

Session 5 : Islamism in Afghanistan

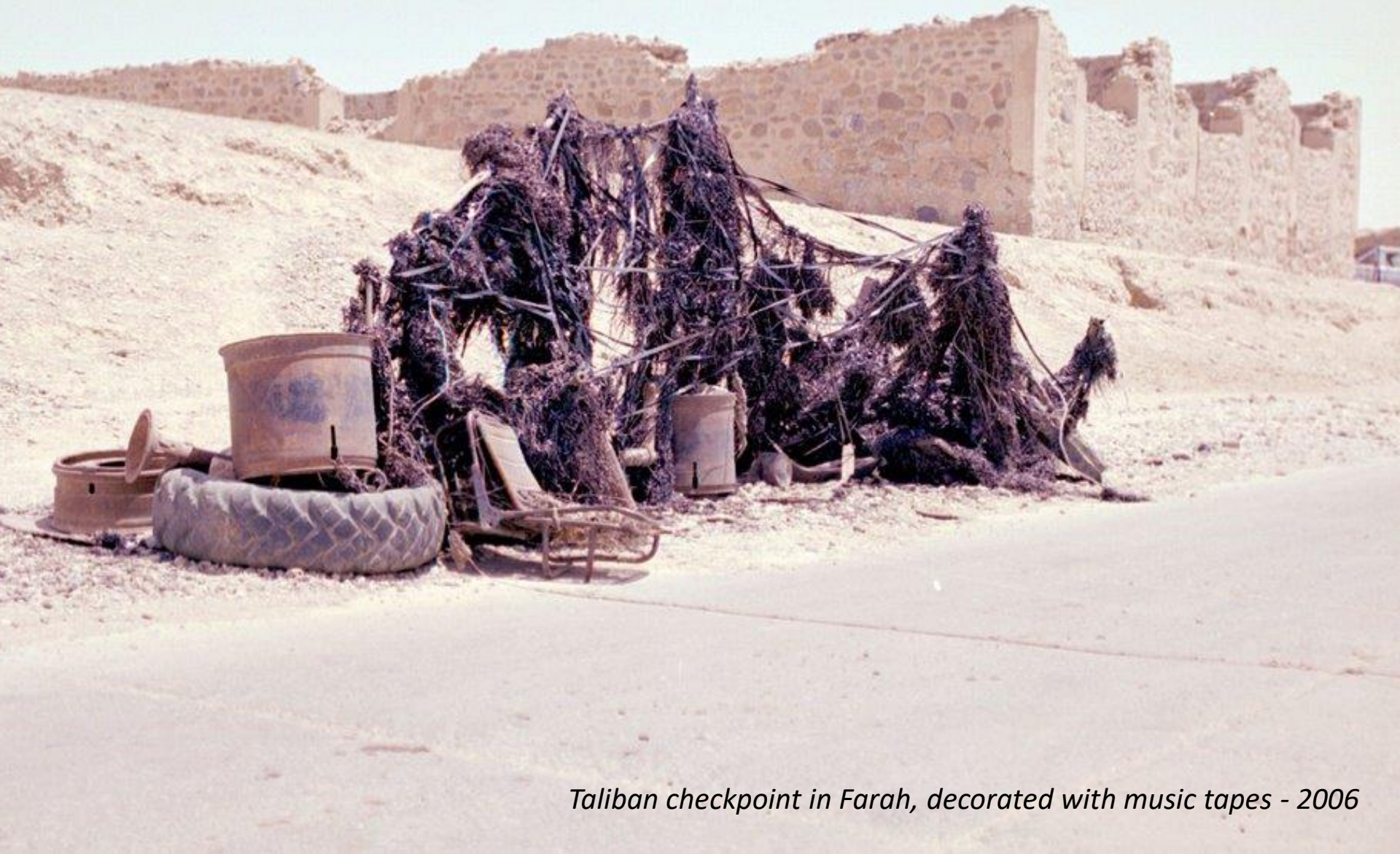
Sufism and orthodoxy in Afghanistan; differences between Muslim Brotherhood-type organizations and contemporary Salafists; evolution of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Required reading: **Faisal Devji: Landscapes of the Jihad, IB Tauris, 2005**

Recommended reading:

- Zaeef, Mollah Abdul Salam & Linschoten, Alex van : My Life with the Taliban, 2011
- Afghan Analysts Network: Afghanistan's New Generation of Islamic Activists, 2015 & Toward Fragmentation? Mapping the post-Omar Taleban, 2015
- Dorransoro, Gilles: Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present, CERJ, 2005

Interpretations of Islam



Taliban checkpoint in Farah, decorated with music tapes - 2006

Afghan 'Islamic' traditions



Sheikh Mati Shrine, Zabul. Sheikh Mati was born in Qalat in the 12th century. He was a noted religious scholar and Sufi poet. He wrote a book called *Da khudai Meena*, meaning “God’s Love”. People carry water with them when they visit his grave, to sanctify it and to use it as medicine.



Supposedly mentally ill person chained to the wall in Mia Baba shrine near Jalalabad, where he must survive 40 days on a diet of dry bread and black pepper to chase away the djinns inhabiting him... surrounded by his own trash, urine and faeces.

=> Danger of romanticizing traditional 'Islam'

Meaning of Sufism???

Malang

Sufism is starting to appear like a Western construct to oppose a humanistic, Western-friendly Islam to a perceived 'fundamentalist', hostile Islam. This perspective is almost wholly based on Persian poets (Rumi, Omar Khayyam, Hafez etc).

Historically, however, Sufism meant many different things; generally, an individually assumed spiritual quest – to impose true Islam on an unbelieving or deviated world.

In Afghanistan, three Sufi orders (*tariqas*) played an important historical role: the Naqshbandiyya, the Qadiriyya and the Chistiyya.

In this contemporary world, with internet penetration to the furthest rural districts of Afghanistan, it is hard to hold on to traditional beliefs. Even traditional justice, pronounced by elders, is adapting to current beliefs, for ex. about women's rights.

The relation with tradition makes 'Sufism' – traditional practices ascribed to Islam - unappealing to the new generation of political Islamists.

Decline in Sufism (but rise of neo-Sufism)

Contemporary Political Islam in Afghanistan

Borhan Osman

Non-violent anti-government Islamist groups growing among educated Afghan youth

- Hizb-u Tahrir – caliphate, secret infiltration of state, anti nation-state
- Jamiat-e Eslah – Afghan branch of Ikhwan / Jamaat-e Islami
- Hezb-e Islami – new generation of Gulbuddin’s 1970s party, similar ideas
- Salafists – varying political objectives, ranging from quietist thru Taliban to Daesh

Western analysts do not see these political developments because of obsession with security; any group that is not violent is not recognized. Stereotypes of ‘educated, pro-democracy Afghan’ vs ‘backward, fundamentalist Afghan’, i.e. democrats vs Taliban, preclude recognition of Islamist currents that may play a big role in the future.

Mobilization through mosques, education and demonstrations; social and trad. media

“None consider the Taliban’s previous Islamic Emirate regime as an example of a viable or desirable Islamic state”. These groups are being targeted neither by government, nor by the Taliban, allowing them to grow.


Genesis of groups – Hizb-ut Tahrir in the European diaspora (?), Jamiat-e Eslah as a reaction to tanzim failures in Peshawar in the 1990s, HIA to rekindle activism among HI families, and Salafism by Saudi proselytism in Pak and Eastern Afgh in the 1980-90s.

Salafism is gradually gaining legitimacy as Muslim orthodoxy in Afghanistan.

Political ideas of Islamists *(Borhan Osman)*

Afghan Islam suffers both from the historic dominance of local traditions, that warp true Islam, and the 'planned secularization' by the West and its puppet rulers. A recurrent theme is how most Muslims today are rewaji believers (based on local traditions, rather than faith) and need to become sho'aori (conscious).

Since all Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, are ruled by *kufri* (un-Islamic) systems, Muslims do not know what an Islamic polity and a true Muslim society would look like



disgraceful dealings!

A return to tawhid (unity of all aspects of life in religious faith, or monotheism) is needed

The need for dawa

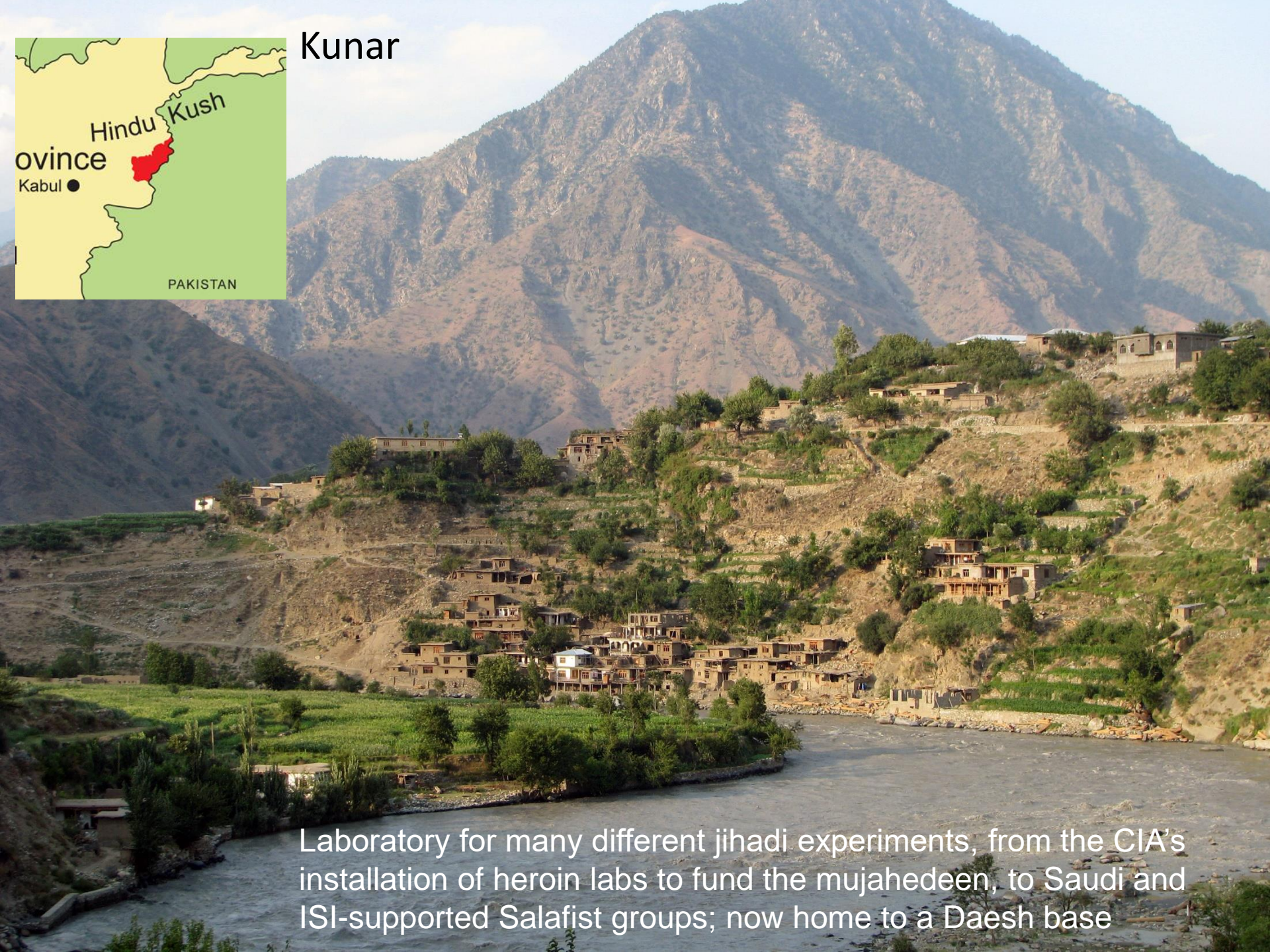
Hizb ut-Tahrir members focus overwhelmingly on the 'Western threat' that they say could strip Afghan society of its traditional Islamic values, while Salafists tend to emphasize the Shia and, by implication, Iranian threat. For Salafists and most Hezbi youth, the threat from the West was mainly seen as a 'cultural invasion,' a term most frequently used by Eslahi reformists.

NGOs, global media and their Afghan offshoots, and Western embassies and international orgs are seen as responsible for this cultural invasion.



The effects of Mohammed Morsi's eviction from power in 2013: clear that the international community's support to democracy is not serious (as with the cancelled victory of the FIS in Algeria, 1992). Also: lack of measures to address massive fraud in Afghan elections. This does not wholly discredit the principle of elections-based democracy, however. Counterexample: Turkey's AKP – victory through elections *is* possible

Kunar



Laboratory for many different jihadi experiments, from the CIA's installation of heroin labs to fund the mujahedeen, to Saudi and ISI-supported Salafist groups; now home to a Daesh base

The Taliban – Then & Now

**What do we know
about them?**



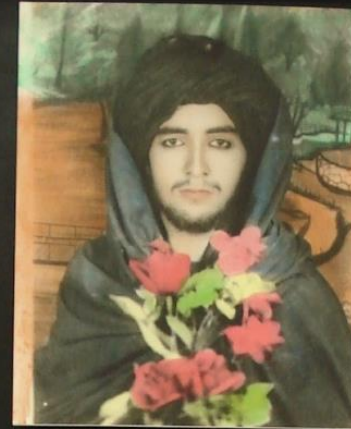


Who are the Taliban?

- Ethnically **Pashtuns**, with very few exceptions
- Background: mujahidin (senior) or madrassa students in the Pak refugee camp (juniors)
- Importance of **Deobandi** clerics, and in particular Dar ul Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak, Pakistan. *In this photo: rally of the Jamiat-Ulema Islamiyya (JUI) in Quetta*
- The Taliban follow the **Hanafi** school of Sunni jurisprudence (and are therefore not Salafis)
- Importance of the **Pashtunwali**, the Tribal Code of the Pashtuns: nang o namoos (honour and the protection of women). Other core values of Pashtunwali are Melmastia (hospitality), Nanawatai (asylum), Nyaw aw Badal (justice and revenge), Turah (bravery) in defending land, property, family (*zan, zar, zamin*), Sabat (loyalty), Khegarā/Shegarā (righteousness), Groh (faith), Pat, Wyaar aw Meṛaana (respect, pride and courage) and Hewaad (country)

Historical Facts – Origins 1994-96

- Ethical revolt against warlord abuse
- Supported by merchants, clerics e.a. to end the Afghan civil war
- ‘Strategic Depth’ support by Pakistan to bind and stabilize Afghanistan
- Initially supported by the West (UNOCAL) to end the civil war and unlock post-Soviet Central Asia
- Capture Kandahar in ‘94, Herat ‘95, Jalalabad & Kabul ‘96, Bamiyan & Mazar ‘97
- Northeast never captured



The Taliban in power 1996-2001

- **No end to the civil war; militarism**
 - **Factionalist & tribal/ethnic policies, hardening fractures in Afghan society; & brutality: massacres of Hazaras, Tajiks and Uzbeks**
 - **Suppression of women from the public domain: no work, no education, reduced access to health**
 - **Child-unfriendly: no rebuilding of schools, prohibiting play**
 - **Import foreign fundamentalism (vice & virtue police, actions against shrines)**
 - **No plan for reconstruction, drought & sanctions, interdiction of poppy => economy stays in a ruin**
 - **Isolation, sanctions, no international support: pariah state (only recognition by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia & UAE)**
- ⇒ **The Taliban lose all legitimacy and are easily swept from power in 2001**

The neo-Taliban 2002-2015



- Uncompromising insurgency against gvt & its foreign supporters
- Swarm structure to make counterinsurgency difficult
- Governance (justice, security, even education & development) in conquered areas to gain legitimacy > government
- Aspects of Pashto regionalism, Afghan nationalism and international jihad
- Use of media for propaganda or participation in debate
- Economy of the Taliban; agriculture, smuggling, narcotics, local support
- Targeted killings of Taliban leaders by US lead to the emergence of more radical leaders

Relations Taliban-Al Qaeda

- **Until 1995: Rivalry**
- **1995-1998 : Tactical alliance**
- **1998-2001 : Strategic alliance**
- **2001+ : Commonality of interests but also increasing tensions**
- **From the early 2000s onwards AQ loses influence in Afghanistan – now focused in Yemen**

Taliban governance

“Outgoverning” a competitor should not be misunderstood as an alternative rendering of “winning hearts and minds.” Governing is not just about offering better services to the public; it is also about the efficient and effective utilization of coercion, a basic ingredient of the art of government.

- Example of justice: only works with coercion (not ‘hearts and minds’)



Listening to citizen’s demands and toning down ideology

- Education: first, Taliban burnt government schools, then allowed private schools to open, and since 2008 are bringing state-schools under their supervision – negotiating with MoE
- Development: Cooperating with NGOs; vetting projects, intimidating non-compliant NGOs, taxing them, imposing personnel

Taleban shadow government in Chahar Dara (Kunduz)

- Chahar Dara has the most-advanced administration, consisting of 'Kamissyuns' – a linguistic relic of the years of Soviet occupation – for military, justice, education, taxation and health affairs.
- Most interesting is the education commission, where Taleban and governmental structures overlap. Since late 2009, Mullah Naim (who left for Pakistan in autumn 2010), a director of a Minibus company under the old Taleban government, was its head. He reportedly monitored the schools in the district constantly. Teachers who did not show up in time were warned not to neglect their duties. Students who did not attend lessons for three days were visited at home. The governmental curricula had not been changed so far. English, chemistry and biology were still taught. Some NGOs, like the Swedish Committee, were permitted to visit the schools they supported. However, all this applies to boys' schools only; girls' schools have been closed since the Taleban took over.¹⁶⁰
- The health commission, consisting of elders and commanders, gives some protection to health workers and doctors against accusations that they are government employees. A functioning health infrastructure provides the Taleban with means to treat their own wounded.¹⁶¹ Remarkably, both teachers and medical personnel paid by the Afghan government or NGOs are accepted and integrated into these structures. This contradicts the widespread Taleban credo that they do not permit any Afghan to work for the Afghan government.
- The government has neither improved services nor tried to regain territory and hegemony. Government authorities did not resist the closure of girls' schools and the enforced nightly shutdown of mobile phone networks.

IS (Daesh) vs Taliban in Afgh & Pak

Source: Jane's Terrorism & Insurgency Monitor, ihs.com, Jan 2015

- Pressure of the army and opportunity in Syria: many TTP fighters went to Syria and are now coming back. Objective = Afghanistan
- IS has announced the creation of the wilayet of Khorassan. The leader appointed is the TTP (Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan) commander Hafez Said Khan, who is now head of the new Tehrik-e Khilafat, a splinter from the TTP after the death of Mehsud. The inhabitants of Khorassan have been asked to pledge allegiance to the IS Amir al Muminin, Al Baghdadi

⇒ Challenge to Taliban? And/or to AQ? Amir al Muminin = Mollah Omar

The Tehreek-e Khilafat has relations with Taliban shuras in Peshawar and Miranshah (not with Quetta) so obviously cordial relations also exist.

⇒ Generational difference (AQ = previous generation)?

it was mainly volunteers coming from the TTP who turned out to be the most attracted by the idea of setting up a branch of the Islamic State in Pakistan, according to the former TTP commander who joined the TeK. He told IHS Jane's , "I joined Daesh [the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State] because it is a most powerful network in the world; there are the Muslims of every country in this network, including countries in Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. We want this network to have representatives in the entire world..."