and, between 2006 and 2010, the Dutch) has added to the complexity of the political marketplace in Uruzgan. The ability to ally themselves with international actors, either on a military/security and/or development level can help cement the status of key actors, especially if they are able to play the role of gatekeepers. As noted earlier, internationals provide access to development projects, construction and security contracts

³⁹ Local housewife, Tirin Kot, 28 February 2010.

⁴⁰ Jeremy Kelly, “Long road to Tarin Kowt,” *The Australian*, 28 April 2009; <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/long-road-to-tarin-kowt/story-e6frg6so-1225704435431>

⁴¹ Interview with Matiullah Khan, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 1 July 2010.

(hence the accumulation of wealth). As an adviser in the Governor's compound observed: "Whoever is in power [in Uruzgan] is so because of the foreigners and if the Taliban would regain power, these people [key actors] would not remain prominent."⁴²

In the early days, during Jan Mohammad Khan's governorship in Uruzgan (2002–06), he and Matiullah Khan worked closely with the US army in their drive to eliminate Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants in Uruzgan. However, it was only Jan Mohammad Khan who "decided who was and who wasn't Taliban, all based on his old rivalries", in essence using "his new links [to the United States] to go after rivals and old enemies".⁴³ When the United States 'caught on' to these practices and slowly started disengaging themselves, which became easier following Jan Mohammad Khan's removal to Kabul as adviser to President Karzai after the Dutch became the lead-nation in Uruzgan in 2006 (The Liaison Office 2010).

This move, in many ways, made Matiullah Khan the key engagement partner for the international military, particularly Special Forces in Uruzgan. On the walls in his guesthouse there are photographs of him and his men posing with Special Forces. Furthermore, during an interview he produced a dozen or more medals given to him by US and Australian Special Forces in appreciation of services rendered.⁴⁴ For example, he collaborated with US and Australian forces who recaptured the Gizab district centre from Taliban control early in 2010. At the same time, "the Dutch refused to deal with him, citing his violent past and his dubious present. The Australians, however, regard him as 'a security provider'. It's a view shared by the Americans, who have replaced the Dutch as the 'lead nation' in Uruzgan."⁴⁵ The Australians recently underscored by flying a few of his men to be trained in Australia, which led to protests in Uruzgan but also non-Pashtuns at the national level.⁴⁶

During their tenure in Uruzgan, however, the Dutch tried to counter-balance U.S. and Australian engagement policies by supporting Barakzai and Ghilzai leaders such as Daoud Khan and Nabi Khan Tokhi, respectively. Both leaders were keenly aware that their capital in the political market place of Uruzgan could greatly decrease with the departure of Dutch troops,⁴⁷ unless other actors, such as the Australians continue to engage them. Indeed, shortly after the Dutch withdrawal in August, Daoud Khan was replaced as Governor of Uruzgan, despite the fact that the Australian political and development actors tried to continue engaging him.⁴⁸ This implies that Daoud Khan, despite being the son of the *jihadi* personality Rozi Khan, was

⁴² Adviser to Provincial Government Department, originally from Deh Rawud, Tirin Kot, 12 February 2010.

⁴³ Paul McGeough, "Doing the bidding of organised crime", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 August 2009, quoting Dutch journalist Bette Dam.

⁴⁴ He proudly produced them during an interview, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 1 July 2010.

⁴⁵ Tom Hyland, "Our mate, the bloody warlord", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 2010; <http://www.smh.com.au/world/our-mate-the-bloody-warlord-20100807-11pd8.html>

⁴⁶ Some Uzbek parliamentarians, having obtained the information from local newspapers, saw it as an illustration of how Pashtuns were getting all the support and minorities none, especially as the newspapers reported that all his men had been flown to Australia to be trained; informal discussions during early November 2010.

⁴⁷ Interviews with Nabi Khan Tokhi, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 30 June 2010, and with Daoud Khan, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 2 July 2010

⁴⁸ Daoud Khan, Tirin Kot, Uruzgan, 2 July 2010.

probably able to keep a foot in the political marketplace only because of being a protégé of the Dutch and, more recently, Australian development and political actors. Unable to build up an independent strong support base and facing strong rivalry from Matiullah Khan, he was unable to continue competing after the departure of his strongest ally, the Dutch. Likewise, as long as Matiullah Khan continues to be courted by the US and Australian military as a key ally for the provision of security, without others being brought on board as well, and furthermore paid for services that in theory should be part of his government job, he will continue to be the uncontested ‘King of Uruzgan’ – unless of course, one of his main rivals, the insurgency, succeeds in killing him.

6.3 Generational rivalries

While all strongmen are to some extent rivals of each other⁴⁹ there is an overarching rivalry between inherited and achieved status-holders. A third line of rivalry is opening up between leaders belonging to different generations, such as pro-government newcomers (for example, MK and Daoud Khan) and leaders with a *mujahideen* reputation (e.g., JMK and Shah Mohammad). This is not to say that there are no generational rivalries among actors who come from an inherited background, as the rivalry between Daoud Khan and his uncle Shah Mohammad illustrates, albeit this has softened since Daoud Khan lost his post as Chora District Governor and Shah Mohammad lost his support from Jan Mohammad Khan and Matiullah Khan.

In these rivalries it is crucial how successfully an individual gambles with clientele support. The one who is able to increase his clientele base has is the most likely to increase his power and influence. In this game, bargaining chips are played off against each other, and the local population has to weigh which ones they value more (see Table 5). Jan Mohammad Khan, who was the most important actor before 2006, has become weaker, but is still considered to be one of the two most influential individuals in Uruzgan.

⁴⁹ Female high school graduate, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010.

Table 5: Power rivals – JMK vs. MK

‘Old School’ – Achieved	‘New School’ – Achieved
<p>Jan Mohammad Khan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>jihadi</i> past • Control over means of violence • Good links to Karzai • Tribal support conditional • Seen as brutal and ruthless • Seen as meddling in politics too much • Declines links to foreigners • Lack of interest in reconciling insurgency • Benefits from weak government • Tensions with ‘new school’ • Tensions with inherited leadership 	<p>Matiullah Khan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks <i>jihadi</i> past • Control over means of violence • Tribal support often among youth, but also conditional • Good links to central government • Income from TK/Kandahar road • Good links to foreigners • Generally seen as ‘good’ guy by local communities (and international actors with the exception of the Dutch government), or at the very least, better than JMK • Benefits from weak government/weak security • Tensions with ‘old school’

That said, Matiullah has managed to overtake him, very slightly, by working hard on his image of a generous and inclusive leader, for example by ‘throwing around’ his wealth and creating a tribal council called *shura islahi*, or reform council, in mid-January 2010. He also has tried to maintain security not just in areas where he holds road contracts, but also elsewhere, such as the Tirin Kot–Deh Rawud road and by participating in the seizing of Gizab from the Taliban.

7. Emerging opportunities: sub-national governance programmes in Uruzgan

Over the past few years there has been a concerted effort by the Dutch, Australian and US governments to improve governance in Uruzgan.⁵⁰ This has included substantial funding to sub-national (reform) programmes, continuous attention and support to sub-national government structures (at provincial and district levels), and lobbying by the Dutch government with Kabul power-brokers to replace inefficient, corrupt and biased government officials.

This section looks at two types of programmes targeting sub-national governance: those linked to the Afghan Government's Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and those to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). It is important to note here that respondents' overall knowledge about the specifics of programmes was limited. This is often the case, unless a government puts effort into running a vigorous public information campaign. This has not been the case in Uruzgan. Thus the following two sections, while strongly drawing on interviews and focus group discussions, are only able to provide overall perceptions, possibly about the Afghan government in general, rather than specific evaluations of sub-national governance programmes.

In this context it is important to understand that while in the first years of its existence, the Karzai government enjoyed significant backing in the province, the rule of the second governor, Jan Mohammad Khan, proved extremely divisive, engineering and exacerbating tribal conflicts and leading to a gradual estrangement of an ever-growing number of important tribal leaders from the government. This has led to a low level of faith in government and overall cynicism about any kind of reform programmes.

⁵⁰ In addition to Dutch efforts, the Australians were very active in governance. They financially supported the training of 49 interns for the provincial governors office, capacity development with MRRD, MoE and the Public Works Department, and the municipality of Tirin Kot. Also USAID (Development Alternatives International) has supported governance in Tirin Kot.

Numerous concerns were raised about the premature transfer of governance support from the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to Afghan actors and programmes, before less corrupt and better qualified government officials were in post. “In my opinion, Afghans should not be provided with cash unless all the administrations are corruption free and professional people are appointed in the offices. The best way is that foreigners themselves implement the provincial projects. [...] Professionals should be given chances of employment so that they can run these programmes carefully and this could also be good for the government too.”⁵¹

In Deh Rawud, for example, many felt that if the PRT were to leave, it would only be a matter of hours before the Taliban arrived to capture the district centre, as the police were considered weak and poorly organized. The likelihood of local communities joining with the Taliban in order to find a way to voice their grievances vis-à-vis the government was seen as high, because individuals working for the district government were seen as inefficient and short-sighted. It was recommended that the PRT should continue their activities until the number of qualified district employees had increased, especially at director level.

7.1 IDLG-supported sub-national governance funds

Of the many IDLG programmes in Uruzgan, most respondents mentioned three: the Performance Based Governors Fund (PBGF),⁵² the provision of advisers to governors under the Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP), and training for civil servants. PBGF was said to encourage positive competition among governors in order to attract more funds.⁵³ In theory, this should improve performance and service provision for the population, by rewarding good governors with access to more funds.⁵⁴ Both the provision of advisers and the training programmes were seen as positive in strengthening the performance of the governor’s office, so long as qualified individuals were hired for the job.⁵⁵ Any programme that worked on

⁵¹ Employee, Governor’s Compound, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010.

⁵² PBGF is a programme that empowers provincial governors by providing them with operational budgets to enhance their relationship with citizens and improve their overall management capacity. The PBGF pilot will 1) provide provincial governors with operational resources; 2) provide provincial administrations with the incentives to improve planning, budgeting and auditing capacity; 3) introduce new elements into sub-national governance policy, including a bottom-up budgeting process and a revised set of roles and responsibilities at the sub-national level; and 4) form the basis for a long-term performance-based programme for provincial governors. PBGF is implemented in partnership with the Afghan Government’s Independent Directorate of Local Governance; <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Activity.166.aspx>

⁵³ Head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010; employee in a government department, originally from Khas Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 14 February 2010; owner of a private clinic in Tirin Kot bazaar, Tirin Kot, 18 February 2010; shop-owner and mediator, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010.

⁵⁴ Owner of a private clinic in Tirin Kot bazaar, Tirin Kot, 18 February 2010.

⁵⁵ Tribal Elder and mediator, Tirin Kot, 24 February 2010; also, Counter-Narcotics Programme Adviser, Tirin Kot, 7 February 2010; head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010; employee in a government department, originally from Khas Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 14 February 2010.

improving civil servants' skills, which in turn would enable them to perform better, was seen as crucial, as this is a much complained-about problem in Uruzgan's administration.⁵⁶

Overall, however, respondents considered most of the governance programmes as positive in theory – “as they are meant to strengthen the government”⁵⁷ – but problematic in their implementation⁵⁸ and hampered by a lack of monitoring.⁵⁹ They saw little much sense in evaluating the content of governance programmes or discussing the need for new ones while deficits on four counts continued to compromise government performance and efficient resource allocation, at the same time as enabling the embezzlement of public funds.⁶⁰ Respondents identified these deficits as: 1) a lack of qualified personnel⁶¹ (explaining the popularity of training programmes);⁶² inadequate physical infrastructure and financial and logistical resources;⁶³ 3) lack of interest on the part of central and sub-national government in making sure that appointments are merit-based; and above all 4) inadequate oversight and control over public expenditures and processes.⁶⁴

“I don't see any problem in the policies but the problem is in the implementation of policies. All the policies are written and organized very well, but due to unprofessional and unskilled personnel, lack of resources in offices, and lack of monitoring of provincial and district level, formal and informal institutions by the central government, the policies are not implemented in a good way.”

Achekzai elder from Tirin Kot

The last two are worth exploring. There was, for example, great scepticism about whether reward-based programmes such as PBGF would be effective in Uruzgan's political marketplace where most key actors were already wealthy and powerful, and thus potentially difficult to ‘buy off’. In theory a monetized political marketplace assumes that actors respond to financial incentives, but this will not be the case if the incentives provided through PBGF are insignificant compared with the other sources of wealth already available to them. As the director of a major local NGO suggested: “They cannot be encouraged by providing incentives to them because they already have access [to power/resources].”⁶⁵ For such a programme to work, key leaders

⁵⁶ Counter-Narcotics Programme Adviser, Tirin Kot, 7 February 2010; employee in a government department, originally from Khas Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 14 February 2010; shop-owner and mediator, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010; employee of a local NGO, Tirin Kot, 17 February 2010.

⁵⁷ Well-known *jihadi*, Tirin Kot, 15 February 2010.

⁵⁸ Head of a local aid organization, originally From Gizab, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010; shop-owner and mediator, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010.

⁵⁹ Tribal Elder, Tirin Kot, 11 February 2010.

⁶⁰ Shop-owner and mediator, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010; employee of an international NGO in Gizab, Tirin Kot, 27 February 2010.

⁶¹ Counter-Narcotics Programme Adviser, Tirin Kot, 7 February 2010; Tribal Elder with *jihadi* background, Tirin Kot, 13 February 2010; high school graduate, Tirin Kot, 16 February 2010.

⁶² Employee of an international NGO in Gizab, Tirin Kot, 27 February 2010.

⁶³ Tribal Elder with *jihadi* background, Tirin Kot, 13 February 2010; owner of a private clinic in Tirin Kot bazaar, Tirin Kot, 18 February 2010; Tribal Elder and mediator, Tirin Kot, 24 February 2010; shop-owner and mediator, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010.

⁶⁴ Employee of an international NGO in Gizab, Tirin Kot, 27 February 2010.

⁶⁵ Head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010.

would need to be deprived of other financial support first, such that obtained as via international military forces and/or from licit and illicit business.

Furthermore, as long as the Afghan government continues to be dominated by personal patronage, PBGF may simply be another source of corruption, in that it can be accessed only by those governors with good links in Kabul, regardless of their actual performance.⁶⁶ The previous Provincial Governor Hamdam, for example, once lamented that he was unable to fire inefficient provincial department heads as many would simply call up the president to protest. In a situation where “the President and his entourage – have consistently sought to use senior subnational appointments and patronage-based politics in ways that have undermined a more formalised form of institution building, while paying lip service to the polices that their practices are undermining”, (Van Bijlert 2009, p.3) there is little incentive for anybody to do a good job. A professional bureaucrat trying to perform well may stand little chance in such a system, which might even see him as a threat, because others’ deficiencies will be shown up.

Instead of positive rewards, many respondents made the radical suggestion to use the stick more than the carrot, by sacking all those who were abusing their official position. However, the idea of sacking people rather than bringing them into the ‘big tent’ – as has been practised by President Karzai – only works if central government is strong enough to contain or remove provincial strongmen, which so far it has been unable (or unwilling) to do. Furthermore, removing some key actors from official governance positions in Uruzgan may work only partially, as the example of JMK illustrates. Despite – but also because of – having been called to Kabul to a presidential advisory position, he continues to hold a tight grip on the province and still influences most key political appointments.

There were also several calls to bring to justice key actors with a ‘dubious past’⁶⁷ and possibly remove them from Uruzgan altogether.⁶⁸ Some even suggested extreme measures, such as those applied by the Taliban, who “successfully threatened people by hanging murderers, thieves and those who are corrupt and thereby were able to change people’s behaviour.”⁶⁹ Considering the ‘Amnesty Law’, which Karzai quietly gazetted with the Ministry of Justice in March 2010 after repeated promises that he would not support it,⁷⁰ it is doubtful whether the Afghan government feels strongly enough to face down predatory strongmen and bring them to justice.

⁶⁶ Adviser in Governor’s Compound, Tirin Kot, 10 February 2010.

⁶⁷ Head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010; employee, Afghan National Security Forces in Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010; owner of a private clinic in Tirin Kot bazaar, Tirin Kot, 18 February 2010.

⁶⁸ Head of one of the major NGOs in Uruzgan Province, Tirin Kot, 8 February 2010; adviser to a government department, originally from Deh Rawud, Tirin Kot, 12 February 2010.

⁶⁹ Kuchi leader, Tirin Kot, 5 March 2010.

⁷⁰ The National Stability and Reconciliation Law was passed by parliament in 2007 by a coalition of powerful warlords and their supporters to prevent the prosecution of individuals responsible for large-scale human rights abuses in the preceding decades. “The amnesty law states that all those who were engaged in armed conflict before the formation of the Interim Administration in Afghanistan in December 2001 shall ‘enjoy all their legal rights and shall not be prosecuted.’” Human Rights Watch, “Afghanistan: Repeal Amnesty Law”, 10 March 2010.

In particular, a frequently voiced recommendation was that performance monitoring by government at several levels be improved: central government should monitor overall provincial governance performances more rigorously and each line ministry should do this for the relevant provincial department. At the provincial level the governor should monitor provincial and district staff. Some interviewees from Deh Rawud argued that a good monitoring system would help improve the image of the Afghan government. Only one respondent saw a role for internationals to assist in monitoring the Afghan government;⁷¹ others argued that they should stop interfering in Afghan government business,⁷² especially “the hiring process of government officials”.⁷³

There was disagreement among respondents when asked if there was a need for a special monitoring body to perform such duties. Even though they all felt that at present nobody was really monitoring government performance, male respondents were roughly split between favouring and disfavouring the creation of a new *shura* or commission to do so. In contrast, nearly all female respondents felt that the Provincial Council was sufficient to perform this duty, which should be supported and strengthened. This demonstrates that women tend to prefer bodies where there are quotas guaranteeing their inclusion. However, some male government employees echoed their recommendation: “The Provincial Council already exists. If it would [do this] work, this would already be enough.”⁷⁴

A big fear expressed by many respondents was that any new body would come automatically under the influence of local strongmen, trying to manipulate it for their own purposes. This led some to suggest that one might as well include all 14 key actors (or at least some) in such a body, in order to publicly make it their task to ‘improve governance’.

7.2 MRRD-supported programmes

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of MRRD was by far the best known and liked programme. It is in many ways the flagship national priority programme, focusing on physical reconstruction in rural areas, with the explicit aim of strengthening democratic governance at the village level through the establishment of democratically elected Community Development Councils (CDCs). NSP was also the one programme that respondents saw as the least closely linked to international actors, or to the PRT. It was seen as an Afghan government programme, possibly also because Afghan NGOs implement it in Uruzgan, and in other areas NSP is credited more to the coordinating NGO than to the Afghan government.

In addition to NSP, two other MRRD programmes – National Area-Based Development Programme (NABDP) and National Rural Access Programme (NRAP) – were seen as positive

⁷¹ Employee, Afghan National Security Forces in Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010.

⁷² High school graduate, Tirin Kot, 16 February 2010.

⁷³ Tribal Elder from Nachin, Tirin Kot, 29 February 2010.

⁷⁴ Employee, Governor’s Compound, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010.

in helping rural development, providing employment opportunities, addressing the primary needs of communities (e.g., schools, roads, power) and decreasing the distance between government and the people (because currently people view the government as not working for the public) and functioning as a mechanism that builds confidence in government.⁷⁵ In particular, employment opportunities were regarded as a contribution to security, as employment “did not leave time for people to create problems”.⁷⁶

NSP was started in 2005 with the cooperation of the Afghan Development Association (ADA) in Tirin Kot (at a time when ADA was the only NGO with long experience in Uruzgan). Currently it is implemented by the Afghanistan National Re-Construction Coordination (ANCC) in Deh Rawud and Chora, while in Tirin Kot MRRD has taken it over and implements it directly. Although the ANCC organization had no prior experience in community mobilization and had not yet been registered with MRRD, it was given the job as no other organizations had come forward to replace ADA. According to the Director of MRRD in Uruzgan, ANCC is doing a satisfactory job.

Compared with their knowledge of other programmes, respondents knew quite a lot about NSP. All interviewees understood that the Community Development Councils were elected through the people with the technical assistance of the implementing organization, even though some also claimed that commanders sometimes interfered in the process. These commanders, however, were mostly local (some alleged that the DG and CoP of Deh Rawud took money from each CDC shura but did not interfere in their work, e.g., selection of projects); the programme was seen as too small (too many small shuras) to invite any interference by the likes of JMK or MK. In other words, if one large project is subdivided into many small projects at the community level, this could avoid the risk of interference by strongmen since the resources are too scattered to allow them to profit from them. If they showed signs of starting to meddle, which according to some interviewees had not happened (yet), it was certainly possible that at the level of the provincial directorate of MRRD some strongmen had been ‘bought off’ in order to keep them out.

That said, one of the reasons why MRRD discontinued its contract with ADA was the latter’s close links with Jan Mohammad Khan who, with the help of tribal elders, tried to bypass government and NSP regulations, ignoring the provincial directorate altogether. There were also complaints of corruption, with ADA skimming off the top of NSP funds. After two evaluations of NSP carried out by MRRD staff in Kabul, the decision was taken to cease working with ADA as implementing partner for NSP.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Shop-owner and mediator, Tirin Kot, 25 February 2010.

⁷⁶ Local Tribal Elder from Nachin, Tirin Kot, 3 March 2010.

⁷⁷ While the Director of MRRD acknowledged that ADA had no problem in establishing good relations with tribal elders, maliks and government officials (JMK during his governorship is said to have supported ADA and is continuing to do so), it was unable to complete the actual project implementation in the allotted time frame of two years. Furthermore MRRD felt that ADA lacked qualified technical staff to complete projects. As ADA at the time was one of the few organizations active in Uruzgan it was overloaded with work and did not make NSP one of its

Overall, people in Deh Rawud seemed satisfied with the NSP programme and project sites are visible around the Deh Rawud district centre. Those interviewed saw it as responding to people's wishes and needs, as well as providing leadership opportunities, and this very much corresponds to what it set out to do (Brick 2008, p.17; Nixon 2008). One of the key benefits of NSP (and related programmes) is the provision of employment, and it also helps to improve the image of the government. "The mentioned programmes have a good impact – the programmes of the government as well as the NSP. Many people have found employment due to these programmes and this way people would think that the government is theirs and they would think that the government accepts our plans. People also think that they have authority and that they are not sidelined. People design the projects, they implement them and run its finance department."⁷⁸

Employment which kept people busy, as noted earlier, was also seen as helping to reduce insecurity: "Where NSP projects are implemented, the security situation gets better, too."⁷⁹ Nevertheless, sometimes conflicts did arise regarding which projects should be implemented. Such conflicts, however, were generally resolved quickly, sometimes by the CDC shuras themselves, but mostly by white-bearded elders (*spin giri*).

This extremely positive evaluation of NSP may be partially linked to project delivery happening in a situation of great poverty and in the absence of other government programmes, with communities able to select projects and contribute to their implementation.⁸⁰ Some felt that the selection process carried out by the shuras signalled the start of democratic activity at district level, which established a bond between the government and the people. It was argued that where NSP shuras existed, people were overall pro-government as they felt part of the government. Shuras also encouraged uneducated people to send their children to school and elders to work for good governance.

That said, at present CDCs at village level do not compete with other informal governance institutions. There are no other shuras, only individual *spin giri* who help to resolve disputes (e.g., over irrigation) and village maliks in Deh Rawud forming a *malik shura* that meets at the district level. Similarly, the tribal shura involving *spin giri* who represent their tribes also meet at the district level only.

These strengths of NSP, however, were viewed by some people as one of its weaknesses. They argued that the moment the programme stopped, people's expectations once again would not be met and unemployment would start rising again. This could lead once more to grievances vis-à-vis the government. Many did not see CDCs as being sustainable once external funds ran out,⁸¹

priorities. The MRRD Director felt that ADA thought it did not matter how well it performed, given that no other organizations were competing with it.

⁷⁸ Adviser in Governor's Compound, Tirin Kot, 10 February 2010.

⁷⁹ Tribal Elder and mediator, Tirin Kot, 24 February 2010.

⁸⁰ Head of District Tribal Shura, Deh Rawud, Uruzgan, 17 April 2010.

⁸¹ Head of District Tribal Shura, Deh Rawud, Uruzgan, 17 April 2010.

because villages and districts already had other representative bodies such as elders and shuras. The point has also been noted by external analysts: as Brick points out, NSP CDCs cannot really be a substitute for governing institutions unless they can develop the ability to generate more reliable streams of revenue for continued project work (Brick 2008, p.20). Thus, in order to maintain NSP's momentum, it would need to be included in the budget of the Afghan government because currently it is dependent on external donor funds.

Furthermore, there was a feeling that NSP mainly targeted areas around the district centre, ignoring more remote villages, especially in insecure areas. In Chora, in contrast, there were some allegations of corruption and meddling by local strongmen. One person interviewed quit as community mobilizer in Chora because they were disenchanted with the programme. There were, however, some complaints about the quality of the work done by contractors used for implementing NSP projects in Deh Rawud. Thus, although ANCC argued that it implemented the programme evenly across Uruzgan without any problems with local strongmen, it seems that the local context has a strong bearing on whether or not all NSP principles are upheld.

The programme's success also was seen as strongly linked to the capacity of the shuras, which vary greatly across Deh Rawud. Most, including the District Development Assembly (DDA) director himself, felt that linking NSP to the DDA would be beneficial, in order to coordinate activities.⁸² Moreover, if CDC shuras were to report directly to the DDA, which could monitor them, this would also introduce another step towards transparency.

⁸² Head of DDA, Deh Rawud, Uruzgan, 17 April 2010.

8. Conclusion

As the discussion so far has shown, the political marketplace in Uruzgan is far from stable, but historically it has responded to changes in market conditions and to the availability of different bargaining chips. Although a certain structural continuity can be observed with regard to the importance of landed elite and *jihadi* leaders, new leaders are certainly able to access the marketplaces if the environment enables this. During the Afghan wars *jihadi* leaders were able to compete for power and status, alongside members of the landed elite for power and status; similarly, more recently younger actors such as Daoud Khan and especially Matiullah Khan were able to gain influence and prominence thanks to, among other things, international support and finance. This does raise the question of why sub-national governance programmes that are part of the extensive funding and international efforts to strengthen Afghanistan's government have not yet borne fruit. Are nine years (four years for the Dutch efforts in Uruzgan) simply too short to establish a functioning civil service culture in Afghanistan, or have international actors failed to understand what kind of programmes (or behaviour) are able to influence the (monetized) political marketplace that prevails in Uruzgan? From an analysis of who is considered a key actor in Uruzgan as well as insights gained from examining the performance of some sub-national governance programmes, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

First, international actors have tried to use financial incentives to influence what they see as a monetized political marketplace where political loyalties are for sale. This, however, can only work if the stakes are high enough to interest actors who already have several other income sources to draw on. The bottom line is, the political marketplace in Uruzgan is probably saturated to a degree that minor performance-based incentives to improve governance are unlikely to work as long as certain actors can make bigger gains from security contracts and/or collaboration with international military actors, not to mention the syphoning off of international development funds and illicit activities.

A 'less is more' approach⁸³ might therefore be worth pursuing. This is probably why the NSP programme was the only sub-national reform to receive relatively good marks, as it might simply be too small to be attractive for interference by strongmen. This suggests that a grassroots-level, bottom-up approach may do least harm in a politicized context such as Uruzgan and may ultimately be more effective than public administration reforms at the provincial level.

International actors could also consider the 'withdrawal' of funding sources and other forms of support as a better incentive than continually 'upping the ante'. For example, it would be possible to regard the provision of security for the Kandahar–Uruzgan road by Matiullah Khan as being part and parcel of his police portfolio rather than paying him extra for every convoy. The idea after all is to strengthen government institutions and not individual actors.

If international actors understood their influence on the political marketplace, where they can enhance the influence of some local actors (Matiullah Khan, and also that of Daoud Khan, even if only for a short time just as much as they can diminish that of others (the 'fall' of Daoud Khan and the exclusion of many Ghilzai leaders), they might also consider using more 'sticks' alongside 'carrots' and hold the people they work with to maintaining certain agreed standards, such as good governance.

Second, international actors may also need to continue providing some impartiality through their own engagement, as otherwise local strongmen may feel little inspired to take the necessary steps towards achieving better governance in the province. Here it might be worth continuing and possibly even increasing the even-handed Dutch engagement approach by ensuring that one's resources (and risks) are spread across several key actors, rather than picking one whom one considers 'the winner' and 'who might get things done'.

As a way of countering possible negative repercussions it was frequently suggested in interviews that a special council for key actors should be created, and that they should be given some sort of advisory and/or conflict resolution role.⁸⁴ The idea of such a consultative group for all key actors (or at a minimum, a core group) might not be a bad one, especially as it would enable international actors to engage with all actors together rather than dealing bilaterally with individual ones.

Third, this may only work if international actors begin to work towards one goal, rather than continuing to work in ways that are incompatible with each other. Over the past few years, political and development actors have tried to promote good governance while military actors were only too happy to work with whoever was able and willing to join with them in their fight against the insurgency.

⁸³ I am borrowing here from my colleague and friend Astri Suhrke, who has argued this elsewhere.

⁸⁴ Employee, Afghan National Security Forces in Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010; Adviser in Governor's Compound, Tirin Kot, 10 February 2010; Tribal Elder with *jihad* background, Tirin Kot, 13 February 2010; owner of a private clinic, Tirin Kot bazaar, Tirin Kot, 18 February 2010.

This has meant continuing support for strongmen outside Afghan government structures, with access to guns and at times questionable governance records, but who ‘got things done’.

Most respondents expressed frustration at this ongoing rule by people with guns, and disappointment that both the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups programme (DIAG) in Uruzgan had failed to disarm strongmen’s militia. The new idea of supporting local defence initiatives in order to step up the fight against the Taliban unfortunately results in providing more arms to strongmen rather than taking them away; certainly the opposite of what international efforts to build up strong Afghan National Security Forces are aiming at.

Fourth, international actors need to accept that a government, as in the Western understanding of the word, does not (yet) exist; therefore, Western-style, merit-based sub-national governance programmes make little sense. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that most interviewees expressed support, at least in theory, for merit-based, impartial and accountable government. So far, however, the Afghan government has not managed to capitalize on these popular norms and values. Furthermore, the call for such a system tends to be more loudly voiced by members of the less powerful tribes – hence those currently losing out – while those in power are usually quite happy with the status quo.

Thus, we can only echo the recommendation of Dutch Afghanistan analyst Martine van Bijlert that international actors abandon ideal types of governance and “stop acting as if they are dealing with already de-personalised government institutions, where the adoption of policies and procedures will automatically lead to the intended changes in behaviour and corporate culture” (Van Bijlert 2009, p.21). As long as individual actors use government positions to enhance their own power rather than supporting governance, cooptation is difficult; and unless President Karzai and IDLG begin to acknowledge, and act upon, “what his friends and officials are allowed to get away with” (van Bijlert 2010), continuing to support performance-based sub-national governance programmes is a fruitless activity, and simply a waste of money.

More creative thinking might be needed on what could work in such a personalized patronage system. One could, for example, ‘learn’ from the Taliban’s public shaming of non-conformers and consider that public praise for good performance could go a long way in a society where social pressure still works. For example, district governors could hold monthly meetings with community leaders where they nominate a good government bureaucrat, or a good police officer, who then is honoured in a public ceremony. Public shaming might also work, as in the traditional community-based tribal police – the *arbakai* – that exists in south-eastern Afghanistan, where policemen who prey on the community either have their house burnt down or are expelled, together with their family (Schmeidl and Karokhail 2009). It might be worth exploring other, equally strong disincentives to bad behaviour. As long as such programmes are run at a village or district-level it is unlikely that strongmen would bother to interfere, as it might

simply be too tedious to do so. This would also bring government a bit closer to the people it is supposed to serve and might encourage a sense of ownership.

The idea to increase government accountability through the creation of a new monitoring shura is unlikely to work in Uruzgan, however, as it may simply create another body into which international funds could vanish. Furthermore, a problem in Afghanistan has been the continual developing of new programmes rather than trying to improve existing ones. According to the recommendations of respondents it would be best to work with, and build the capacity of, the Provincial Council in Uruzgan. Particular heed should be paid to what came out of interviews with women, which was that elected bodies with quotas as prescribed by the Afghan constitution allow for women's participation without any need for lobbying.

The ultimate quandary, however, concerns whether it is possible to focus on strengthening good governance in a context where insecurity prevails. This, of course, is the key reason why international military actors continue to engage with the likes of Matiullah Khan who excel in the area of security provision. Several respondents, perhaps somewhat cynically, recommended granting Matiullah Khan his wish to become Chief of Police (CoP) in Uruzgan, as at least it would bring his security-providing activities into line with the state's monopoly over the use of force. "If MK obtains the post of CoP then security could be enforced in the province."⁸⁵ This could create an enabling environment for the improvement of governance, if Matiullah could be persuaded to refrain from predatory behaviour and try to accept a status built on the legal-rational authority that comes with a government position as in Weber's ideal typology.

For this to happen, though, the rules of the political marketplace in Uruzgan would have to change drastically, as an adviser in the governor's compound argued: "His [Matiullah's] tribe supports him because he has authority. If he gets deprived of his authority, his tribe would not support him any more because he is a tyrant, uneducated and does not have a good record from his fathers [lacks background of elite family]."⁸⁶

The million dollar question here – and I am afraid this report has failed to provide a clear answer – is whether international actors can change their own engagement to the extent that they are able to alter the rules of Uruzgan's political marketplace, even if only slightly. Ultimately, however, it may boil down to whether or not Matiullah could be content with being no longer the 'King of Uruzgan', but just a government servant. This might be for the next generation to decide, and until then, international actors should try to do as little harm as possible.

⁸⁵ Employee, Afghan National Security Forces in Uruzgan, Tirin Kot, 9 February 2010.

⁸⁶ Adviser in Governor's Compound, Tirin Kot, 10 February 2010.

Appendix I: Overview of ethnic/tribal composition of Uruzgan's districts

District	Zirak Durrani	Panjpai Durrani	Ghilzai	Other
Tirin Kot (90,000)	Popalzai (20%) Achekezai (10%) Barakzai (15%) Mohammadzai (5%) Alkozai (2%)	Alizai (2%) Nurzai (1%)	Hotak (20%) Tokhi (10%) Suliman Khail (5%) Other Ghilzai (8%)	Sayed, Quraish, Hazara (2%)
Deh Rawud (78,750)	Popalzai (15%) Achekezai (2%) Barakzai (5%) Alkozai (5%) Mohammadzai (2%)	Nurzai (30%) Khogiani (7%) Alizai (1%) Ishaqzai (1%)		Kakar (2%) Babozai (30%)
Chora (72,000)	Achekezai (71%) Barakzai (26%)			Ghilzai, Sayed (3%)
Chenartu (30,000)	Popalzai (75%) Achekezai (11%) Barakzai (6%) Alkozai (1%)	Nurzai (2%) Ishaqzai (1%)	Taraki (3%) Hotak (1%)	
Char China⁸⁷ (84,000)	Achekezai (16%)	Nurzai (70%)		
Gizab (59,000)	Achekezai (78%)		Tokhi (1%)	Hazara (21%)
Khas Uruzgan (80,000)	Achekezai (60%) Barakzai (8%) Popalzai (1%)			Pashtun Wardak (2%) Non-Pashtun Hazara (27%), Tajik (1%), Sayed (1%)
Total	57.5%	18.5%	9%	Hazara (8%) Other Pashtun (6%) Other (1%)

⁸⁷ This province used to be called Shahidi Hassas, and currently both names are used interchangeably. The name Char China literally means four streams.

Appendix II: Overview of key actors in Uruzgan

Tribe	Size	Key leaders	District (origin)	Inherited leadership	Achieved leadership	Official position
Achekzai (Zirak Durrani)	35%	Malem Abdul Khaleq	Chora	Traditional landowning tribal elite family with influence among all Achekzai in Uruzgan	Provided logistic and financial assistance to the <i>mujahideen</i> ; some say he was a commander, others that he did not have a (prominent) military role	Member of Parliament since 2005, running again in 2010
		Haji Niamatullah Khan	Gizab	Wealthy landed elite family, head of all Achekzai in Gizab	Commander during the <i>jihad</i> and assisted the <i>mujahideen</i>	
		Haji Naqibullah Khan	Khas Uruzgan	Famous landed elite family; father Abdul Kuduz was the DG of Khas Uruzgan	Possibly father, he was too young to participate in <i>jihad</i>	
Nurzai (Panjpai Durrani)	17.5%	Haji Ghulam Hayder Khan	Char Chinno	Main Nurzai leader from Chari Chinno; inherited leadership	Famous <i>jihadi</i> commander with <i>Ittehad</i>	First District governor of Deh Rawud in current government (2002–03); currently running for parliament (2010) Son Haji Naeem, CoP in Char Chinno in 2005, was recently elected to the Provincial Council

Popalzai (Zirak Durrani)	10.5%	Jan Mohammad Khan	Tirin Kot		Rose to power as a former <i>jihadi</i> commander with history of switching factions (<i>Harakat, Ittehad, Jabha</i>)	Second provincial governor of Uruzgan (2003 to 2006) Presidential Adviser to President Karzai
		Matiullah Khan	Tirin Kot		Rose to fame in the current government under the tutelage of his uncle JMK, but also fought with Karzai against Taliban in 2001	Initially Commander of the Afghan Highway Police that was transformed into the Operational Police or <i>Kandak-e Amniyat-e Uruzgan</i> , which in theory is under the ANA command
		Malem Rahmatullah	Tirin Kot, Khaneqa	Elder of the Ayubzai sub-tribe in Uruzgan who inherited his leadership, famous for his hospitality	Rose to power as a commander with <i>Hizb-e Islami</i> Khales faction of (HIK)	First governor of Uruzgan post-2001 (2002) Previous Head of and current adviser to the Department of Education Has aspiration to become PG of Uruzgan once again
Barakzai (Zirak Durrani)	9%	Shah Mohammad	Chora	Inherited leadership from brother of the late Rozi Khan (former CoP of Uruzgan and DG of Chora)	Rose to power during <i>jihad</i> (Hizb-e Islami), currently poor reputation	
		Commander Akhtar Mohammad	Chora	Some say he has <i>pailuch</i> background. Literally this means barefooted. A kind of sub-culture of feared fighters that existed in southern Afghanistan until most of the fighters were killed during the wars	Rose to power during the <i>jihad</i> (Mahaz-e Melli)	DG of Char Chinno in 2004; aspires to become DG of Chora

		Haji Zaher Khan Mohammad	Tirin Kot	From a traditional leading tribal landed elite family (four generations) with an excellent reputation; but currently in decline	<i>Jihadi</i> figure (Ittehad)	
		Daoud Khan	Chora	Son of the late Rozi Khan (former CoP of Uruzgan and DG of Chora). Disagreement about whether family belongs to landed elite in Chora. He refers back to his grandfather Wakil Khudai Dat, while Barakzai rivals deny elite family background	Through becoming DG of Chora (father had <i>jihadi</i> background)	Previous DG of Chora (following his father's death, who took this position in 2007 and also served as CoP under JMK)
Hazara (non-Pashtun)	8%	Sahed Commander Etimadi	Gizab		Rose to power during <i>jihad</i> (Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami, then switched over to Hezb-e Seppa and enjoys support from Iran)	Currently running for parliament (2010) but for neighbouring province Daykundi, not Uruzgan.
Babozai	5%	Ghulam Nabi Khan	Deh Rawud	Unconditional backing of tribe	Commander with Hizb-e Islami Khales (HIK)	Now living in Helmand. Only key actor to have had links to important Taliban
Tokhi (Ghilzai)	2.5%	Mohammad Nabi Khan	Tirin Kot, Darafshan	From a traditional tribal elite family and has influence within his tribe/district, especially the Darafshan and Merabad area	One of the two main Ghilzai <i>jihadi</i> commanders in Uruzgan; he was affiliated with the Hizb-e Islami faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (HIG)	Headed the Arbakai supervision <i>shura</i> (2009). He has aspiration to become PG

Appendix III: Key actors in Deh Rawud District

Confed.	Tribe	Size	Name	Achieved leadership	Inherited leadership	Official position
Zirak Durrani	Popalzai	15%	Ahlullah			Deputy DCoP
	Popalzai		Ahmad Khan	Sub-commander ofJMK	yes, khan	Head of Development Shura; he is the ex-head of the District Shura where he was hired by JMK
	Popalzai		Haji Ahmad Khan		yes, khan	Head of the Development Shura; ex-head of the District Shura
	Popalzai		Haji Manan	<i>jihadi</i> commander		
	Popalzai		Haji Mohammad Naim	<i>jihadi</i> commander	no	Member of Tribal Shura
	Popalzai		Haji Zahir Aka		yes, khan	
	Popalzai		Ibrahim Akhundzada	Sub-commander ofJMK		Member (Head?) of Provincial Shura; Former DCoP
	Popalzai		Mullah Mohammad Anwar	<i>jihadi</i> commander (Haraka)	yes, khan	
	Popalzai		Mullah Shah Mohammad	Sub-commander ofJMK	yes, malik	
	Popalzai		Sher Mohammad	<i>jihadi</i> background	yes, khan	
	Alkozai	5%	Jan Mohammad	<i>jihadi</i> commander		Member of District Shura
	Alkozai		Malik Khudai Dost		yes, khan	
	Barakzai	5%	Abdul Halim Khan	Father was <i>jihadi</i> commander	yes, khan	He represents his tribe at the District Shura
Panjpai Durrani	Nurzai	30%	Haji Bismillah	<i>jihadi</i> background	yes, khan	
	Nurzai		Khan Mohammad		yes, malik	
	Nurzai		Malek Nazar Mohammad	<i>jihadi</i> background	yes	

Confed.	Tribe	Size	Name	Achieved leadership	Inherited leadership	Official position
	Nurzai		Malik Jilani	<i>jihadi</i> background	yes	Head of Malik Shura, membership District Shura
	Nurzai		Mohammad Akhbar	<i>jihadi</i> background	yes	Membership of the District Shura
	Nurzai		Mohammad Ekhlas		yes; replaced his brother as tribal elder	
	Sultanzai (Nurzai)		Omar Khan			DCoP
	Alizai		Haji Mir Hamza	<i>jihadi</i> commander	yes, khan	
OTHER	Babozai		Haji Malem Abdul Rahman	<i>jihadi</i> commander, later he joined and is still a member of Itihad-e Islami		Represents his tribe in the District Shura and Malik Shura
	Babozai		Lal Mohammad		no	Head of the District Shura
	Balolzai		Khalifa Sadat			DG
	Hotak		Amanullah Hotak		yes, but still very young	Head of the Provincial Shura; ex-member of Tribal Shura

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADA	Afghan Development Association
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCC	Afghanistan National Re-Construction Coordination
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces (ANA, ANP, National Directorate of Security)
CDC	Community Development Council, elected bodies through the NSP in charge of identifying and implementing community priorities
CF	Coalition Forces
CoP	Chief of Police
DG	District Governor
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups programme
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance responsible for coordinating sub-national governance policy and controlling the appointments process for most government offices below the national level
IMF	International Military Forces
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force – the NATO security mission in Afghanistan operating under UN mandate since December 2001
JMK	Jan Mohammad Khan, Popalzai strongman in Uruzgan, Provincial Governor 2002–06, currently presidential adviser
MK	Matiullah Khan, Popalzai strongman and nephew of JMK, Head of the <i>Kandak-e Amniyat-e Uruzgan</i> ⁸⁸
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MRRD	Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

⁸⁸ Formerly the Highway Police and now the Operational Police, which is technically under the command of the Chief of Police and lies within the Afghan National Police structure.

NSP	National Solidarity Programme of MRRD
PBGF	Performance Based Governors Fund
PC	Provincial Council
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team, a civil–military development unit intended to provide recovery assistance to their respective provinces, ideally in partnership with local government organizations
<i>shura</i>	customary council/committee
TLO	The Liaison Office
US	United States
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the UN-appointed office responsible for helping oversee UN assistance programmes in Afghanistan.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

References

Andres, Richard B, Craig Wills and Thomas E Griffith Jr, 2006, “Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model”, *International Security*, 30(3)

Anten, Louise, *Strengthening Governance in Afghanistan: Sub-national governance in Uruzgan Province*, Framing paper for project, Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, March 2010

Anten, Louise, *Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States*, Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, June 2009

Boege, Volker, Anna Brown, Kevin Clements and Anna Nolan, *On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of ‘Fragility’*, Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Dialogue No.8, October 2008

Brick, Jennifer, *The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan*, 2008, pp.17, 36

Brinkhoff, Derick W, “Rebuilding Governance in Failed States and Post-Conflict Societies: Core Concepts and cross-cutting themes”, *Public Administration and Development*, Vol.25, No.1, 2005

Cookman, Colin and Caroline Wadhams, *Governance in Afghanistan: Looking Ahead to What We Left behind*, Washington DC: Center for American Progress, May 2010, p.34; http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/CAP_GovernanceInAfghanistan_LookinGAheadToWhatWeLeaveBehind.pdf

De Waal, Alex, “Mission without end? Peacekeeping in the African political marketplace”, *International Affairs*, 85:1, 2009: pp.99-113

Fund for Peace, *The Failed State Index 2008*, Washington, DC: The Fund for Peace and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008; www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4350&page=0.

Hyland, Tom, “Our mate, the bloody warlord”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 2010; <http://www.smh.com.au/world/our-mate-the-bloody-warlord-20100807-11pd8.html>

Kelly, Jeremy, “Long road to Tarin Kowt,” *The Australian*, 28 April 2009; <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/long-road-to-tarin-kowt/story-e6frg6so-1225704435431>

McGeough, Paul, “Doing the bidding of organised crime”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 August 2009, quoting Dutch journalist Bette Dam

Nixon, Hamish, *The Changing Face of Local Governance: Community Development Councils in Afghanistan*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008

Oakes, Dan, "Military chief defends warlord ally", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 October 2010; <http://www.smh.com.au/world/military-chief-defends-warlord-ally-20101029-177iv.html>

Schmeidl, Susanne, "The Emperor's New Cloth: The Unravelling of Peacebuilding in Afghanistan", *Friedens-Warte – Journal of International Peace and Organizations*, 1-2(2007):69-86

Schmeidl, Susanne and Masood Karokhail, "The Role of Non-State Actors in 'Community-Based Policing' – An Exploration of the Arbakai (Tribal Police) in South-Eastern Afghanistan," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2009, Vol.30(2):318-342

The Liaison Office, *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006 to 2010*, A TLO socio-political assessment. Kabul: The Liaison Office, 2010

van Bijlert, Martine, *Between Discipline and Discretion: Policies Surrounding Senior Subnational Appointments*, Briefing Paper Series, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, May 2009

van Bijlert, Martine, "Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles: Taliban Networks in Uruzgan", in: Antonio Giustozzi (ed.) *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, London: Hurst & Company, 2009, 155-179, p.156

van Bijlert, Martine, "Afghanistan Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration", *Eurasia Review*, 4 February 2010, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/2010/02/31594-afghanistan-peace-reconciliation.html>

Wilder, Andrew and Sarah Lister, "State-building at the Subnational Level in Afghanistan: A Missed Opportunity," in: Wolfgang F. Danspeckgruber and Robert Finn (eds) *Building State and Security in Afghanistan*, Princeton: Princeton University, 2007, 85-102, p.88