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**Islamists, Leftists – and
a Void in the Center.
Afghanistan's Political Parties and
where they come from (1902-2006)**

Thomas Ruttig

Preface

With his new publication Thomas Ruttig presents us with a piece of work that is truly remarkable and unique in various regards. It is far more than a mere enumeration and characterization of political parties in Afghanistan, but rather an abstract of Afghan history with a particular focus on the development of organised political movements.

The reader is taken on a journey starting out in the early days of the last century when small groups of independent political thinkers in Afghanistan, for the first time, set about agreeing on political aims and adopting a common political agenda. Thomas Ruttig, who has been working on Afghanistan for more than 25 years, analyses the stream of political groupings and parties, neatly intertwining it with political events and developments in the course of the decades. Using his knowledge of both Dari and Pashto, the author also introduces us to the emerging Afghan literature on this subject. Thus, he provides the reader with a deep and detailed insight into prevailing structures and determinants of political life in Afghanistan. Furthermore, his paper makes us aware that the history of an Afghanistan striving for political pluralism and democracy does certainly not begin only after the fall of the Taliban regime five years ago. This should broaden our knowledge of potential partners, who still are too often overlooked, in our common effort to build a peaceful Afghanistan.

Thomas Ruttig's profound knowledge of this country is necessary in order for the reader not to get lost amidst a political landscape that too often is confusing, for veteran and as well as new observers of Afghanistan. During his time as Political Counsellor at the German Embassy in Kabul, Thomas Ruttig provided the German government and the international community with valuable advice on many occasions. I am grateful to him and to the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation for writing and publishing this essay, thus allowing all those interested in the further development of Afghanistan to once again tap into his vast expertise.

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INTRODUCTION

Contrary to conventional wisdom, there are political parties in Afghanistan. Not yet in a Western sense, of course: most lack cohesion and structure, a distinguishable programme, and internal democracy. Many are extremely hierarchical or even authoritarian, often organised along ethnic lines. Parties in Germany must have appeared like this in the 1860s.¹ One could say that most Afghan parties are still in the making, or proto-parties. We do not know which ones will survive. A number of parties, though, have already shown remarkable stability over decades.

All this is not surprising: Except for a few years of a relatively open political environment at the turn of the 1940-50s and under the 1964 constitution, during the last years of Najibullah government, and after the fall of the Taleban in 2001, there has never been much time for political forces to come into the open, organise, build links with the population and start a civilised debate about the direction the country should go.

The first attempts to organise politically occurred more than 100 years ago during the first constitutionalist movement (1903-09) or *mashrutiāt*, as it is called by Afghans. The eminent Afghan historian Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar already called their circles ‘parties’ – *hezb* in Dari or *gund* in Pashto – even though it is unlikely that these groups used this term themselves.²

There are other terms, too: *harakat*, *tehrīk*, *nohzat*, *jombesh*, *ghurdzang* – all standing for ‘movement’ in the various Afghan languages or in loaned Arabic: *jabha* and *mahaz* for ‘front’; *tanzīm*, *sazman* or *kanun* for ‘organisation’; *jam’iat* for ‘society’, *majmu’a* for ‘association’; *groh* or *grup* for ‘group’; in the 60s, prior to the political parties law, some political groupings preferred the word *jerian*, for ‘current’.

After the first *mashrutiāt*, there was political distinction only between conservatives, interested in maintaining the status quo, and constitutionalists. In the second half of the last century, these political forces diversified. Three main political currents emerged that continue to exist until today: the political-religious (Islamic) current, the communist Left (sub-divided into – formerly

¹ In Germany, e.g., the first political parties consisted of ‘loose local groups’ that communicated personally with each other because ‘relatively few people [were] involved’. See: Oskar Niedermayer, ‘Parties and the Party System: Pluralisation and Functional Change within Limits’, In: Ludger Helms (ed.): *Institutions and Institutional Change in the Federal Republic of Germany*, London, pp. 169.

² He gives its name as *Jam’iat-e Sirri-ye Melli*, or ‘Secret National Society’. Mir Ghulam Muhammad Ghubar, *Afghanistan dar masir-e tarikh*, Kabul 1346 (1967), p. 717. For a general account on the *mashrutiāt* see: Ghubar, *op.cit.*, pp. 716ff; Abdul Hai Habibi, *Jombesh-e mashrutiāt dar Afghanistan*, Kabul, 1363 (1974); Mir Muhammad Seddiq Farhang, *Afghanistan dar panj qarn-e akhir*, 3 vol., [Kabul] n.d., vol. 2, pp. 463ff.; S.S. Hashemi, *Afghanistan-e mu’aser*, Kabul 1359 (1980); Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, Stanford, 1968. Ghubar himself as a young man was involved in the second constitutional movement. Habibi was active during the first democratic period’ in the 1940-50s.

- pro- and anti-Moscow groups), and a variety of ethno-nationalists.³ The first current was mainly represented in the 1980s by the Sunni Mujahedin *tanzim* based in Pakistan, the ‘Peshawar Seven’, and the Shia Mujahedin groups based in Iran, the ‘Tehran Eight’. The second current mainly consisted of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), with its two major factions *Khalq* and *Parcham*, and the ‘Maoist’ groups that emerged from the *demokratik-e newin*, or ‘new democracy’, commonly referred to as *shola’i*. For the third current, there are mainly *Afghan Millat* with at least three different factions on the Pashtun(ist) side and *Settam-e Melli* on the Tajik side, with some Uzbek and Turkmen elements, and currently *Sazman-e Inqilabi-ye Zahmatkashan-e Afghanistan (SAZA)*, or ‘Revolutionary Organisation of Afghanistan’s Toilers’ and the new *Hezb-e Kangara-ye Melli*, or ‘National Congress Party’. There is no current Hazara equivalent to them since *Hezb-e Wahdat* has absorbed the Hazara demand for religious, political and judicial equality.

By mid-October 2006, there were 81 ‘hezbs’ (to be precise it should be called *ahzab* or, in Pashto, *gunduna*) registered.⁴ Some 10 to 15 other applications are still being processed, others have decided not to get registered after the de facto exclusion of political parties from the 2005 parliamentary elections.

While many Afghans criticize the ‘mushrooming’ of political parties⁵, it should not be ignored that this is normal in times of transition.⁶ There is also the misperception, mainly amongst foreigners, that the political party system in Afghanistan is a post-Taleban development and that most parties have been founded just for acquiring funds, and are nothing more than NGOs in political disguise.⁷ This might be true in some cases. But with regard to many, and the more important of them, this is an unfair and incorrect assessment. Even many Afghans seem to have forgotten that political organisations look back to a long history in their country. Although there

³ Isma’il Akbar categorises them slightly differently into ‘1) the political-religious movements, 2) the leftist movement or communist groups, 3) the ethnic, *mazhabi* (sectarian) and local groups, raising the ‘national question’, plus the democratic movement. Daftar-e mutale’at-e siyasi “Rah-e ayenda” (ed.) [Muhammad Ismail Akbar], *Rah-e ayenda*, n.d. [Kabul 2006], p. 1.

⁴ www.moj.gov.af/dari/list_political_parties.htm. The list is not available in English. The Dari version, however, provides links to the programmes of most of the parties. A printed collection of their documents is also available: Wezarat-e ‘Adlia-ye Jumhuri-ye Afghanistan (ed.), *Ahزاب-e siyasi-ye Afghanistan*, Kabul, 1384 (2005).

⁵ During the workshop ‘Political Party Consolidation vs. Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) System’ held with party representatives and MPs by the German Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation on 20-21 Sept 2006 in Kabul most participants spoke against the – as they saw it – unnecessarily high number of political parties in Afghanistan.

⁶ This could also be observed in Eastern European countries after 1989. Even in stable democracies there are many more parties than those in parliament. In Germany, there were 34 parties and lists that participated in the 2005 Bundestag elections on the federal level alone. See <http://www.parteien-online.de/>. In 2006, the German Bundeswahlleiter (Federal Head Election Officer) registered 107 political parties and lists in his ‘address list of parties and political associations’. See:

<http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahl2005/downloads/anschriftenverzeichnisparteien.pdf>.

The Directory of U.S. Political Parties lists 51 parties. See: <http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm>.

⁷ See for example: Rassoul Rahim, *The democracy movement in Afghanistan – fragmented and in lack of funds*. A political analysis by Rassoul Rahim, journalist for Deutsche Welle, [Kabul], n.d., p. 2.

is some literature on the issue,⁸ this paper attempts to take a more systematic overview at where today's political parties in Afghanistan come from and where they stand - showing a continuity of political ideas and organisation in Afghanistan's recent history and arguing that parties have a legitimate role to play in the country's political system.⁹

The constitutionalist movements

The first constitutionalists, or *mashruta-khwahan*,¹⁰ were striving to replace the absolute monarchy with a constitutional one. They were no more than small circles inside and outside the Royal court¹¹, mainly 'liberal and reformist ulema'.¹² Definitely, they did not constitute political parties. It is more accurate to speak, as Mesbahzada does, about the beginning of 'jerianha-ye fikri wa siasi' (thought and political currents).¹³ These groups were brutally suppressed in 1909 and seven of their leaders executed¹⁴. From 1911 onwards, a new generation of *mashruta-khwahan* took up their banner. Led by the Ottoman-educated Mahmud Tarzi, who became King Amanullah's (r. 1919-29) Foreign Minister, they helped to trigger the King's reforms. This group was known as *Afghanan-e Jawan*, or 'Young Afghans'.¹⁵

⁸ Afghan sources are mainly reference books without much of an assessment of the listed groups. See for example: Al-Hajj Muhammad Amin Forutan, *Gam be gam nohzat-e islami wa inqilabi-ye Afghanistan*, [Kabul] 1370 (1991); Seyyed Muhammad Baqer Mesbahzada, *Aghaz wa farjam-e jombeshha-ye siasi dar Afghanistan*, Kabul 1384 (2005) – but already written (and not updated) in 1379 (2000); Taqi Wahedi, 'Diruz wa imruz-e ahzab-e Afghani', In: *Khat-e sewum* (Meshhed), no. 2-3 (spring/summer 1382=2003), pp. 94-106. Also see: S. Fida Yunas, *Afghanistan: political parties, groups, movements and mujahidin alliances and governments (1978-1997)*, Peshawar, n.d. The major Western sources are: Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, London and New York, 1986; Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, Oxford and New York, 2000; Gilles Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to the Present*, London 2005. On recent developments see: International Crisis Group, *Political Parties in Afghanistan*, Asia Briefing No 39, Kabul/Brussels, 2 June 2005; Kit Spence, *Political Party Assessment Afghanistan*, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, [Kabul], Spring 2006.

⁹ It does not deal with the Taliban Movement, though. On this issue see: William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, London, 1988; Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994-1997*, Karachi 1999; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven, 2000.

¹⁰ Ghubar calls it 'democratic movement', *op. cit.*, p. 716.

¹¹ According to Ghubar and Habibi, they consisted of three circles: the Afghans gathered as so-called *Ikhwan-e Afghan*, or 'Afghan Brothers'; the Indian teachers at Habibia high school, called themselves *Jan-nesaran-e Islam*, or 'Those who sacrifice themselves for Islam', and then there was the Ghulam-bachagan group, sons of tribal elders living at the court. Habibi, *op. cit.*, pp. 23f ; Ghubar, *op. cit.*, pp. 717ff.

¹² Sher Zaman Taizi, *The Saur Revolution*, Peshawar, 1986, p. 5.

¹³ Mesbahzada, *op. cit.*, pp.2-3.

¹⁴ Some survived and worked later with Tarzi's newspaper, the renewed *Seraj ul-Akhbar*.

¹⁵ Habibi, *op. cit.*, pp. 153ff; Ghubar, *op. cit.*, pp. 723ff. Korgun claims that Amanullah even tried to establish a political party called *Istiqlal wa Tajaddud*, or 'Independence and Renewal', in 1928. See: V.G. Korgun, *Intelligenciya v politicheskoi zhizni Afganistana*, Moscow, 1982, pp. 37f.

The 'Parties' of the First Democratic Period: The Wesh Dzalmian movement

In the 1930s, the first generation of Pashtun intellectuals not linked to the royal aristocracy - a result of Amanullah's educational reforms - embarked on a movement to promote the Pashto language. This evolved into a reformist movement with broader aims in the late 1940s, also attracting non-Pashtun intellectuals. Some of its leaders were elected into parliament, created independent publications and organisations which they called 'party' for the first time – Afghan authors speak of the 'first democratic period'.¹⁶

In 1947, Pashtun *glitterati* launched a – still loosely structured - movement called *Wesh Dzalmian*, or 'Awakened Youth', after its manifesto *Wesh Dzalmian ghwaru*, or 'We want an Awake Youth', drafted and published by the Pashtun poet Abdurra'uf Benawa.¹⁷ A year later in Kabul, on 7 Jauza 1327 (27 May 1948), 22 young writers from Kandahar, Nangarhar and Kabul, turned it into a political organisation with a programme, regular meetings and membership, that advocated a constitutional monarchy, the separation of powers, free elections and civil liberties. However, there were no elected leaders.¹⁸ At this point, some 100 people were active in subgroups in Jalalabad, Kandahar and Farah. At the same time, groups around Ghubar and Mir Muhammad Seddiq Farhang, mainly urban Tajiks, as well as Dr. Abdulrahman Mahmudi's group, mainly Shiite, had already left the *Wesh Dzalmian*. They criticized the pro-government tone in Benawa's manifesto. From these various tendencies, the first political parties – better labelled 'party nuclei' (Wahedi) or 'proto-parties' (Boyko)¹⁹ – in Afghan history emerged. But the initially multi-ethnic movement had, over political issues, split along ethnic lines, a major fault-line that would continue to haunt the Afghan reformist movement.

The first party to be formed was the *Wesh Dzalmian* party, set up by the younger and more radical Pashtuns, on 27 Mizan 1329 (18 Oct. 1950).²⁰ Its programme concentrated on Pashtun issues again - the language and Pashtunistan - and emphasised the 'cooperation (...) with the

¹⁶ Zaher Tanin, *Afghanistan dar qarn-e bistum, 1900-1996*, Tehran 1383 (2004), p. 86ff. Wahedi, in order to point out the continuity, calls it the third *mashrutiat*. *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁷ Abdurra'uf Benawa, 'Wesh Dzalmian ghwaru', *Kabul* no. 13/1326 (1947), 2nd cover page. This manifesto was developed on the basis of articles by 44 authors, among them four women, printed in *Kabul* earlier the same year (nos. 211-212, 1326, ed. by the *Pashto Tolena*), and gave the movement its name. See: Thomas Ruttig, *Zur Bedeutung der bürgerlichen Oppositionsbewegung der 50er Jahre unseres Jahrhunderts für die Formierung progressiver politischer Kräfte in Afghanistan*, Diplomarbeit, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 1985 pp. 46ff; Muhammad Alam Batsarkai, *Wesh Dzalmian: De Afghanistan yau siasi tahrik (1325-1350)*, [Netherlands], 1379 (2000).

¹⁸ Muhammad Wali Dzalmi, *Milli Mubarize*, Kabul 1382 (2003), p.268ff.

¹⁹ Wahedi, *op. cit.*, p. 97; Vladimir Boyko, 'The Origins of Political Parties in Contemporary Afghanistan in the Light of New Archival Data', *Central Asia Journal* No. 46 (Summer 2000), p. 196.

²⁰ Batsarkai claims that the party had already been founded on 27 Assad 1328 (17 Aug 1949). *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

national government'.²¹ It was actively recruiting new members and reached a membership of 816 in nine cities by 1951.²² In Jaddi 1329 (Dec 1950/Jan 1951), it was followed by *Hezb-e Watan*, or 'Fatherland Party', led by Ghubar and, in early 1951, by *Hezb-e Khalq*, or 'People's Party', led by Dr. Mahmudi. Both raised pro-democratic slogans: a 'national government', free elections and the establishment of political parties; but *Hezb-e Khalq* had a somewhat more left-leaning agenda, adding 'social justice' and the 'fight against exploitation' to the demand for democratic rights.²³

Five *Wesh Dzalmian* leaders were elected to the parliament's lower chamber, the *Wolesi Jirga*, in 1949²⁴, after the new government opened up some political space by not interfering openly in the elections any more. For the first time, secret ballots were used.²⁵ Under the influence of events in neighbouring Iran, the five called themselves, after Mossadegh's alliance, *Jabha-ye Melli*, or the 'National Front'²⁶ - this was the first political faction ever in an Afghan parliament. It was joined by eleven other MPs, and between 30 and 40 MPs supported their reformist agenda.²⁷ Amongst its main achievements was a more liberal press law in January 1951 that opened the way for a handful of short-lived pro-reform periodicals that supported their agenda.²⁸ In Northern Afghanistan, *Ittehad wa Taraqi*, or 'Unity and Progress', a group that followed pan-Turkist ideas and mainly worked underground, also had representatives in the *Wolesi Jirga* and cooperated with *Jabha-ye Melli*.²⁹

The attempt to create political parties – in particular the publication of a first party programme in *Neda-ye Khalq* - led to the suppression of the movement and its newspaper. Both parties continued to work clandestinely – *Hezb-e Watan* for a further five years. The party dissolved

²¹ *De Wesh Zalmyano maramnama* (unpublished), Kabul, n.d. A German translation in: Ruttig, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, annex 3. Also see: Dzalmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 268ff.; Bacarkai, *op. cit.*, pp. 27ff.

²² Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Gardez, Mazar-e Sharif, Baghlan, Maimana, Pul-e Khumri and Herat. See: Boyko, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

²³ Ruttig, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72, 75ff.; Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, London 2004, p. 115.

²⁴ Ghubar and the Shiite medical doctor Abdulrahman Mahmudi, originally from a Hazara family in Jaghori (Ghazni province), in Kabul; Abdulhai Habibi in Kandahar; the Pashtun poet Gul Pacha Ulfat in the Eastern province and Muhammad Karim Nazihi in the Northern town of Andkhui. See: Ruttig, *op. cit.*, p. 57ff.

²⁵ Wahedi, *op. cit.*, p. 96; Rahim, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²⁶ Ghubar, 'Dar Shura-ye melli chi kardem?', *Watan* (Kabul), 19 Jaddi 1330 (8 Jan 1952).

²⁷ Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Princeton 1973, p. 494; G. Grassmuck, L.W. Adamec and F.H. Irwin, *Afghanistan: Some New Approaches*, Ann Arbor 1969, p. 153.

²⁸ *Angar*, or 'Ember', with Faiz Muhammad Angar as editor-in-chief; *Watan*, or 'Fatherland', with Ghubar as publisher and Farhang as editor-in-chief; *Neda-ye Khalq*, or 'People's Voice', with Mahmudi as publisher; and *Ulus*, or 'Nation', with Ulfat as publisher and Ali Muhammad Shinwari as editor-in-chief. Non had more than 1,500 copies. See: Ruttig, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-73; Dupree, *op. cit.*, p. 495; 'Me-guyand', *Watan* (Kabul), 9 Jauza 1330 (29 May 1951); Muhammad Kazem Ahang and Muhammad Z. Seddiq, *Matbu'ato ta yaua katena: De Afghanistan de matbu'ato de wradze pe wiar*, Kabul 1351 (1972); author's interviews in Kabul, 1983/84.

²⁹ Led by two brothers, the Faryab MP Muhammad Nazar Nawa and Abu-l-Khair Khairi, it is said to have later promoted the strategy of an armed uprising which would make it a predecessor of *Settam-e Melli*. The name is the same one used by the constitutionalist Young Turks movement that emerged around 1870 in the Ottoman Empire. This group has only recently been mentioned in the literature. See: "Rah-e ayenda" (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

when its leader Ghubar left prison,³⁰ perhaps as a precondition for his release. Even if reformist MPs had not been, in their own assessment, ‘completely successful’³¹, Ghubar wrote at the end of the legislative period that ‘the National Front (...) has honestly and courageously fulfilled its mandate until the last minute (...) in a spirit of reformism and reconciliation between the nation and the state (...). The ability of the nation to achieve a democratic government (...) has become obvious’.³²

The Parties of the 2nd Democratic Period (1963-73) and in the Daud Republic (1973-78)

This current reappeared - stronger, involving another new generation of politically more differentiated activists - during the ‘second democratic period’, after King Muhammad Zahir Shah had commissioned the 1964 Constitution. It was a top-down development, but it achieved practically what three generations of *mashruta-khwahan* had fought for. The formation of political parties was allowed - once a law regulating this would have been passed -, and a whole range of political groupings ‘in waiting’ emerged: leftist, moderate, conservative and Islamic. Most of them, as fifteen years earlier, crystallised around newly emerging independent publications.³³ But ultimately, the King shied away from signing the law when it had finally passed the parliament in 1968 after two years of deliberations.³⁴ Saikal calls this a ‘fatal mistake’³⁵, as the very leftists and Islamic radicals the King had wanted to stop continued to be active,, ultimately upsetting the political order.

The left was split into three major currents. First, a range of Marxist study circles, that had sprung up in the early 1960s as ‘first organised units’³⁶, merged into the *Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan*, or the ‘People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)’, on 1 January 1965, with Taraki heading its Central Committee and Karmal as his deputy. Because of the lack of a parties’ law, it did not call itself *hezb* publicly, but *Jerian-e Demokratik-e Khalq*, or the ‘People’s Democratic current’. In its documents, the party avoided any Marxist-Leninist terminology, but it ‘did not hide that its aim was the establishment of a socialist society’, as one of its co-founders, Karim Misaqlater claimed.³⁷ However, the PDPA never achieved internal

³⁰ Author’s interviews in Kabul, 1983/84.

³¹ ‘Nutq-e Agha-ye Sakhi Amin Khan wakil-e Dushi’, *Watan* (Kabul), 12 Jaddi 1330 (1 Jan 1952).

³² Ghubar, ‘Dar Shura-ye melli chi kardem?’, *Watan* (Kabul), 19 Jaddi 1330 (8 Jan 1952).

³³ For a list, see: Dupree, *op. cit.*, pp. 602-607.

³⁴ Rasuly, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-253.

³⁵ Saikal, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

³⁶ Tanin, *op. cit.*, p. 129, mentions three, one led by Ghubar. Bradsher, *op. cit.*, p. 3ff., lists five, the earliest started by Taraki as early as in 1956.

³⁷ Zahir Tanin, *op. cit.*, p. 131. In 1985, in a speech on the occasion of the PDPA’s 20th anniversary, Karmal called the PDPA ‘the new typus party of the proletariat and all working people of the country’ – a Leninist term – and its

unity and two of the former study circles re-emerged as its main factions, *Khalq* and *Parcham*, both named after its early periodicals. In August 1968, *Settam-e Melli*, or '[Against] National Oppression',³⁸ led by Taher Badakhshi, broke away because it considered the 'national question' more important than the 'class question'. *Settam-e Melli* mixed left-wing, nationalist rhetoric with a 'Maoist' approach, concentrating on rural mobilisation.

Secondly, there was *Jerian-e Demokratik-e Newin*, or the 'New Democratic Current', usually described as 'Maoist'.³⁹ Its members became known as *Shola'i*, after the name of its publication *Shola-ye Jawed*, or 'Eternal Flame', of which only 11 issues appeared in 1968. *Jerian-e Demokratik-e Newin* was founded by Abdulrahim and Abdulhadi Mahmudi, relatives of the late founder of *Hezb-e Khalq/Neda-ye Khalq*, Dr. Mahmudi, together with two Jaghori Hazara brothers, Akram and Seddiq Yari. In October 1965, this group established a clandestine organisation called *Sazman-e Jawanan-e Mutarraqi*, or the 'Progressive Youth Organization (PYO)', that never made its existence and name public, and finally ceased to exist in 1972.

Thirdly, there were a series of moderate leftists groups. One was led by the old constitutionalist Ghubar who had initially participated in the early preparations for the establishment of the PDPA, but withdrew before the party was officially founded. Another nameless group, led by Farhang, was described as social-democrat. It ceased to be active when the Political Parties Law remained unsigned.⁴⁰ The third party to emerge was called *Hezb-e Mutaraqi Demokrat-e Afghanistan*, or the 'Progressive Democrat Party of Afghanistan' –better known amongst Afghans under the name of its newspaper, *Mussawat*, or 'Equality' -, led by Muhammad

aim was to build 'the Afghan society on the basis of socialism'. See: *Die DVPA – Triebkraft und Organisator des Kampfes des afghanischen Volkes für nationalen und sozialen Fortschritt*, Rede Babrak Karmals..., unofficial translation, GDR Embassy, Kabul, p. 1.

³⁸ This was not an official name but referred to the main feature of its doctrine, the fight against Pashtun supremacy over other ethnic groups. Internally, the group was known as *Mahfel-e Intizar*, or 'Circle in Waiting'. See: Überblick über die historische Entwicklung und des heutigen Kurs der Revolutionären Bewegung der Werktätigen Afghanistans (SAZA), [Kabul] Jauza 1362 (May/June 1983), working translation, GDR Embassy in Kabul.

In addition, there were at least four more PDPA factions that left and rejoined the party throughout the 1960-1980s. *Groh-e Kar*, or 'Labour Group', led by Eng. Amanullah Ustuwat, was active mainly amongst the Northern Afghan Uzbeks and Turkmens; *Jam'iat-e Inqilabi-ye Zahmatkashan-e Afghanistan (JAZA)*, or 'Revolutionary Toilers Society of Afghanistan', led by the Kandahari Zaher Ufoq, criticized the PDPA from a more leftist position (e.g. for not having proclaimed 'dictatorship of the proletariat' after the Saur coup); *Khalq-e Kargar*, or 'Workers People', led by Dastagir Panjshiri; and a nameless faction led by Dr. Abdul Karim Zarghun, who was killed by the PDPA regime. Author's interviews in Kabul, 1983/84; see also: Taizi, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Bradsher, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³⁹ Hyman remarks that it was 'not so closely aligned to Peking as to deserve such a simplistic description'. See: Hyman, *op. cit.*, p. 59. Afghans involved with the movement insist that this was not an organisation but a slogan derived from Mao Zedong's 'new democracy': 'ma nasher-e afkar-e demokrasi-ye nawin hastem', 'we are the disseminators of the idea of new democracy'. Author's interview in Kabul, 2006.

⁴⁰ Farhang said he felt close to 'liberal democratic parties with social tendencies' and sympathised with the socialism of the Indian Congress Party. See: Horst Büscher, 'Demokratisierung und Ansätze zur Parteienbildung in Afghanistan', *Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, Vierteljahresberichte, Probleme der Entwicklungsländer, Vol. 39 (1970), p. 22.

Hashem Maiwandwal, who served as Prime Minister from 1965-67. *Mussawat* is described as ‘moderate socialist’ with ‘pro-monarchist and pro-Islamic’ tendencies⁴¹ and mainly attracted Pashtun intellectuals who had earlier sympathised with the *Wesh Dzalmian*.⁴² For representing the social-democrat current, Maiwandwal’s group competed with *Afghan Millat* – the better known term for *Afghan Sosial-Demokrat* (or, in pure Pashto, *Tolenpal Wuluswak*) *Gund*, or ‘Afghan Social Democratic Party’.⁴³ Founded by Ghulam Muhammad Farhad⁴⁴ in March 1966, and known amongst Afghans mainly for its advocacy of a Greater Afghanistan (or Pashtunistan), it is called Pashtunist, even ‘fascist’, by its critics. Its leaders, meanwhile, described it as a ‘third force which is moderate, national and progressive’⁴⁵.

On the Islamic right, there were groups inspired by the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’, or *Ikhwanin ul-Muslimin*. These comprised mainly of university professors who had studied at al-Azhar in Cairo where there had been a quota for Afghan students as for all other Muslim countries. The first Islamist circles started to gather around Ghulam Muhammad Niazi, the dean of the Sharia Faculty at Kabul University, in 1957.⁴⁶ In 1969, the student wing of this movement, led by Abdulrahim Niazi evolved into the *Jawanan-e Muslimin*, or ‘Muslim Youth’, which, in turn, morphed into *Jam’iat-e Islami*, or ‘Islamic Society’, with a regular membership and a leadership *shura*, around 1973.⁴⁷ Another loose group, called *Khuddam ul-Forqan*, or the ‘Servants of Providence’, emerged in the mid-1960s from within the Ulema under the influence of the head of the Mojaddedi family, Ibrahim Mojaddedi.⁴⁸

The formation of political groups amongst the Shia minority goes back to a ‘cultural renaissance’ movement started by a religiously educated intellectual from Jauzjan province, Seyyed Muhammad Ismail Balkhi, soon after World War II. In his speeches and sermons, he called for equality for the Shiites – a subject still featuring prominently amongst Shia activists

⁴¹ Anthony Hyman, *op. cit.*, p. 58. Sarajuddin Rasuly, *Die politischen Eliten Afghanistans: Ihre Entstehungsgeschichte, ihre Bedeutung und ihr Versagen in der Gegenwart*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXXI, Politikwissenschaft, Vol. 323, Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, Bern etc., 1997, p. 151.

⁴² The party was relaunched after the fall of the Taleban. Its leader Muhammad Wali Arya, editor of the party’s *Mussawat* newspaper in the 1960s, lives in the USA. Author’s interview in Kabul, 2006.

⁴³ Supported by the German SPD, it had held an observer status at the Socialist International (SI) for a while. Currently, the French PS is said to advocate giving an Afghan SI seat to *Hezb-e Kangara*, instead. The SI website currently does not list an Afghan party either as member, consultative or observer party. <http://www.socialistinternational.org/maps/english/asia.htm>.

⁴⁴ In 1948, Farhad was the first elected mayor of Kabul. From 1934, he had studied in Nazi Germany and was fascinated by some aspects of its policy. See: Abdulhamid Mubarez, *Tahlil-e waqe’at-e siyasi-ye Afghanistan 1919-1996*, [Kabul] 1375 (1996); <http://www.afghanmellat.de/farhad/Farhad.htm>.

⁴⁵ Editorial by Eng. Istiqlal, *Afghan Millat* (Peshawar), 5 Jan. 1988.

⁴⁶ M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1995, p. 86. Niazi was executed during Daud’s Republic.

⁴⁷ David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2002, pp. 200-201.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 255. Dorransoro (*op. cit.*, p. 69) writes that it emerged in the 1950s in Herat under Faizani and only later moved closer to the Mujaddedi family. This seems to be incorrect. Faizani, instead, kept links to *Jawanan-e Muslimin*.

of all political leanings - and for a democratisation of the country.⁴⁹ Some groups inspired by him and Iranian influences, like Ali Shari'ati's 'Islam without clergy', started in the 1960s and turned into resistance organisations after the 1973 coup. The most important ones were *Islam Maktab-e Tauhid*, or 'Islam School of Monotheism', led by Maulana Muhammad Attaullah Faizani⁵⁰, and *Sazman-e Mujahedin-e Mustaza'fin*, or 'Holy Warriors of the Disadvantaged'.⁵¹ Dupree⁵² estimated that in those days *Khalq* had some 2,500 followers, *Parcham* 1,500-2000, and the Maoists and Islamists around the same number of followers each. 'There was no especially obvious dominant ethnic element among the Islamists or the Communists, seen overall', Dorronsoro writes. Indeed there were Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras in all political currents. 'On the other hand, (...) the factions within them and most splinter groups clearly reproduced communal divisions, whether tribal, religious or regional.'⁵³

In 1965, some PDPA and Islamic leaders successfully campaigned for parliament, as they had done 15 years earlier, officially running as independents. For the first time they unleashed a real electoral campaign with rallies and speeches, that attracted thousands of Kabulis. The Maoists stayed away, not believing in parliamentary work. Once again, the government reacted by manipulating the 1969 elections⁵⁴ and started a wave of repression against Islamists. That intensified further after the monarchy was toppled in 1973 by an alliance formed by Prince Daud⁵⁵, who had lost his premiership with the approval of the 1964 constitution, and military officers close to the PDPA.

Subsequently, the Islamists' main protagonists went to Pakistan where they formed Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence's (ISI)⁵⁶ response to the Daud government's support for Pashtun and

⁴⁹ Balkhi (1922-68) was imprisoned after an alleged coup against Prime Minister Shah Mahmud – the so-called 'Gauswar plot' at Afghan New Year 1347/48 (1949) - and remained in custody for 14 years. Author's interviews in Kabul; see also: Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 326, M.I. Akbar, *Rah-e ayenda (op. cit.)*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Faizani was probably killed after the Saur coup. For more details see: Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 228ff, 326.

⁵¹ This organisation was initially inspired by the Iranian anti-Shah *Mujahedin-e Khalq*, or 'People's Mujahedin', and carried the name *Mujahedin-e Khalq-e Afghanistan* around 1977/78. It soon distanced itself soon from it and chose *Mustaza'fin* as its new name. It included Shia as well as Sunni, Hazara, Tajiks and Uzbeks.

⁵² Louis Dupree, 'Red Flag over the Hindu-Kush', Part V, *AUFS report* no. 28, 1980, p. 3.

⁵³ Dorronsoro, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁵⁴ The PDPA had at least eight candidates: Babrak Karmal, the Parcham leader and Afghan President 1979-85, Anahita Ratebzad, the DRA Education Minister, Nur Ahmad Nur and Faizan-ul-Haq Faizan won; Taraki, Amin, Keshtmand and Shara'i Jauzjani lost – as did Majid Kalakani. Amongst the elected were Farhad (*Afghan Millat*), Farhang, the *Wesh Dzalmai* Ulfat, Ms. Mas'uma Ismati (in Kandahar province), and the Islamist Nabi Muhammadi, later leader of *Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami*. In 1969, from the PDPA, only Karmal and Amin got through while Farhang lost and Maiwandwal's candidacy was prevented. See: Büscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 16; Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32, 42; Rasuly, *op. cit.*, p. 151; Tanin, *op. cit.*, pp. 147f.; author's interviews Kabul, 2006.

⁵⁵ A cousin of the King Muhammad Zahir Shah who dominated the country until the 1964 Constitution; Defence Minister 1946-8, Interior Minister 1949-51, Prime Minister 1953-63 and, after he toppled the monarchy, President of the Republic 1973-78; he himself was overthrown and killed during the 7th Saur coup d'état of 1978.

⁵⁶ ISI is responsible for gathering and cataloging foreign and domestic intelligence, and the smooth coordination of intelligence between Pakistan's three main military branches. Obtaining intelligence can come either from surveillance, interception, monitoring of communication, or conducting offensive, intelligence gathering or espionage missions during times of war.

Baluch insurgents.⁵⁷ The most serious attempt at an uprising, in which both Ahmad Shah Massud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar were involved, failed on 22 July 1975, and resulted in a split in *Jam'iat-e Islami*. While Rabbani continued under this name, Hekmatyar and Qazi Muhammad Amin Waqad established *Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or the 'Islamic Party of Afghanistan'.⁵⁸

Non-Pashtun ethno-nationalist and Maoist groups also intensified the armed struggle against Daud's regime which they saw as the incarnation of the Greater Pashtun cause. The Maoists had ceased to exist as a unified organisation in 1972 and split into dozens of groups - 'reflections of [developments in] the international Maoist movement and in the CP of China - like the conflict about the Lin Biao line -, in Latin American guerrilla groups and several revolutionary Iranian groups', as a former activist put it⁵⁹.

The parties during the war of resistance

The Islamists only rose to importance after the PDPA's 7th Saur coup (or the Saur Revolution, as the PDPA called it) in 1978 and, in particular, after the Soviet invasion of Christmas 1979. They profited from the enormous amount of military and financial aid, coming mainly from the USA and Saudi Arabia and channelled through the ISI⁶⁰, and from the Pakistani decision in May 1979 to limit the flow exclusively to the Sunni Islamist 'Peshawar Seven', the so-called *tanzim*⁶¹ that constituted the *haftgana* or 'Alliance of Seven'. The nationalist and leftist resistance groups were cut off from supplies.⁶² Pakistan also stopped two attempts to convene a Loya Jirga that would have reinforced the tribal elites vis-à-vis the Islamists.

Right at the beginning of the resistance war the Islamists split into various *tanzim*. Attempts by Pakistan and the USA to establish an umbrella organisation only resulted in short-term unity and then the establishment of new factions. *Harakat-e Inqelab-e Islami*, or 'Islamic Revolution Movement', and *Ittehad-e Islami bara-ye Azadi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Union for the Freedom of Afghanistan', were both meant to be alliances but soon turned into new factions, led by Muhammadi and Sayyaf. Dorronsoro correctly states that 'it was not "ethnicities" that

⁵⁷ Farhang, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 23; 5000 fighters and 150 commanders, among them Mas'ud and Hekmatyar, were trained in Pakistan at this time. See: Bradsher, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁸ There is also the theory that the split was caused by a controversy about whether to include the Progressive Socialists (the Maiwandwal group) into the armed resistance.

⁵⁹ Author's interview, Kabul 2006.

⁶⁰ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars*, New York, p. 344; Loretta Napoleoni, *Modern Jihad: Tracing the Dollars Behind the Terror Networks*, London and Sterling 2003, pp. 79-83.

⁶¹ The term *tanzim* is used by most Afghans for the Sunni mujahedin parties that fought the PDPA regime and Soviets between 1978 and 1992. Western sources nowadays sometimes label them 'jihadi groups'.

⁶² Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 165; Muhammad Isma'il Akbar, *Fasl-e akher*, Peshawar, 1382 (2003), p. 140.

made war, but political organisations with ideological objectives and particular institutional practices'⁶³ even though the *tanzim* increasingly mobilised along ethnic and tribal lines.

Resistance by Shia groups can be divided into two phases: a 'successful popular resistance movement' between 1978-83, led by *Shura-ye Inqilabi-ye Ittifaq-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Revolutionary Islamic Unity Council of Afghanistan', and the 'in-fighting' period which resulted from the 'emergence of Hazara groups backed by Iran'.⁶⁴ Shia resistance started in a very fragmented way; Bradsher counted 'at least 37 factions'⁶⁵ by the summer of 1979. The *Shura*, a conservative Islamic organization, came into being when the leaders of the rebellion, mainly from the old *khan* elite from almost all Hazara areas, came together in September 1981, setting up a parallel administration in areas under its control..⁶⁶

From 1983 onwards, the leadership in Tehran pushed Khomeinist groups from the Afghan diaspora, mainly *Pasdaran* and *Nasr*.⁶⁷ They brutally suppressed the *Shura* and its social base in what amounted to an inner-Hazara civil war. In 1987, Tehran forced the eight major Shia groups – the so-called *hashtgana* or 'Tehran Eight'⁶⁸ – to unite in *Shura-ye I'tilaf-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Coalition Council of Afghanistan', from which, in 1989, *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami*, or 'Islamic Unity Party', was created. This was first led by Abdulali Mazari (killed 1995) and then by Abdulkarim Khalili. The non-Hazara *Harakat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Movement of Afghanistan', under its religious leader Sheikh Asef Mohseni⁶⁹, soon opted out leaving the predominantly Hazara *Hezb-e Wahdat* as the only active Shia group. Within *Hezb-e Wahdat*, the constituent groups maintain some coherence until today, particularly in rural areas. The *Mustaza'fin* retained some degree of organisational independence throughout this period..In addition to the Peshawar Seven and the Tehran Eight,

⁶³ Dorronsoro, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ S.A. Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan*, Richmond 1998, p. 180. See also: Niamatullah Ibrahimi, *The Failure of a Clerical Proto-State, Hazarajat 1979-1984*, Crisis States Research Center, London School of Economics, Working Paper no. 6.

⁶⁵ Bradsher, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

⁶⁶ Mousavi, *op. cit.*, p. 179ff. The son of the founder Seyyed Ali Beheshti, Seyyed Muhammad Jamal Fakkuri Beheshti, is currently member of the *Wolesi Jirga*.

⁶⁷ *Nasr* already existed before the Saur revolution of 1978 as an alliance of revolutionary Islamist and leftist Islamic groups who were later expelled for their rejection of Khomeini's concept of *welayat-e faqih*. Author's interview, Kabul 2006. See also: Rasuly, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

⁶⁸ *Sazman-e Nasr*, or 'Victory Organisation', led by Abdul Ali Mazari; *Pasdaran-e Jihad-e Islami*, or 'Islamic Pasdaran of the Jihad', led by Muhammad Akbari; *Harakat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Movement of Afghanistan', led by Asef Mohseni; *Nohzat-e Islami*, also 'Islamic Movement', led by Ali Eftekhari; *Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Inqilab-e Islami*, or 'United Front for an Islamic Revolution' (itself a 4-party alliance), led by Yusuf Ali Zaki; *Hezb-e Da'wat-e Islami*, or 'Islamic Call Party', led by Sheikh Hossain Qarabaghi; *Hezbollah*, or 'Party of God', led by Yazdan Ali Wosuqi; *Sazman-e Niru-ye Islami*, or 'Organisation Islamic Force', led by Hojjatulislam Seyyed Muhammad Zaher Mohaqeq Kabuli. See: Mousavi, *op. cit.*, pp. 185, 247-249.

⁶⁹ Initially, this group apparently was also influenced by Islamic revolutionary ideas of Ali Shari'ati; by the 1990s not much was left of this. Mohseni was a student of Ismai'il Balkhi. See: Dorronsoro, *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 160.

dozens of other armed groups continued to fight the Soviets - and for their own organisational survival.

At least in the first years, the Maoist groups continued highly intense guerrilla warfare against the new regime. Meanwhile, *Settam-e Melli*/SAZA became less active, in particular after the Pashtun PDPA leaders were replaced by Tajik speaker, Babrak Karmal, following the Soviet invasion. One of the most successful resistance groups was *Sazman-e Azadibakhsh-e Mardom-e Afghanistan* (SAMA), or 'People's Liberation Organisation of Afghanistan', formed in the summer of 1979 by Abdulmajid Kalakani.⁷⁰ Although generally labelled 'Maoist', it was in fact a mixture of former *Shola'i*, non-conformist leftists like its legendary leader, and groups of outlaws politicised by him. In January 1980, SAMA initiated a broader alliance that included some ex-*Shola'i* and ex-*Settami* groups, left-wing Pashtun nationalists, and religious leaders like the Pir of Obbeh from Herat province, called *Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National United Front of Afghanistan (NUFA)',⁷¹ which continued to follow Kalakani's republican ideals.⁷² SAMA soon came under military pressure from *Jam'iat* and *Hezb*. Kalakani was arrested in February 1980 and executed four months later. Some SAMA leaders negotiated a surrender with the government which led to further splits.⁷³

Other leftist underground groups were *Paikar* (full name *Sazman-e Paikar bara-ye Raha'ibakhsh-e Afghanistan*, or 'Struggle Organisation for the Liberation of Afghanistan') – the successor to *SuRKhA* (*Sazman-e Rahayibakhsh-e Khalqha-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Liberation Organisation of Afghanistan's Peoples') which was destroyed by the regime –, *Raha'i* (*Sazman-e Raha'ibakhsh-e Khalqha-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Afghanistan's Peoples' Liberation Organisation')⁷⁴, and *Sazman-e Feda'ian-e Zahmakashan-e Afghanistan* (SAFZA), or 'Feda'ian Organisation of Afghanistan's Toilers', a *Settam-e Melli* offshoot. After an ill-prepared uprising in Badakhshan in August 1979, its leader Maulawi Bahauddin Ba'es who considered himself an 'Islamic socialist', was put into prison and killed. Other SAFZA leaders re-joined PDPA in 1984.⁷⁵

On the other side of the frontline, the PDPA established a one-party state after its take-over of 27 April 1979. 'Five groups were declared enemies [by the Khalqi regime]: the Parchamis, the

⁷⁰ Reportedly, there was a Kalakani group already in 1962/63, the *Jumhuri-khwahan*, 'Republicans'. Author's interview, Kabul 2006.

⁷¹ Dorronsoro, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-214; Taizi, *op. cit.*, p. 114; author's interviews in Kabul, 2005/06.

⁷² H[akim] Tawana and F. Nadib, *Shekast-e stratezhi-ye Ma'oizm dar Afghanistan*, n.d. [Kabul, 1987 or 1988], p. 46.

⁷³ Author's interviews in Kabul, 2005/06.

⁷⁴ Founded in December 1979, the group followed the line of the Iranian *Feda'in-e Khalq* (*Aksariat*), or 'People's Feda'in (Majority)'. Tawana and Nadib, *op. cit.*, preface, p. 'u'; author's interview, Kabul 2006.

⁷⁵ M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher* (*op. cit.*), p. 23; author's interviews in Kabul, 2006.

Islamists, the Maoists, the Settamis (...) and Afghan Millat'⁷⁶, along with independent intellectuals, many of whom were arrested, killed or 'disappeared', sometimes with their whole families.⁷⁷ The purges within the party against *Parchami*, and later against *Khalqi* when *Parcham* came to power, perpetuated the split between the two major factions.

Najibullah's controlled multi-party system

This did not change until President Najibullah, who had replaced Karmal as PDPA leader in 1986 and as President the year after, started a controlled political opening as part of his *siasat-e ashti-ye melli*, or 'national reconciliation policy'. Declared in January 1987, it was encouraged by Gorbachov in the Soviet Union. On 6 July 1987, a Law on Political Parties was passed and by July 1988 seven new parties had registered.⁷⁸ With, SAZA, led by Mahbubullah Kushani, the main *Settam-e Melli* successor appeared openly for the first time.⁷⁹ It had not actively fought against the Soviets but maintained links with them in Afghanistan as well as independent military structures, presenting itself as a leftist alternative to the PDPA.⁸⁰ *Sazman-e Zahmatkashan-e Afghanistan (SeZA)*, or 'Organisation of Afghanistan's Toilers', led by Hamdullah Gran was the successor of other PDPA break-away groups from the late 1970s. Both joined PDPA in creating *Ittehad-e Ahzab-e Chap Demokratik*, or the 'Union of Left-Democratic Parties', but criticised the PDPA for not giving up on its 'monopoly of power'.⁸¹ *Hezb-e Edalat-e Dehqanan-e Afghanistan (HADA)*, or 'Peasants Justice Party of Afghanistan', participated as an observer.

⁷⁶ Fred Halliday and Zahir Tanin, 'The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978-1992: Institutions and Conflicts', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 8 (Dec 1998), p. 5.

⁷⁷ Ghulam Muhammad Niazi was only the most prominent case on the Islamist side, while on the left the leaders of the three most important opposition groups were killed: Taher Badakhshi, Bahauddin Ba'ez, Abdul Majid Kalakani, Akram and Seddiq Yari. Maiwandwal had already been killed under Daud; Abdul Rabb Rasul Sayyaf was one of the few lucky ones since he was released apparently on the intervention of his 'watanwal' Hafizullah Amin, both Kharoti Pashtuns from Paghman.

⁷⁸ The first ones in Nov. 1987 were SAZA, SeZA, HADA and *Hezb-e Islami-ye Mardom-e Afghanistan (HAMA)*, or 'People's Islamic Party of Afghanistan', led by Qari Abdulsattar Sirat (not to be confused with the Rome group leader who participated in the Bonn conference). See: *Haqiqat-e Inqilab-e Saur* (Kabul), 28 Nov. 1987. They were followed later by *Nohzat-e Hambastagi-ye Mardom-e Afghanistan (Feda'ian)*, or 'People's Solidarity Movement of Afghanistan (Feda'ian)', led by Safar Muhammad Khadem; *Ittehadia-ye Ansarullah*, or 'Ansarullah Association', led by Mir Sarwar Nuristani; and *Hezbollah Afghanistan*, led by Maulawi Abdulhalim Raqim – this seems to be a Shia faction of the group that was part of *Hezb-e Wahdat* (see p. 13).

⁷⁹ Most probably, it adopted this name in 1977. However, this is not mentioned even in its own documents (see footnote 38).

⁸⁰ M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op. cit.)*, p. 35; Rasuly, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁸¹ 'SAZA chief suggests new approach to coalition', *Kabul Times*, 5 Sept 1988. In 1988/89, *Sazman-e Kargarane Jawanan-e Afghanistan (KoJA)*, or 'Young Workers Organisation of Afghanistan', led by Sufi Shena, and *Ittifaq-e Mubarezan-e Solh wa Taraqi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Alliance of Peace and Progress Fighters of Afghanistan', led by Zaman Gul Dehati, joined this alliance.

Effectively, only left-wing parties (and in SeZA's case initially only the wing that cooperated with the intelligence service⁸²), some token Islamic and other 'block parties'⁸³ got the chance to become openly active. At the same time, Najibullah was not able to control his multi-party system as effectively as the Eastern European governments of the time were. That created some space for independent political activity; Maoist groups successfully infiltrated HADA, whose leader Abdul Hakim Tawana was a *Paikar* cadre.

Liberal-minded intellectuals coming back from exile also tried to use the new-found political space. In 1986, they founded *Ittehad-e Melli bara-ye Azadi wa Demokrasi*, or 'National Union for Freedom and Democracy (NUFD)'⁸⁴, initially led by Prof. Muhammad Asghar, a former president of Kabul University, and after his death by Mir Muhammad Mahfuz Neda'i. However, they were ultimately denied legalization. *Afghan Millat* was also approached to join the new system and apparently offered posts in the government. Some of its imprisoned leaders were released and received by President Najibullah.⁸⁵ Ultimately, however, it did not accept to work under the PDPA's 'leading role'.

From 6 to 15 April 1988, parliamentary elections were held. However, most of the seats were allocated in advance to secure a PDPA majority with some, in what Bradsher calls 'reverse rigging'⁸⁶, reserved for the new groups. A new cabinet under a non-PDPA Prime Minister was formed in June that included SAZA and a number of non-party ministers some of whom were linked to monarchist circles abroad. At the same time, Karmal's Parchami sub-faction became active again, rejecting Najibullah's new policy as a 'betrayal of the revolution' and accusing him of being a Soviet puppet.⁸⁷ In July 1990, at its first congress since its foundation in 1965, the PDPA was renamed *Hezb-e Watan*, or 'Fatherland Party'. Najibullah stated that it had been 'a historic mistake' to have come under 'a specific ideology'. In its new programme, *Hezb-e Watan* committed itself to a 'democracy based on a multi-party system'⁸⁸. However, almost the complete PDPA leadership was transferred to the new party.

⁸² SeZA was split by the KhAD into the (officially recognized) wing under Hamdullah Gran, while another SeZA faction, led by Zaman Gul Dehati, remained semi-illegal. Author's interviews in Kabul, 1988/89.

⁸³ This was a system used in the GDR where there were other parties besides the ruling communist one, while the latter had its 'leading role' guaranteed by the constitution. GDR advice played some role in the design of Najibullah's multi-party system. An Afghan political leader called HADA and HAMA 'nothing more than PDPA departments'. Author's interview in Kabul, 1988.

⁸⁴ Also known as *Hezb-e Rastagari-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Resurrection Party of Afghanistan'.

⁸⁵ The delegation was led by today's Secretary-General of the party, Abdulhamid Yaqin Yusufzai, who had been detained in 1983. Interview on *Afghan State TV*, late 1983 (personal note); 'Dr. Najibullah receives Afghan Millat delegation', *Kabul New Times*, 29 Oct 1987, See also: Kakar, *op. cit.*, pp. 155, 261.

⁸⁶ Bradsher, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁸⁷ Rumours emerged about a *Sazman-e Nejat-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Salvation Organisation of Afghanistan', whose Dari acronym SENEMA (pronounced 'cinema') was seen as a hint to PDPA history when its leaders clandestinely met at the Park Cinema in Kabul's Shahr-e Now. See also: Kakar, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁸⁸ Cit. in: Bradsher, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

Political organisation during the mujahedin and Taleban regimes

After the fall of Najibullah's regime, there was not much space for political organisation during the inter-factional war⁸⁹ and the subsequent Taleban rule,. This period was dominated by major military confrontations, first between the *tanzim* in ever-changing alliances, later between the Taleban Movement and the *Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Islami bara-ye Nejat-e Afghanistan*, or 'United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan' – better known as the Northern Alliance (NA) - established on 13 June 1997.⁹⁰

Some of the moderate groups, like *Nohzat zed-e Jang wa bara-ye Wahdat-e Melli*, or 'Movement against War and for National Unity', that had become active under Najibullah's government worked under the first Mujahedin government and later, under the Taleban regime, from abroad. The most important of these was *Shura-ye Tafahum wa Wahdat-e Melli Afghanistan*, or 'Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan', originally established as a broad coalition of moderate Jihadi commanders and non-Islamist intellectuals in the mid-1980s.⁹¹ Ultimately, it failed because the agreed rotation at its head was violated by one of the leaders. Relunched by Ishaq Gailani in 2000/01 in Pakistan, some smaller, moderate 'post-Jihadi' parties emerged from it after the fall of the Taleban,, like Ishaq Gailani's *Nohzat-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Solidarity Movement of Afghanistan'.

Starting from the late 1990s, at a time when there was no international interest for – or even knowledge about - their existence, an *Anti-Taleban* political underground developed. It consisted of pro-democratic groups committed to values like democracy and human rights, in a reaction to the Taleban violations. Most were home-grown, like *Hezb-e Jumhurikhwahan-e Afghanistan*, or 'Republican Party of Afghanistan (RPA)'. When founded in 1999,⁹² in a symbolic act, it declared the UN Human Rights Declaration its programme. As one of few parties, it has a membership across the ethnic divide. Over the years, RPA had to fight take-

⁸⁹ The widely used term 'civil war' is avoided here because, at the core, this was a fight for exclusive power between different *tanzim* and not between 'groups of citizen'. The overall majority of the civil population was tired of the fighting.

⁹⁰ It consisted of *Jam'iat/Shura-ye Nazar*, Khalili's faction of *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami* and *Jombesh* as the major military forces, with *Ittehad-e Islami*, *Harakat*, Sabawun's wing of *Hezb-e Islami*, Mujaddedi's ANLF and Mansur's Ismaili militia as minor partners. Its predecessor *Shura-ye 'Ali bara-ye Defa' az Watan*, or 'Supreme Council for the Defence of the Motherland', established on 10 Oct 1996. See: M. Hassan Kakar: *The Afghan Political Landscape*, p. 7. Online Center for Afghan Studies (www.afghan-politics.org); Ahmed Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 121 (German edition); Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

⁹¹ Many prominent participants were killed: Gen. Abdul Hakim Katawazi, Prof. Seyyed Bahauddin Majruh, Aziz-ur-Rahman Ulfat, commander Abdul Haq, Hakim Taniwal.

⁹² Originally established by Daud Republic era politicians led by Zia Arya'i Waziri and backed by Daud's former Minister for Public Works, Ghausuddin Fa'eq. On 6 March 2004, it was registered as the first party.

over attempts by former Khalqis⁹³ and later by Sayyaf's *Ittehad*, which led to some losses in membership. While the party accepts former PDPA members in its ranks, it has strictly excluded PDPA leaders – down to the level of Central Committee members- from leading positions.

In German exile, a number of secular groups and intellectuals founded *Shura-ye Demokrasi bara-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Council for Democracy in Afghanistan (CfDA)', in 1992.⁹⁴ In time this council initiative the establishment of *Nohzat-e Melli*, or 'National Movement' (also known as 'Göttingen process'), in 1998. This included ex-Maoists, *Mustaza'fin*, monarchists and moderate Islamists, but soon disintegrated and did not manage to spread its structures into Afghanistan. In Aachen (Germany) in June 2001, CfDA started another attempt at bringing about cooperation between democratic forces and set up a coordination council led by Aziz Gardezi.⁹⁵

Five groups that had established relations with the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) office in Kabul during the Taleban days were invited to the Bonn Conference in late 2001:

- The Republicans;
- *Hezb-e Mardom*, or 'People's Party'⁹⁶, led by Muhammad Farid Hamidi, that had emerged from an illegal students organization in Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul;
- *Nohzat-e Azadi wa Demokrasi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Afghanistan Freedom and Democracy Movement (AFDM)' led by Abdulraqib Jawed Kohestani, that united former Maoists, other leftists and mujahedin who had fought the Soviets and had links with *Shura-ye Nazar*;
- *Shura-ye Islami wa Melli-ye Aqwam-e Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic and National Council of Afghanistan's Tribes', a network of anti-Taleban tribal councils based in Quetta⁹⁷;

⁹³ Party leader Sanjar was, at the age of 16, PDPA member for a year and worked as a police officer under minister Gulabzoy.

⁹⁴ It produced the newspaper *Faryad*, or 'The Call', that was regularly smuggled into Taleban Afghanistan.

⁹⁵ Participants were CfDA, founded in January 1992 in Cologne; *Ittehadia-ye Zanan-e Demokratik-e Afghanistan*, or 'Association of Democratic Women of Afghanistan (ADWA)'; *Shura-ye Rastagari-ye Millat-e Afghanistan*, or 'Council for the Resurrection of the Afghan Nation', based in Germany and led by Assad Rosta Habibi (probably a SAZA-related group); *Afghan Millat*; *De Pashtano Tolenidz Wulusi Gund*, or 'Pashtuns' Social Democrat Party', led by Kabir Storai from German exile; *Wulusi Millat* or 'People's Nation', a leftist splinter group of *Afghan Millat* led by Prof. Pashtunyar; SAZA and SAMA. Gardezi belonged to CfDA.

⁹⁶ This group later renamed itself *Hezb-e Mardom-e bara-ye Solh wa Tause'a*, or 'People's Party for Peace and Development', because there was another party that used the same name and had applied for registration earlier. The PPPD later decided not to register at all, with its leading figures concentrating on human rights work. A second group with this name, led by Abdulqadir Ra'ufi, was refused registration because there were leadership problems, so that finally a third group was granted official status under this name, led by Ahmad Shah Asar.

⁹⁷ It appointed Same'ullah Safi, the left-leaning leader of an early tribal uprising against the Soviets in 1978 in Kunar province and later of the SAMA-led NUFA, as their Bonn representative. See: David B. Edwards, *op. cit.*,

- and *Itifaq-e Mubarezan-e Solh wa Taraqi-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Alliance of Peace and Progress Fighters of Afghanistan’, led by Zaman Gul Dehati, a successor group of SeZA that is currently active mainly in exile⁹⁸.

However, the change at the head of the UN mission in late 2001⁹⁹ prevented those groups from fully participating as a joint fifth official delegation in Bonn at the last moment; they were instead reduced to an observer status. This had far-reaching consequences, as it led to the complete exclusion of pro-democratic forces from the Bonn process in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰

Parties in the Post-Taleban-Period

The 2003 Political Parties Law

After the fall of the Taleban regime in 2001, the three major political currents – the Islamists, the left, the ethnic Nationalists – re-surfaced as the backbone of the emerging multi-party system, with the new democrats emerging as a new one. While the old *tanzim* and other armed factions tried to reshape themselves as political parties, there were splits and attempts at alliance-building at the same time. Often, new parties were launched without any hint of programmatic differences and by leaders who were simply not the ‘number one’ in their old parties – ‘vanity projects’, as Kit Spence calls them.¹⁰¹

The optimism of the new forces, however, was hampered by the lack of a legal framework and of a safe political environment - in particular, by the failure to disarm the factional militias. With the *tanzim* in possession of armed power, controlling most of the resources and dominating the different layers of government, ‘Post-Taleban Afghanistan inherited for the most part faction politics (...) and the politics of arms accumulated by a variety of warlords’.¹⁰² As a result, alternative political forces live in constant fear of persecution and are only able to

pp. 95ff. Safi also represented *Ittihadia-ye Melli-ye Mobarazan-e Azadikhwa-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National Association of Freedom Fighters of Afghanistan’, which later became a party, and CfDA. 21 of the 29 members of the *shura* later decided to establish *Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-ye Aqwam-e Afghanistan*, or ‘National Solidarity Party of Afghanistan’s Tribes’, led by a former SAMA commander, Muhammad Zarif Naseri.

⁹⁸ Arya’i, Kohestani, Safi and Dehati were present in Bonn while *Hezb-e Mardom* was represented by Ahmad Nader Naderi, now AIHRC spokesperson.

⁹⁹ From PRSG Francesc Vendrell to SRSG Lakhdar Brahimi.

¹⁰⁰ Their complete exclusion from the conference was only prevented by the fact that airplane tickets had already been purchased and some of them were already on their way to Bonn. A leading German diplomat involved in the organisation of the Bonn Conference later told the author that he considers this exclusion a ‘major mistake’.

¹⁰¹ Kit Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁰² G. Rauf Roashan, *Positioning by New Political Parties in Afghanistan*, p. 1.

operate relatively freely in the largest cities and a few rural areas.¹⁰³ Some of them are still extremely careful not to expose their complete structures and membership.

It took until September 2003 for a Political Parties Law to be approved its drafts had stalled in the cabinet for nearly a year.¹⁰⁴ According to this law, all parties – including those formed long before – were obliged to register with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), was chosen for this purpose instead of a neutral body. The law states that the ‘political system of the State of Afghanistan is based on the principles of democracy and pluralism of political parties’, but also that parties will not be registered, or can be banned, whose ‘objectives are opposed to the principles of the holy religion of Islam’ and who maintain armed wings or militias.

Hossein Ramuz¹⁰⁵ divides the post-Taleban period into two phases: a phase of ‘optimism about a developing party pluralism’ (2001-2004) and a phase of disillusionment. In the first phase, pro-democracy parties emerged from the underground or were newly created, while the Islamist parties fragmented and brought about internal ‘reforming mechanisms’. Neither the international community nor the President were sure yet whether to support a partisan or non-partisan system. The second phase, after 2004, started when both decided to adopt the SNTV system for the coming elections. Political parties thus reduced their activities and the internal reform mechanisms failed. As a result, Islamist parties became ‘even more conservative and authoritarian’; none held a public congress.

The Sunni tanzim

Four of the Islamist Peshawar Seven continued their activities mainly in their old frameworks: *Jam'iat; Ittehad* – renamed *Tanzim-e Da'wat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Organisation for the Islamic Call of Afghanistan’ -; Pir Seyyed Ahmad Gailani’s *Mahaz-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National-Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA); and Prof. Sebghatullah Mojaddedi’s *Jabha-ye Melli-ye Nejat-e Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan National Liberation Front (ANLF)’, with splits in *Jam'iat* and *Da'wat*. *Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami (HII)*, or ‘Islamic Revolution Movement’, and *Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan/Khales* (HIA/Khales) were barely

¹⁰³ UNAMA, in cooperation with the AIHRC, tried to remedy this by their Joint Verification of Political Rights campaign, but these reports, mainly due to UNAMA’s stance, were so accommodating (and also contained only cases fully investigated while UNAMA’s capacity – and also willingness on the top level – to do so was extremely limited), that it had no deep effect on the electoral environment.

¹⁰⁴ There were at least four drafts. While the first three were rather restrictive - parties linked to armed militias would not have been banned – this was only rectified in the fourth draft. For the text, see: <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/partylaw-engl.htm>. There was a ‘Jihadi’ majority both in the ministerial drafting committee and the drafting department in the MoJ. Author’s interview in Kabul, 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Ramuz was politically active during this period himself, worked with the National Democratic Institute and now with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in Kabul. He gave the following assessment during an interview with the author in 2006 in Kabul.

visible as organizations any more and *Hizb-e Islami*, not having been invited to the Bonn Conference, stayed outside of the peace process and declared *jihad* on the USA.¹⁰⁶ On the Shia side, the two main organizations *Hezb-e Wahdat* and *Harakat-e Islami* also split into two.

Particularly in *Jam'iat*, there were some attempts at internal renewal. It had had competing leaderships during most of the resistance period and in particular after Ahmad Shah Mas'ud in 1985 established *Shura-ye Nazar-Shemal*, or 'Supervisory Council of the North', effectively founding a parallel military structure within *Jam'iat* and under his own command. While Rabbani remained *Jam'iat*'s nominal head – and of the Islamic State of Afghanistan – during the Taleban regime, Mas'ud emerged as its de facto leader. After his assassination, a triumvirate of his confidants took over, the so-called Panjshiri Trio: Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, intelligence chief Muhammad Qasem Fahim and Interior Minister Muhammad Yunus Qanooni. During the Bonn Conference, the latter's negotiation skills ensured the *Shura-ye Nazar* dominance in the post-Taleban Administration under President Hamed Karzai.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, the decision to finalize the Bonn Agreement in Germany rather than in Kabul – as assured to Interim President Rabbani who did not participate in Bonn –, was also an attempt of the Panjshiri Trio, probably with tacit agreement in the West, to facilitate a power transfer to the younger *Jam'iat* generation.

This was followed in 2003 by an attempt to reshape *Jam'iat*, and if possible the other mujahedin *tanzim*, into a new political party, *Nohzat-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Movement of Afghanistan'. The aim was to advocate the objectives of the just Jihad and national resistance'. But within *Nohzat*, two groups were competing for leadership: the Panjshiri Trio, not always pulling together, and the surviving brothers of their late leader, Ahmad Wali Mas'ud and Ahmad Zia Mas'ud. While the first group wielded the real power within *Shura-ye Nazar*, the latter relied on their role as their brother's 'heirs-apparent'. The quarrels dragged on for more than a year, and most other *tanzim* lost interests, feeling they were no more than pawns in the Panjshiris' leadership gambit. Confusion reached its peak when Qanooni ran for President in 2004 as (self-declared) official candidate of *Nohzat*, while the Mas'ud brothers challenged this claim publicly. Soon after the elections, *Nohzat* was finally registered, now with Ahmad Wali Mas'ud as leader, while Qanooni – who was still a founding

¹⁰⁶ After Hekmatyar had called for suicide attacks against US troops, Washington declared him a 'worldwide terrorist'; *Hezb*, however, was not put on the US list of terrorist groups. 'Guerillaführer Hekmatyar ruft zu Selbstmordanschlägen auf', Associated Press, 24 Feb 2003. In 2005, he extended the Jihad call to all 'invaders'. See: 'Hekmatyar's party expresses solidarity with Taleban', *Afghan Islamic Press*, 2 Apr 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Fahim became Minister of Defence and Vice President, Qanooni and Dr. Abdullah kept their old Ministries (Interior and Foreign); Amrullah Saleh, Dr. Etebar and Abdulhafiz Mansur were heads of the intelligence, the powerful Department for Administrative Affairs (*edara-ye umur*) and the national radio and TV respectively.

member in July 2004 - soon set up his own party, *Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Newin*, or 'New Afghanistan Party'.

Another strand of younger *Jam'iat* reformers tried to stir the organization into a consequent opposition to Karzai. Led by Abdulhafiz Mansur and Dr. Mohiuddin Mehdi, their first attempt came during the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ), when Mansur led the opposition against Karzai's plan for a presidential system. Feeling manipulated and intentionally split along ethnic lines, the advocates of a parliamentary system attracted most Tajik, Uzbek and many Hazara deputies as well as some democrats, and even a small group of Pashtuns. Representing almost 45 per cent of the deputies, its boycott stalled the CLJ for several days. Immediately after the CLJ, Mansur and Dr. Mehdi tried to turn this loose group into a sustainable political organization. First known as *Jabha-ye Yazdah-e Jaddi*, or '11th Jaddi Front' after the date the CLJ vote boycott commenced, it was later called *Jabha-ye Adalat wa Demokrasi*, or 'Justice and Democracy Front'. Mehdi claimed that groups from *Nohzat-e Melli*, *Afghanistan Newin*, the Shia *Hezb-e Wahdat* and *Harakat*, as well as *Jombesh*, *Hezb-e Kangara*, and some smaller parties and social organisations participated in it.¹⁰⁸ It wanted to push for a single opposition presidential candidate, but this effort was thwarted by contradicting ambitions of several of the front's leaders who all ran separately.

Qanooni took over initiative again soon to crystallize the anti-Karzai opposition around his own person. As runner-up during the presidential election, he first tried to set up an alliance of the defeated presidential candidates.¹⁰⁹ In April 2005, this evolved into the 12-member opposition alliance, *Jabha-ye Tafahom-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Understanding Front of Afghanistan',¹¹⁰ , and was surprisingly, welcomed by President Karzai in an official

¹⁰⁸ Interview in *Kabul Weekly*, 19 May 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Qanooni received 16.3% of the votes, Mohaqeqq 11.7% and Dostum 10.0% in the 2004 presidential election, finishing as (distant) runners-up behind incumbent Hamed Karzai with 55.4%. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_presidential_election%2C_2004 that still keeps the official final result chart from the now suspended official website www.elections-afghanistan.org.af.

¹¹⁰ The NUF comprised of 11 parties and one (initially three) individual former presidential candidate(s): *Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Newin*, or New Afghanistan Party, led by Qanooni; *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami-ye Mardom-e Afghanistan*, or 'People's Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan, (Mohaqeqq); *Hezb-e Iqtidar-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Rule Party of Afghanistan' (Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai), *Harakat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan* (Seyyed Muhammad Ali Jawed), *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Melli wa Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National and Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan' (Muhammad Akbari), *Hezb-e Istiqlal-e Melli-ye Afghanistan* , or 'National Independence Party of Afghanistan' (Taj Muhammad Wardak), *Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami wa Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic and National Revolution Movement of Afghanistan' (Ahmad Nabi Muhammadi), *Sazman-e Islami-ye Afghanistan-e Jawan*, or 'Islamic Organisation "Young Afghanistan"' (Seyyed Jawad Hossaini), *Hezb-e E'tedal-e Melli wa Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National and Islamic Moderate Party of Afghanistan' (Qarabeg Izadyar), *Hezb-e Solh wa Wahdat-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Peace and National Unity Party of Afghanistan' (Abdul Qadeer Emami Ghorri), *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Melli-ye Aqwam-e Afghanistan*, or 'National Unity Party of Afghanistan's Tribes' (Nasrullah Barakzai), and the editor-in-chief of the pro-Mujahedin weekly *Payam-e Mujahid*, Abdul Hafeez Mansoor. Jombesh representatives were already completely missing. Mir Mahfouz Neda'i and Latif Pedram, leader of *Hezb-e Kangara-ye Melli*, left after only two weeks. See: Khalid Moahed, 'Qanooni to head opposition alliance', *Frontier Post*, April 7, 2005. In May 2005, *Jombesh-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan* , or

statement.¹¹¹ Again, the front aimed at jointly running for elections, this time the parliamentary ones, and establishing a parliamentary system by ‘fundamental amendments to the constitution’.¹¹² Qanooni even proposed, in the long run, to merge into a single ‘reformist’ party¹¹³. But two presidential candidates – Latif Pedram from *Hezb-e Kangara-ye Melli*, and the moderate leftist Neda’i from NUF – left the front only two weeks after its establishment, criticising Qanooni for having secret contacts with Karzai, whom the front was supposed to attack.¹¹⁴ It neither managed to run joint candidates for parliament nor did it survive these elections for long. Ahmadzai and Mansoor dropped out, accusing Qanooni of not supporting their claims that they lost the race for a *Wolesi Jirga* seat because of fraud¹¹⁵, while Mohaqqueq openly supported Karzai’s favourite Sayyaf for the *Wolesi Jirga* presidency against Qanooni. By early 2006, the front had practically ceased to exist.

In a new twist, Qanooni brought about a rapprochement with Rabbani in December 2005. In a joint meeting of leaders of *Jam’iat-e Islami* and *Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Newin*, also including ‘a part of the leadership council of *Nohzat-e Melli*’, they announced that ‘the breakaway parties from *Jam’iat-e Islami* shall explore ways for a merger, and that the finalisation of the merger is inevitable’, and installed Rabbani as the opposition leader, in effect replacing Qanooni. Meanwhile, the latter was proposed by Prof. Rabbani as their candidate for the post of the *Wolesi Jirga* speaker. All members of the undersigning parties gave an Islamic oath of allegiance (*bay’at*) to Rabbani¹¹⁶; but the Mas’ud brothers were ominously missing. Another split-off from *Jam’iat*, Qarabeg Izadyar’s *Hezb-e E’tedal-e Melli wa Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National and Islamic Moderate Party of Afghanistan’, was initially believed to be a stop-gap for *Afghanistan-e Newin*, in case it was refused registration.

Politically, the most active of the *tanzim* is NIFA. Driven by the two sons of Pir Gailani, in alliance with *Afghan Millat*, led by the Pir’s son-in-law, Finance Minister Ahady¹¹⁷, it managed

‘National Solidarity Movement of Afghanistan’, (Eng. Ahmad) joined the NUF. See: *Payyam-e Mujahed*, 15 Saur 1384.

¹¹¹ Presidential Office, press release, 1 April 2005, In: *Anis* (Kabul), 2 April 2005.

¹¹² ‘Qanooni alleges pre-poll rigging’, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 26 April 2005; ‘Head of Afghan opposition front outlines platform, goals, membership’, *Anis*, Kabul, 6 April 2005.

¹¹³ ‘Head of Afghan opposition front outlines platform, goals, membership’, *Anis*, Kabul, April 6, 2005.

¹¹⁴ Mir Wais Harooni, ‘Jabha-ye Tafahum-e Melli dar nokhostin ruzha-ye hayat-ash darzabar dasht’, *Haftanama-ye Kabul*, 13 April 2005.

¹¹⁵ ‘Understanding Front faces misunderstandings’, *Cheragh*, 28 Nov 2005; ‘Khoruj-e Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai az Jabha-ye “Tafahum-e Melli”’, *Cheragh*, Kabul, 23 Nov 2005; Najeeb Khelwatgar, ‘Qanooni-led alliance likely to toe govt line’, *Pajhwok News Agency*, 13 Nov 2005.

¹¹⁶ ‘Tawafuqnama-ye Jam’iat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan wa Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Newin wa Nohzat-e Melli-ye Afghanistan’, *Payyam-e Mujahed*, 1 Jaddi 1384 (21 Dec 2005). However, by mid-October 2006 all three parties were still operating separately.

¹¹⁷ This link already existed during the Jihad when *Afghan Millat* was only allowed to operate in Pakistan under the NIFA umbrella. See: Kakar, *op. cit.*, p. 104. Ahady also was member of the Pir’s delegation (the Peshawar group) at the Bonn Conference.

to successfully build a pro-Karzai coalition amongst the Pashtuns including radical Islamists from *Dawat-e Islami* and the legalized domestic wing of *Hezb-e Islami* (see next paragraph). Meanwhile, NIFA tries to present a moderate Islamic front, somewhat different from the other *tanzim*. The defeat of deputy leader Hamed Gailani in the 2005 elections in Paktika showed, however, that the party has weaknesses even in their claimed areas of influence.¹¹⁸ Mojaddedi's ANLF, always the weakest of the seven *tanzim*, largely remained a one-man show and without much effect as a party.

The other *tanzim* did not change much. Sayyaf's *Ittehad/Dawat* concentrates successfully on infiltrating the sub-government level of power. Before the presidential elections, Sayyaf's deputy, Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai - big property-owner in and around Kabul - left the organization and set up his own *Hezb-e Iqtidar-e Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Rule Party of Afghanistan'.¹¹⁹ It was however refused registration, despite reports by an Afghan news agency in early 2006 to the contrary, suggesting an agreement had been reached with the government and UNAMA that the party 'would not back [sic] any military group'.¹²⁰

HIA/Khales is split into a pro- and an anti-government wing. The former, effectively a major part of the Nangrahar province administration, almost ceased to function as an organization. It did not apply for registration as a party but continued to participate in UNAMA's Political Harmonizing Committee meetings in Jalalabad. The other faction, led by Maulawi Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahed, the son of historical party leader Maulawi Yunos Khales (d. July 2006), declared *jihād* against the Karzai government in 2003 and 2005.

Also almost vanished is HII. After the death of its leader, Maulawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammad in 2001, his son Ahmad Nabi Muhammadi took over and gave it a slight change of name as *Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami wa Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic and National Revolution Movement of Afghanistan'. But by this time not much was left of the *tanzim* after, in the mid-1990s, its members had 'defect[ed] almost entirely to the *Taliban*'.¹²¹ Another breakaway group is the party of Maulawi Muhammad Osman Salekzada, *Hezb-e Sa'adat-e Melli wa Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National and Islamic Prosperity Party of Afghanistan', that has taken over the HII basis in the North.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Given the heavy irregularities observed by the author in this very region, it showed that other groups were more successful in manipulating the election result. Hamed Gailani was subsequently appointed a senator and is currently Vice President of the *Meshrano Jirga*.

¹¹⁹ In the presidential elections, he scored a marginal 0.8 per cent of the vote.

¹²⁰ 'Two new Afghan political parties receive license', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 3 Jan 2006. The name of the party was deleted (in handwriting!), however, from a printed-out list acquired from the MoJ and does not appear on the official list on the MoJ website any more.

¹²¹ Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat and Parvez Khan Toru, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹²² Salekzada is from Sarepul province.

What mainly remains of HII is *De Khuddam ul-Furqan Jam'iat*, or 'Society of the Servants of Providence', that claims to be a revival of an Islamist group of the same name in the 1960s. It was launched only a few days after the fall of the Taleban regime by some of its former high-ranking leaders and diplomats¹²³ under the nominal leadership of a religious figure, Muhammad Amin Mojaddedi. On 9 December 2001, it presented itself in Islamabad as a moderate Taleban faction and declared its support for the 'UN process' towards a Loya Jirga, claiming a stake for itself in the political process. In its Manifesto, it supports equal rights for 'both man and woman', but 'in accordance to Islamic Shariah' and with the Quran and the Sunnah still 'the exclusive source of legislation' in an 'Islamic Republic' of Afghanistan.¹²⁴ In June 2004, before the election, it tried to register as a political party and to open an office in Kabul.¹²⁵ Again, it distanced itself from the 'trail of murder and mayhem stemming from Taliban activities in Afghanistan' and declared that 'we are no more linked to Taliban in any way'. The registration, however, was apparently refused by the authorities.

In their programmes – and even more so in their practical policy – the Islamists strongly advocate that the new Afghanistan should be an Islamic state, and present themselves as the defenders of *mujahedin* rights (whose former leaders came under severe criticism by human rights campaigners for their atrocities in 1992-96). Even those considered to be 'moderate' like *Wolesi Jirga* speaker Qanooni insist that there can be no separation between Islam and politics: 'There is no place for secularism in Afghanistan (...) and no system will be acceptable other than Islam'.¹²⁶ Some Afghans believe, however, that Islam is instrumentalised. This was illustrated by the *Aftab* newspaper affair in 2003 when, under the headline 'Holy Facism', it attacked Jihadi leaders for misusing Islam as an instrument to take power'.¹²⁷ In consequence, its editor was sentenced to eight years in prison, but was forced into hiding and, ultimately, to flee the country.

¹²³ Among them is Arsala Rahman who first belonged to Sayyaf's *Ittehad-e Islami* Executive Council, was Minister for Islamic Guidance in the Rabbani government of the 1990s and appointed to the *Meshrano Jirga* by President Karzai in 2005; Rahmatullah Wahidyar, Minister for Refugees under Mojaddedi and deputy minister under the Taleban, as was Abdul Rahman Hotak (for Information and Culture), and Abdul Hakim Mujahed, the former Taleban 'ambassador' to the UN.

¹²⁴ *Da Khudamul Furqan Jam'iat*, *Press Release*, 9 Dec 2001 [Islamabad]; *Manifesto of Da Khudamul Furqan Jam'iat*, Dec 9, 2001 [Islamabad].

¹²⁵ When the author tried to get into contact with HII in September 2006, he was not able to find it and was only referred to *Khuddam ul-Furqan* members. See also: 'Taliban splinter group backs Karzai government', *Frontier Post* (Peshawar), 3 May 2005.

¹²⁶ In the same interview, Qanooni calls a 'moderate and tolerant Islam' the 'future of Afghanistan'. Syed Saleem Shahzad, 'The opposition face of Afghanistan', *Asia Times online*, 21 Sept 2005.

¹²⁷ Mir Hossein Mahdawi, 'Fashizm-e muqadas', *Aftab*, No. 20, 21 Jauza 1382 (10 June 2003). See also: Danish Karokhel, 'Blasphemy Editor Unrepentant', *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, ARR No. 76, 1 Oct 2003.

Within and without: Hezb-e Islami

A special case is *Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan, or 'Islamic Party of Afghanistan'*, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Excluded from the Bonn process, the party joined the armed struggle against the Karzai government and its international supporters. Many former *Hezb* cadres, however, opted for collaboration with the Karzai government.¹²⁸

In May 2004, after a year of preliminary talks, a group that claimed it had broken with Hekmatyar and his politics, publicly announced its support for Karzai's government, agreeing to work 'in the framework of the constitution' and distancing itself from violence, terrorism and drug cultivation. Led by Muhammad Khaled Faruqi, former *Hezb* provincial commander of Paktika, it also claimed that it was talking 'on behalf of [the entire] *Hezb-e Islami*'.¹²⁹ The dissociation, however, did not come immediately. Initially, the group had submitted a registration request under the original name and coat of arms (including the original founding date) of Hekmatyar's party, and left blank the space in the form for the name of the leader. This was rejected, the party requested to change its name and to name a leader in order to show that it was no stopgap for Hekmatyar. Even though only the latter instruction was carried out the party was recognised. Hekmatyar distanced himself, calling it 'a small group of nobodies' that was forced to announce support for 'Kabul's American government'.

The party, with a strong (but not formal) faction in the parliament, is still ambivalent about its status. In an interview with the author, a leading party member insisted that the leadership had irreversibly distanced itself from Hekmatyar but that, however, the party rank-and-file did not accept that this was a separate party organisation. At the same time, the Faruqi group claims all former *Hezb* members and was about to convene a *shura* meeting with its –old – provincial heads in September 2006. Many Afghan observers therefore believe that the split is artificial and that the group might be a Trojan horse inside the Karzai administration.

Hezb-e Islami had experienced earlier splits. In 1988, deputy leader Qazi Muhammad Amin Waqad left the party and headed an alliance of six small groups, *Da'i-ye Ittehad-e Islami-ye Mujahedin-e Afghanistan*, or 'Missionaries of an Islamic Union of Afghanistan's Mujahedin'.¹³⁰ In 1994, Wahidullah Sabawun, the party's head of intelligence, left and later joined the Northern Alliance. In 2006, he registered his own party, *Hezb-e Muttahed-e Islami-*

¹²⁸ The author was shown a list of more than 200 former *Hezb* cadres who are now part of the administration by a former high-ranking *Hezb* official.

¹²⁹ See: 'Poshtibani-ye Shura-ye Tasmim-giri-ye Hezb-e Islami az daulat', *Anis* (Kabul), 14 Saur 1383 (4 May 2004); 'E'lamia-ye hai'at ba salahiat-e Shura-ye Tasmim-giri-ye Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan', *ibid*. Some authors believe that *Hezb* deputy leader Qutbuddin Hilal who has not returned to Afghanistan is behind the group. See e.g.: Syed Saleem Shahzad, 'Assault on Afghanistan's political soul', *Asia Times online*, 21 Apr 2004.

¹³⁰ *Afghan Jihad* (Peshawar), 1 (1987/88) 4, p. 142.

ye Afghanistan, or ‘United Islamic Party of Afghanistan’. Two other parties, *Hezb-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National Islamic Party of Afghanistan’, and *Hezb-e Muttahed-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘United National Islamic Party of Afghanistan’, applied for registration under their leaders Rohullah Ludin and Abdul Muhammad Sadeq respectively in 2005 but have not received it yet. These might be stop-gap parties in case *Hezb* was not registered under its original name. Abdulqader Emami Ghorī, a former *Hezb* leader from Ghor province and now a Wolesi Jirga member, also registered a party, *Hezb-e Solh wa Wahdat-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Peace and National Unity Party of Afghanistan (PNUPA)’¹³¹.

A legal Taleban party?

In 2004, there was even an attempt – somewhat similar to *Hezb-e Islami* - to set up a ‘legal Taleban party’. A hitherto unknown Maulawi Muhammad Arif Haqqani Karzai applied for registration of *De Afghanistan Madani Islami Milli Tanzim*, or ‘Civil Islamic National Organisation of Afghanistan’, announcing plans to bring together ‘all Taleban factions’ with a policy ‘completely opposite’ to that of the ‘hard-line Taleban’. However, the party was not heard of again.¹³²

The Shia parties

The largest of the Shia parties, *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami*, had already split into two during the Taleban era, when Ustad Muhammad Akbari struck an agreement with them and maintained control – under some Kandahari supervision - over parts of the Hazarajat, while Khalili’s wing remained with the NA. From their strongholds in Northern and Central areas, Mohaqqueq and Kazemi developed their own factions without officially leaving *Hezb-e Wahdat* before 2003. During both presidential and parliamentary elections, Mohaqqueq very effectively mobilized the Hazara community, projecting himself as the only Hazara leader in opposition to Karzai. He ended up third in the first elections, and the strongest candidate in Kabul in the second¹³³ - only to shift back into the government’s camp afterwards. When Mohaqqueq chose to support Sayyaf

¹³¹ This party experienced a change of leader in March 2005 when Emami Ghorī was removed for ‘lack of paying attention’ to party decisions and replaced with Dr. Nisar Ahmad Ahmadzai (communication of the party).

¹³² Salem Mandokhel, ‘Pe hewad ki de Ulemawo au Talebano gund e’lan shu’, *Kabul Weekly*, 23 Saur 1383 (12 May, 2004). The second ‘surname’ of the party leader - Karzai - signalled that he comes from the same area as the President but was only mentioned in the Dari/Pashto part of the weekly.

¹³³ He was 5.6% ahead of Qanooni. See:

<http://www.results.jemb.org/results.asp?ElectionID=1&ProvinceID=1&Order=Vote>.

as the government's candidate for *Wolesi Jirga* speaker against his erstwhile ally Qanooni, he lost much of the influence he had gained earlier.

A further Wahdat splinter group, *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami-ye Mellat-e Afghanistan*, or 'Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan's Nation', was formed by Qurban Ali Urfani. *Harakat* also split into two factions, with Mohseni's wing keeping the traditional name and representing its clerical wing, while Seyyed Hossein Anwari's wing, called *Harakat-e Islami-ye Mardom-e Afghanistan*, or 'People's Islamic Movement of Afghanistan', representing its military – and more secular – component. In February 2005, Mohseni stepped down as party leader and handed over to Hojjatolislam Seyyed Muhammad Ali Jawed, a minister in Karzai's first cabinet formed in late 2001 in Bonn.

There were several attempts to reunify the Shia camp and, later, at least *Hezb-e Wahdat*, but all failed. In September 2004, the Khalili wing held its 'restructuring congress' in Kabul, but none of the other invited faction leaders or independent individuals joined when it became obvious that the historical leader was not prepared to give up his leading role and allow new faces to emerge. In fact, Khalili informed the participants that the party's founders' *shura* had already 'decided' to re-elect him, and went on to name two deputies.

A non-Jihadi tanzim: Jombesh

While *Jombesh-e Melli Islami-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan', is a military-political organization like the Islamist *tanzim*, it has to be treated separately for its different background. Initially a pro-government militia, *Jombesh* allied itself with the NA in 1992. Only then was *Jombesh* officially established as a party. Since the fall of the Taleban, it has been oscillating between the government and the opposition camps. While its internal mechanisms, like that of the *tanzim*, are still dominated by its leader General Abdulrashid Dostum, as Giustozzi says, it is 'not just a loose coalition of military commanders, but also included political parties and groups'. Among them are former leftists (from PDPA, *Groh-e Kar*, SAZA activists and even former Maoists) to whom *Jombesh*'s secular outlook appealed after the collapse of the PDPA/*Hezb-e Watan* regime in 1992, Uzbek and Turkic nationalists as well as Islamists, who prevented *Jombesh* from developing a clear political and ideological identity. It also did not have a clear ethnic identity, until the time of the two *Loya Jirgas* in 2002 and 2003, when, according to Giustozzi, the *Jombesh* leadership increasingly started to focus on ethnic issues. But while 'public statements about the Turkic character of *Junbesh* were never issued (...), it became common practice for the national and local leaders of *Junbesh* to

present themselves in public and private discussions as the defenders of the rights of the Uzbek and Turkmen in Afghanistan'. This and the perceived under-representation of Uzbeks on the central governmental level again strengthened Dostum's position – which had been considerably undermined in 2002 - as the 'only defender of Uzbek (or Turkic) interests', "'useful", if not loved', as Giustozzi puts it.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, with the merger of *Hezb-e Mobarezin-e Melli-ye Demokrat-e Solh-e Afghanistan*, or 'Party of National Democratic Peace Fighters of Afghanistan', a party with a limited number of followers among Eastern Pashtuns led by Zhan Padshah Shinwari, with *Jombesh* in June 2005,¹³⁵ it acquired the chance to present itself as moving towards becoming an all-Afghan party.

At the same time, several unsuccessful attempts at internal democratization of *Jombesh* led to the alienation of many of its second-ranking leaders.¹³⁶ After Dostum was appointed to the symbolic post of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces in the Presidential Office in March 2005, he announced that he would step down as party head 'in a couple of months'¹³⁷ and his deputy Seyyed Nurullah was made 'caretaker' leader. The urge for change increased when *Jombesh* was hit by a scandal in June 2006 involving the beating-up of one of its parliamentarian after he reportedly suggested that Dostum step aside and allow for a *Jombesh* remake as a modern political organization.¹³⁸ This seems to have galvanized the modernizers' faction to prepare carefully for internal changes at a long planned third *Jombesh* congress, without pushing Dostum into outright opposition. The leading bodies of the party have not been convened for about two years.¹³⁹ With the military and pro-Dostum wing reinforced by a small but vocal Islamist group of former Hezbis, and the reformers almost equally strong, *Jombesh's* future remains in the balance.

Meanwhile, its continuing conflict with Gen. Abdulmalik's *Hezb-e Azadi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Afghanistan Freedom Party', continues in some Northern areas and has triggered some of the most violent inter-factional fighting that post-Taleban Afghanistan has witnessed. Abdulmalik's *Hezb-e Azadi* is accused of being used by *Jam'iat* as an instrument to undermine Dostum's

¹³⁴ Antonio Giustozzi, *The Ethnicisation of an Afghan Faction: Junbesh-i-Milli from its Origins to the Presidential Elections*, Crisis States Programme, Working paper series no. 1, London School of Economics, Working Paper no. 67, pp. 2, 5, 14-16.

¹³⁵ *Aina TV* (Jouzjan), 15 June 2005.

¹³⁶ According to leading *Jombesh* activists, six of the eight deputies left the party. Among them were ministers Dadfar and Qarqin, who moved closer to the Presidential camp but maintain relations with Dostum and *Jombesh*. Author's interviews in Kabul and Mazar, 2005/06.

¹³⁷ 'Dostum [to] resign from his party', *Cheragh*, 5 Apr 2005.

¹³⁸ The scandal was first publicised in the *New York Times*, 30 June 2006, and then picked up by the Afghan press. Some parliamentarians demanded an official inquiry.

¹³⁹ Author's interviews in Kabul, 2006.

constituency.¹⁴⁰ Statements by Interior Minister Zarar Ahmad Moqbel in mid-August 2006 such as ‘[t]hese parties have military wings, so they must be dissolve[d]’¹⁴¹ are seen in the same light, as they represent a selective approach to the disarmament of party militias.

The ethno-nationalists and the ethnic left

Amongst the ethno-nationalists, *Afghan Millat* has profoundly thrown in its lot with the government and is a major player in the Pashtun camp. With its leader Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady as a government minister and a group of some 10 MPs¹⁴², the party is well-positioned and has access to resources. A network of NGOs close to it helps to mobilise support in the provinces, not only in Pashtun areas. Still predominantly Pashtun, it is trying to shed its old Pashtunist image and is making efforts to mobilize among other ethnic groups.¹⁴³ Two other factions, led by Shams-ul-Huda Shams (d. Dec. 2005; he is followed by his son Eng. Ajmal Shams as party leader¹⁴⁴) and by Qudratullah Haddad, have become marginalised.

Hezb-e Kangara-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan, or ‘National Congress Party of Afghanistan’ - founded as *Harakat ba su-ye Kangara-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Movement towards a National Congress’ - in Winter 2001/02 in Belgium, and renamed a party in 2003, maintains a high profile in the media. Its leader, the vocal poet Latif Pedram, openly criticized both Loya Jirgas as undemocratic, and rejected the establishment of US military bases on Afghan territory and Afghanistan’s ‘strategic partnership’ with the USA. However, he only scored 1.4 per cent in the presidential elections – being the strongest of the small candidates -, and the party experienced a split in 2006 with some leaders criticizing Pedram for dominating the party and for his strong anti-Pashtun tone.

SAZA still has a considerable following among the educated, and also villagers, in the North-East and North, and reportedly maintains some armed groups that were pro-government militias

¹⁴⁰ Gen. Malik, a former Dostum deputy, briefly switched sides to join forces with the Taliban in 1997 after he had accused Dostum of having ordered the assassination of his brother Rasul Pahlawan a year earlier. When he found out that the Taliban had no intention of making him the ruler of Northern Afghanistan he changed sides again and drove them out of Mazar-e Sharif, again in cooperation with *Hezb-e Wahdat*. The captured Taliban were massacred. Malik fled abroad after the Taliban retook Mazar a year later and lived in the USA during the Taliban regime, when the latter demanded that he be handed over in exchange for Osama bin Laden. After the Taliban’s fall, Malik returned to Kabul and later to the North, apparently protected by Dostum’s main rival Muhammad Atta, the governor of Balkh province, and his Kabul allies.

¹⁴¹ Sayed Yaqub Ibrahim, ‘Afghan Interior Ministry Takes on Armed Factions’, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, IWPR Afghan Recovery Report, No. 228, 1 Sept 2006.

¹⁴² In October 2006, party leaders claimed that the group has 14 full-members and 9 sympathisers. Author’s interview, Kabul 2006.

¹⁴³ The head of its women’s wing, e.g., is Tajik. Author’s interviews in Kabul, 2006. This tendency seems to have started much earlier, though, in the mid-1980s. See: Bucherer-Dietschi and Jentsch (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 368.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Afghan Millat leader Shamsul Huda Shams dies’, *The News International*, 6 Dec. 2005. The Shams faction had supported Asefi in the Presidential election against Karzai.

under Najibullah. Renamed in exile as *Nohzat-e Demokrasi*, or ‘Democratic Movement’, at the time of the Aachen conference of June 2001, its leader Mahbubullah Kushani maintained relations both with the ex-PDPA left - in particular with the ‘Karmalist’ wing, *Nohzat-e Maihani* - as well as with certain ex-Maoists. After the fall of the Taleban, SAZA became active again inside Afghanistan., with One wing joined *Paiman-e Kabul*, or ‘Kabul Accord’¹⁴⁵, another the unified with NCPDA¹⁴⁶ for a while, while a third apparently continued to operate independently for a time. Remarkably, on these occasions, SAZA cooperated with (formerly) Pashtun nationalists, indicating that it is in the process of shedding some of its ethno-nationalist origins. SAZA still does not press for its registration as a party; as Kushani says, as it wants to keep open the chance for an envisaged larger party. It also rejects much of the current peace process as not being genuinely democratic.¹⁴⁷

Two more ethnic-leftist groups are active. *Groh-e Kar* kept contacts with Dostum’s *Jombesh* through the 1990s but one group of its members launched a new party in 2002, *Jombesh-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-e Afghanistan*, or ‘National Solidarity Movement of Afghanistan’¹⁴⁸, led by Eng. Ahmad. SAFZA officially ceased to exist in 1984 but is still reported to have a number of followers in the North-East, including a small militia in Darwaz district (Badakhshan).¹⁴⁹

Another party, *Hezb-e Paiwand-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National Alliance Party of Afghanistan’, started with a minority component as a mainly political vehicle for the Baghlan Isma’ili community leader, Seyyed Mansur Naderi, whose sons led a small militia during the different regimes to protect their vulnerable community. The original group was called *Jabhaye Roshanfikran*, or ‘Intelligentsia Front’, and included some ex-leftist groups and members, such as Zuhhur Razmju, a former PDPA Polit Bureau member. The MoJ rejected its registration under this name, so it was forced to change.

The ex-PDPA Left

The ex-PDPA left today is more divided than ever. There are at least 15 registered parties led by former PDPA officials that try to appeal to this *clientèle*. While these organizational splits reproduce the old Khalq/Parчам gap, the differentiation goes even deeper today, reflecting ‘Aminist’, ‘Najibist’ and ‘Karmalist’ tendencies. At the same time, these parties claim that they

¹⁴⁵ See chapter: *The ‘new democrats’*.

¹⁴⁶ On *Nohzat-e Maihani*, Aachen, *Paiman-e Kabul* and NCPDA, see below in the chapter on the new democrats.

¹⁴⁷ Author’s interview in Kabul, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Not to be confused with Ishaq Gailani’s ‘National Solidarity Movement’; both parties use a different Dari term for ‘movement’.

¹⁴⁹ Both, the SAZA and SAFZA militias in Darwar came under UN-led DDR in 2004.

have left the past behind. Some claim that they never really were communists but patriots¹⁵⁰, and refer to themselves as ‘non-ideological’¹⁵¹, and support a (free) market economy.¹⁵² Others say that they always supported social progress, see e.g. Nur-ul-Haq Ulumi: ‘We wanted progress, and that’s still what we want’¹⁵³. Abdulkabir Ranjbar, the leader of *Hezb-e Demokrat*, or ‘Democrat Party’, declared: ‘I am proud of my past because I was always in the service of the people’.¹⁵⁴

The first party from this end of the political spectrum was established in August 2003 by former general Nur-ul-Haq Ulumi, *Hezb-e Mutahed-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National United Party of Afghanistan (NUPA)’. What was later called its ‘founders’ congress’ was initially announced as a ‘session of intellectuals, national personalities and former members of *Hezb-e Watan*’. While the official speakers emphasised that the party had learned from the past and would ‘not repeat its mistakes’, some of the 850 grassroots participants repeatedly broke out into cheers on *Hezb-e Watan* or Dr. Najibullah and called each other ‘comrades’.¹⁵⁵ This led to difficulties for the party when it applied to be registered. In August 2003, the Supreme Court, acting on a petition by five Jihadi leaders¹⁵⁶, referred to the *Hezb-e Watan* ban by the mujahedin government after the fall of Najibullah’s regime in May 1992¹⁵⁷. Finally, registration took 14 months while the law provides for a reply within three months.¹⁵⁸

Many former leftists, however, criticised the launch of this party because it had been preceded by almost two years of preparatory work with the participation of 21 ex-leftist groups, not just from the former PDPA. Most of them preferred a lengthier process of building up the party bottom-up and accused Ulumi of going it alone. Consequently, 18 of the initial participating groups withdrew.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁰ They refer to the fact that Hafizullah Amin was killed by the Soviet invaders but do not mention that he had declared Afghanistan the country of the ‘second model revolution’. Author’s interviews in Kabul, 2003.

¹⁵¹ See e.g. the declaration ‘the party does not have any ideological basis’. *A snapshot of National Progress Party*, press release, [Kabul, Nov 2004].

¹⁵² See e.g., ‘De yawwali pe lur’, Joint declaration of the ex-Khalqi parties *Milli Yauwalai*, *Hezb-e Melli* and *De Sole Ghurdzang*, 21. Assad 1384 (31 July 2005).

¹⁵³ Graeme Smith, ‘Afghans may vote in Communists they drove out’, *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 22 Sept 2005.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with *Radio Free Afghanistan (Radio Azadi)*, 29 Nov 2005. There is, indeed, a growing number of Afghans who hail, in hindsight, some aspects of the PDPA government. Women, in particular, had considerably more rights, at least in urban areas.

¹⁵⁵ Observed by the author at the NUPA founding conference on 22 Aug 2003.

¹⁵⁶ *BIA News Bulletin*, 16 Aug 2004.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Leadership Council Abolishes Communist Structures’, *Radio Afghanistan*, 6 May 1992, cit. in: BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3 The Far East; C. SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT; LEADERSHIP MEASURES; FE/1375/C1/ 1; 8 May 1992. See also: Rasuly, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

¹⁵⁸ According to Art. 5 (1), the Political Parties Law requires a reply by the MoJ to the applying party – negative or positive – within two months, (See: Regulations governing the registration of political parties, see: <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/partylaw-engl.htm>).

¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Ulumi claims that many came back to the party later when they learned that it was working. The party is indeed present in large parts of the country.

Soon after, three groups led by former Khalqis, emerged: *Hezb-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘National Party of Afghanistan’, of former minister Abdulrashid Aryan¹⁶⁰, *De Afghanistan Sole Ghurdzang*, or ‘Afghanistan Peace Movement’, of former Defence Minister Shanawaz Tanai¹⁶¹ and *De Melli Yauwali Gund*, or ‘National Unity Party’, led by Abdulrashid Jalili, a minister under Amin. In contrast to Ulumi’s party, they did not face any problems in getting quickly registered. In July 2005, the three parties declared their intention to start building a ‘broad, strong, nation-wide, independent and national party’, agreed to form a ‘front’ on the basis of a ‘joint platform’ that would also be open to ‘other national, progressive and democratic parties and individuals’, and to jointly campaign during the elections.¹⁶²

Some smaller parties of mainly Parchami background participated in attempts to set up alliances with new democratic parties. The most active amongst them are Baktash’s *Hezb-e Taraqi-ye Melli*, or ‘National Progress Party (NPP)¹⁶³, itself a merger of 17 groups, and *Hezb-e Refah-e Mardom-Afghanistan*, or ‘People’s Welfare Party of Afghanistan’, led by Mia Gul Wasiq.¹⁶⁴ Both go back to leftist forces that participated in broader alliances built in exile in Pakistan in the late 1990s, *Aksariat-e Khamush*, or ‘Silent Majority’, and *Nohzat zed-e Jang*, respectively. *Hezb-e Tafahum wa Demokrasi-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan Understanding and Democracy Party’ (AUDP), led by former deputy minister Ahmad Shahin claims to be established already in 1989 while Muhammad Zubair Piruz’ *Hezb-e Sa’adat-e Mardom-e Afghanistan* (APWP) started as *Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*¹⁶⁵ in 1989.

The alliance building, however, was hampered by disagreements between former PDPA members and opponents about whether the 7th Saur events were a ‘revolution’ or a ‘coup d’etat’. This issue stalled another attempt to bring together some 25 parties from former PDPA, *Shola’i* and new democratic background in July 2006.

Currently, there are at least three ongoing initiatives to build a coalition of the ex-PDPA left. Two of them have been carried forward by exile PDPA politicians who are increasingly visiting Afghanistan. In June, ‘Najibist’ forces from inside and outside the country – the non-registered *Sazman bara-ye Demokrasi dar Afghanistan*, or ‘Organisation for Democracy in Afghanistan (ODA)’, and the *Kamisiun-e muwaqat-e insijam-e a’za-ye Hezb-e Watan*, ‘Temporary Coordination Commission of *Hezb-e Watan* members’, led by former minister and PDPA

¹⁶⁰ This party used the old name PDPA until 2003. Author’s interview, Kabul 2003.

¹⁶¹ Tanai unsuccessfully attempted a coup against Najibullah in 1990 and subsequently fled to Pakistan where many of his Pashtun cadres joined the Taleban.

¹⁶² ‘De yauwali pe lur’, *op. cit.*

¹⁶³ The NPP itself is a merger of 17 groups and was initially backed by a member of the royal family, Ali A. Seraj.

¹⁶⁴ 2001-02, the party was called *Hezb-e Nejat-e Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan Salvation Party’. ‘A Brief Historical Background of Hizb-I-Refa Mardum Afghanistan’ [sic], pamphlet, [Kabul, Nov 2004].

¹⁶⁵ See footnote 4.

Central Committee member Eng. Nazar Muhammad, signed a protocol of cooperation as a ,first step to coordinating and gathering the members of *Hezb-e Watan* and all the ‘politically interested’ in order to achieve ‘organic and organisational unity’. Together they form what is called *Kamisiun-e muwaqqat-e insijam-e a’za-ye Hezb-e Watan wa kuli-ye niruha-ye melli wa watandost*, or ‘Temporary Coordination Commission of *Hezb-e Watan* members and all National and Patriotic Forces’. This alliance favours a concentric model, forming a ‘non-tribal and non-regional, country-wide party’ and a ‘national united front of all patriotic forces’.¹⁶⁶ On 7 September 2006, representatives of 12 smaller parties and non-registered groups, mainly based inside Afghanistan, decided to merge into one single party.¹⁶⁷

In a third move, members of the ‘Karmalist’ *Nohzat-e Maihani Demokrasi wa Taraqi-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Patriotic Movement for Democracy and Progress in Afghanistan’, that was established abroad¹⁶⁸, set up and registered an inland wing called *Nohzat-e faragir-e Demokrasi wa Taraqi-ye Afghanistan*, or Broad Movement for Democracy and Progress in Afghanistan’. It is coordinated by former second tier PDPA officials, Sher Muhammad Bazgar and Sulaiman Kamjo. In a declaration, issued on 25 February 2006, the Patriotic Movement ‘approved’ the programme and statutes of *Nohzat-e faragir* and announced that it would dissolve its own organisation into the new one. At the same time, the former PDPA leaders that inspired the Patriotic Movement declared that they would not seek leading posts in the new party. Up to now, the registration of *Nohzat-e faragir* has not attracted much public attention¹⁶⁹.

Apart from these, there are a number of groups in exile. The most interesting is a renewed *Hezb-e Watan-e Afghanistan* ‘in exile’ that held its first conference on 28 June 1997 in Munich and elected Muhammad Isa Jassur, a young former *Hezb-e Watan* member, as its leader. The party views itself as a continuation of the PDPA and Najibullah’s party of the same name, hailing his ‘policy of national reconciliation’, but also projecting a clean break with its ‘failures,

¹⁶⁶ ‘E’lamia-ye mushtarak-e Sazman-e Dimukrasi bara-ye Afghanistan wa Kamisiun-e muwaqqat-e insijam-e a’za-ye Hezb-e Watan’, [Kabul,] 25. Jauza 1385 (14 June 2006).

¹⁶⁷ The participating parties and groups are as follows: NPP; AUDP; APWP; *Shura-ye Maslahat-e Melli*, or ‘National Compromise Council’ (Muhammad Seddiq Khawari); one ODA faction led by Abdul Rasheed Janbaz; *Sazman-e Afghanistan-e Newin*, or ‘Organisation New Afghanistan’ (Abdul Khalil Maihanpoor, a split-off of Tanai’s *De Sole Ghurdzang*), *Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Wahed*, or ‘United Afghanistan Party’ (Muhammad Wasel Rahimi), *Shura-ye Insijam-e Hezb-e Wahed*, or ‘Coordination Council of a United Party’ (Muhammad Akbar Urya), *Shura-ye Solh wa Dimukrasi bara-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Peace and Democracy for Afghanistan Council’ (Seyyed Sarwar Tabesh), *Shura-ye Insijam-e Dimukrasi bara-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Coordination Council for Democracy in Afghanistan’ (Mir Muhammad Akbar Zafer), *Ittehad-e Millat-e Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan Nation Union’ (Ms. Adela Kohistani) and *Bakhsh-e Aksariat-e usulgera wa wahdatkhwah-e Hezb-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or the ‘The principled and pro-unity majority of the National party of Afghanistan’ under MP Seyyed Muhammad Gulabzoi, a former PDPA Minister of the Interior who had just split off Aryan’s *Hezb-e Melli*. Interview of the author with Dr. Baktash, 10 Sept 2006. No documents have been received yet on this.

¹⁶⁸ With the participation of prominent former PDPA leaders Mahmud Baryalai, Nur Ahmad Nur, Najmuddin Kawiani, Farid Mazdak etc.

¹⁶⁹ The party claims to have 5 MPs. Information received from A. Giustozzi.

subjective deviations and extremism’ of the past.¹⁷⁰ It went even further at its second party congress in November 2000 in Frankfurt/Main (Germany) when it declared all former PDPA leaders, including Babrak Karmal, and the officers linked to Dostum’s anti-Najib ‘coup’ in 1992 ‘national traitors’ and expelled them from the party.¹⁷¹ It is not clear; however, how much this party is active inside Afghanistan.

Previously left of the PDPA¹⁷², the former KoJA remains active as (*Hezb-e Ettehad-e Azadi-ye Mardom-e Afghanistan (AAMA)*), or ‘Freedom Unity (Party) of the People of Afghanistan’, led by Sufi Muhammad Shena, but has not registered. Overall, ‘no viable [single] successor’ has emerged amongst the post-PDPA parties yet.¹⁷³

The ‘new democrats’

In the post-Taliban period, a new current emerged from underground and exile – what is here referred to as the ‘new democrats’. This is a new generation of political activists, that evolved mainly from the leftist camp, both ex-PDPA and ex-‘Maoist’, but also from amongst former Mujahedin who wanted to transcend old political dividing lines. The four most interesting of the new parties, that involve almost only young activists that had no part in the bloodshed of the past, are *Hezb-e Kar wa Tause’a-ye Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan Labour and Development Party (ALDP)’; *Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-ye Jawanan-e Afghanistan (HaMJA)*, or ‘National Solidarity Party of Afghanistan’s Youth’, the Republican Party and AFDM.¹⁷⁴

The ALDP was founded as *Hezb-e Ashti-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan (HAMA)*, or ‘National Reconciliation Party of Afghanistan’, in 1999 inside Afghanistan, by young Hazara intellectuals around Zulfiqar Khan Omid, who comes from the family of an influential *khan* in Daykundi who was involved with *Shura-ye Ittefaq* in the 1990s. It united with some intellectual groups organised in Tehran and even a *Hezb-e Sabz-e Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan Green Party’, led by Ms. Ma’suma Muhammadi.¹⁷⁵ Its original name, however, was rejected by the MoJ when the party applied for registration – with the remarkable reason that ‘national reconciliation has

¹⁷⁰ Kamita-ye Markazi-ye Hezb-e Watan Afghanistan, ‘Payyam-e Awwalin Konferans-e Sarasari-ye Hezb-e Watan dar kharej-e keshwar by ahzab, sazmanha wa niruha-ye solh-dost-e jehan’, *Watan* (Antwerp), No. 2, 1st year, 13 Sumbula 1376 (3 Sept 1997).

¹⁷¹ See: *Green Left Weekly*, Broadway NSW (Australia), no. 364, 9 June 1999; author’s interview with Mr. Jassur in Berlin, 2000; Shamim Shahid, ‘Najibullah’s Watan Party reformed’, *The Nation* (Lahore), 26 Feb 2001; Jan Heller and Martin Ling, ‘Afghanistan: Auf der Suche nach einer Dritten Kraft’, *Neues Deutschland* (Berlin), 29 March 2001; John Ishiyama, ‘The Sickle and the Minaret: Communist Successor Parties in Yemen and Afghanistan after the Cold War’, *MERIA Journal* Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2005), p. 17.

¹⁷² It left the PDPA in 1988 because it rejected the Geneva Accords; see footnote 80.

¹⁷³ Ishiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ For Republicans and AFDM, see above.

¹⁷⁵ No more information available about this group.

already been achieved – so why call a party this?'.¹⁷⁶ Its background makes ALDP a natural bridge-builder between new democratic and democratising ex-Jihadi forces. It is also forced to do this; with its leadership almost entirely composed of Hazaras¹⁷⁷ it will be extremely difficult to broaden its base to other ethnic groups, so the ALDP actively participates in inter-ethnic party coalition-building. In 2006, Hazaras that had broken away from *Hezb-e Kangara* joined the ALDP. One of them, Muhammad Ayub Baran, was elected the new ALDP chairman in summer 2006 at a party conference with 470 participants - the first time in post-Taleban Afghanistan that a party leader was voted out from his post but did not leave the party.¹⁷⁸ HaMJA emerged from a mainly Pashtun youth organisation established in Quetta in 1998. It is led by Jamil Karzai and still concentrates on organising the youth. Calling itself a 'moderate party', it oscillates between criticising and supporting the President.¹⁷⁹

The June 2001 Aachen conference led to the establishment of *Paiman-e Kabul* in the late summer of 2002 in Afghanistan itself. Bringing together six former leftist groups, that call themselves 'constitutionalists', it aims to establish a 'non-tribal, all-Afghan [social] democratic party'.¹⁸⁰ Simultaneously, Spanta and independent activists like Isma'il Akbar and Qasim Akhgar tried to mobilize free-lance intellectuals in meetings across the country into the *Ittehadia-ye Roshanfikran-e Mustaqil*, or 'Association of Independent Intellectuals' – sometimes called *Khat-e Sewum*, or 'Third Way', in 2004. In November that year, after the presidential elections, it publicly criticized Karzai for his 'coalition with the warlords' and called on him to appoint a cabinet 'of competent and right' people that would 'end the rule of the gun'.¹⁸¹

In Afghanistan, the groups that had participated as observers at the Bonn conference undertook steps towards closer cooperation. Only weeks before the Emergency Loya Jirga (ELJ), in May 2002, four of them¹⁸² founded *Shura-ye Mudafe'an-e Solh wa Demokrasi*, or the 'Council of Defenders of Peace and Democracy (CDPD)'. At the same time, a remarkable coalition of

¹⁷⁶ Communication with Omid, Kabul 2003.

¹⁷⁷ The party claims 30% non-Hazara members.

¹⁷⁸ 'We had the dream to have a big election [involving all party members] but our budget was insufficient.' Communication with Omid, Kabul 2006.

The leadership changes in the Republican Party from Arya'i to Sanjar in late 2002 – by an election – led to the withdrawal of the former party leader from politics. The change in PNUPA in 2005 was based on a decision of the party leadership. In the case of the LDP, the former leader now heads the party's drive to extend its organisation.

¹⁷⁹ Jamil Karzai is a second-grade nephew of the President.

¹⁸⁰ Participating groups were CfDA, SAZA, *Hezb-e Adalat wa Refah-e Afghanistan*, or 'Afghanistan Justice and Welfare Party of Afghanistan (JWPA)' led by Sher Pacha Qiam, *Wulusi Millat* and two groups mainly active in Western Afghanistan, *Shura-ye Insijam-e Melli wa Mardomi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National and Popular Coordination Council of Afghanistan', and *Anjuman-e Wafaq-e Melli*, or 'National Unity Society'. Author's interviews in 2003-04.

¹⁸¹ *Hewad* (Kabul), 23 Nov 2004. *Shura-ye Nazar* intellectuals like Eng. Mohiuddin Mehdi also participated.

¹⁸² *Itifaq-e Mubarezan* had not fully established itself inside Afghanistan by then.

former activists from *Hezb-e Islami*, SAZA, *Mustaza'fin* and independent Northern leftists came together in *Shura-ye Melli-ye Solh wa Demokrasi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Council for Peace and Democracy (NCPDA)' led by Eng. Usman Tareq¹⁸³. Both groups transcended ethnic as well as old political dividing lines.

Encouraged by the appointment of the secular-minded Minister for Women's Affairs, Sima Samar, and the Uzbek and former Maoist, Azam Dadfar, as the two deputy chairs of the ELJ over all Jihadi candidates – an event that showed that pro-democratic forces constituted a considerable force –, they decided to nominate a candidate for head of state at the CLJ. In coordination with other pro-democratic forces, they established an informal alliance called *Ittilaf-e Niruha-ye Melli wa Demokratik-e Afghanistan*, or 'Coalition of National and Democratic Forces of Afghanistan', and contacted Hazara and Uzbek deputies to find a joint candidate. When this ultimately did not work out, they went alone and supported the acting deputy Minister for Mines and Industries, Neda'i, a long-time democratic activist, who had declared his willingness to run at the last minute.¹⁸⁴ In the election, Neda'i only received 89 votes, less than he had received for his nomination – some other democrats had decided to vote for the only women candidate Mas'uda Jalal.

It turned out that the new democrats, with only a handful of members amongst the 1,501 ELJ delegates, were not able to assert influence on the meeting. The developments prior to the *Loya Jirga* also had not been in their favour. The new groups had slowed down their public activities waiting for the political parties law to be passed in an attempt to prove that they were serious in their demand for establishing the rule of law - but this left them unknown to the population. Armed factions were still dominant throughout the country. The killing of Aviation Minister Dr. Abdulrahman in February 2002 who, as rumour had it, had fallen out with *Shura-ye Nazar* and was building up a monarchist party¹⁸⁵, as well as mass-arrests of *Hezb-e Islami* activists in Kabul two months later, served as a warning to the new democrats. In the ELJ itself, the armed factions had taken over the choreography through the provincial governors, who almost without exception were linked to them and had already used their power locally to prevent the election

¹⁸³ See also: M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op.cit.)*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁸⁴ The coalition's initial candidate Muhammad Nur Sohaili agreed to step aside for the elderly Neda'i who, despite presenting himself as the coalition's nominee, failed to use the prepared speech and lost a chance to introduce the democratic forces of the country to a broader Afghan public. See also: M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op. cit.)*, pp. 82f.

¹⁸⁵ See: M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op. cit.)*, pp. 72-74; Dr. Abdulrahman was a deputy to Ahmad Shah Mas'ud during the Taliban regime. Karzai called his killing an 'assassination', named involved high-ranking officials and ordered their arrest but soon the investigation faltered and the accused were released without comment. 'Karzai says minister assassinated; points finger at Afghan officials', *CNN*, 15 Feb 2002. (<http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/central/02/15/afghan.minister/index.html>); John F. Burns, *Afghan Leader Blames Officials in Killing of Aide*, *New York Times*, 16 Feb. 2002.

of undesirable candidates prior to the ELJ.¹⁸⁶ The factions were unexpectedly granted this chance to dominate the ELJ when the UN and US representatives and President Karzai forced the Afghan Independent Loya Jirga Commission, against the agreed rules, to approve 50 additional ELJ seats for Karzai appointees. In the *jirga* tent, the *Shura-ye Nazar*-controlled intelligence service openly threatened deputies.¹⁸⁷

After their defeat at the ELJ, the democratic groups took the next step of building a broader coalition in preparation for the presidential election. In January 2003, representatives of eleven democratic groups met for a workshop in Islamabad and decided to initiate a *Jabha-ye Melli bara-ye Demokrasi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Front for Democracy in Afghanistan (NFDA)',¹⁸⁸ by actively approaching other 'national, democratic and intellectual forces' to join. The plan was to establish a joint working agenda up to the 2004 elections. The front's general aim was defined as the 'democratisation of Afghanistan'. It established relations with NCPDA and two other coalitions, *I'tilaf-e Niruha-ye Melli wa Mutaraqi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Coalition of National and Progressive Forces of Afghanistan (CNPFA)',¹⁸⁹ and *Shura-ye Melli-ye Hedayat az Solh wa Demokrasi*, or 'National Council for the Support of Peace and Democracy', an NCPDA offshoot that mainly united its ex- *Mustaza'fin* and SAZA members.¹⁹⁰ When the front was officially established on 11 March 2003 with some 40 political parties, women's, students' and youth organisations as well as councils of clerics, tribal elders and minorities - half of them already active during the Taliban regime -, the NCPDA participated. *Paiman-e Kabul* was split on the issue, with two of its parties taking part, and the CNPFA and Neda'i's NUFD¹⁹¹ remaining outside.

At the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the democrats – claiming 38 to 40 deputies¹⁹² - suffered another defeat. Azam Dadfar had been chosen by some secular Hazaras and Uzbeks and the

¹⁸⁶ Officially, eight ELJ candidates were killed before the meeting and the UN SRSG was reluctant to go public about this. A press conference was called on the issue only a few days before the ELJ commenced. See: 'UNO: Acht Kandidaten für afghanische Loja Dschirga im Mai ermordet', AFP 27 May 2002.

¹⁸⁷ See also: Omar Zakhilwal and Adeena Niazi, 'The Warlords Win in Kabul', *New York Times*, 21 June 2002.

¹⁸⁸ The participants were the four CDPD member groups; NCPDA; *Shura-ye Melli-ye Taraqi-khwahan-e Afghanistan*, or 'National Progressive Council of Afghanistan (NPCA)', led by Abulahrar Ramizpur, a break-away from the Afghan Liberal Party; a group around the newspaper *Mash'al-e demokrasi*, or 'Torch of Democracy', led by Fazl Rahman Urya; JWPA; *Kanun-e Demokratha-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Afghanistan Center of Democrats', led by Eng. Muhammad Nur Sohaili; *Itifaq-e Mubarizan* and *Ittehadia-ye Sartasari-ye Zanan-e Afghanistan*, or 'All-Afghan Women's Association (AAWA)', led by Soraya Parlika, a former high-ranking PDPA official and women's rights campaigner.

¹⁸⁹ An umbrella of 16 leftist groups working from Peshawar at this time that later morphed into NPP.

¹⁹⁰ They split off after Pashtun NCPDA members offered the organisation's leadership to a military commander from Logar.

¹⁹¹ Revived in 1994, it unsuccessfully tried to establish a 'broad democratic front' in 1998, *Jabha-ye Muttahed-e Mardom-e Afghanistan*, or 'United People's Front of Afghanistan', probably together with the 'Progressive Democrats'. Sometimes, it still uses this name.

¹⁹² A move to change the country's official name in the draft constitution from 'Islamic Republic' to 'Republic of Afghanistan' won 151 signatures (out of 502 delegates) and showed that the democrats actually were not alone in

democrats as their candidate. Against this agreement, the NFDA spokesman for the CLJ, Khwaja Sher Pacha Qiam, ran for deputy chairman and the eight votes he received cost Dadfar the election as the undisputed second of the two deputies. That ended the NFDA's unity in the jirga and caused an immense loss of trust among potential allies.¹⁹³

The CLJ started to put more distance between Karzai and the democrats who, until then, had supported him. They were particularly offended when amongst the 50 Karzai appointees for the jirga there was not a single democrat, and Karzai opted instead for a coalition with Sayyaf and other warlords. By then, the front had lost precious time in establishing country-wide structures for the 2004 presidential elections. Ultimately, none of the democratic forces nominated a candidate of their own¹⁹⁴. Again, they supported Karzai after he announced his 'reformist agenda'. By then, the NFDA had proven too large and ineffective, and its activity soon fizzled out. Also, the NCPDA had disintegrated again¹⁹⁵, and there were tensions in the CDPD.

Though the front was never officially declared dead, some of its driving forces started the next attempt for unification only a few days before the presidential election. On 1 October 2004, 15 parties established the *Kamisiun-e Mashwarati-ye Melli wa Demokratik-e Afghanistan*, or 'Advisory Commission of National and Democratic Parties (AC-NDP)',¹⁹⁶ - for six months, at first - to learn from the past mistakes and 'approach the parliamentary elections in a coordinated way' to ensure that 'true representatives of the people' would be elected. The new alliance urged Karzai to form a new cabinet of professionals, arguing that his election victory was a clear sign of rejection by the people of 'extremism and warlordism' as well as of Karzai's 'policy of compromise and power-sharing' with the warlords.

In general, there was a lack of mutual confidence and a strong overestimation of its own strength by some of the NFDA parties that finally prevented it from setting up a joint list of

the *Loya Jirga* – even if CLJ chairman Mujaddedi denounced the signatories as 'infidels' and rejected to put the petition to a vote. 'These 151 should join hands', a democratic activist told the author afterwards.

¹⁹³ It had been agreed by the NFDA that Qiam should use the chance of his candidature to present the front – and then withdraw in Dadfar's favour. As a result, Dadfar would have the same number of votes as Sayyaf's candidate Kashaf who was made a third deputy then. Qiam later cooperated with *Shura-ye Nazar*.

¹⁹⁴ Neda'i run again but had moved close to *Shura-ye Nazar*.

¹⁹⁵ See also: M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op. cit.)*, p. 75-77.

¹⁹⁶ Officially, it was only announced one month later. 'E'lamia-ye Kamisiun-e Mashwarati-ye Melli wa Demokratik-e Afghanistan', press release, Kabul, 10 Aqrab 1383 (1 Nov 2004). Founding members were: Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-ye Jawanan-e Afghanistan (led by Jamil Karzai); Hezb-e Jamhuri-khwahan-e Afghanistan (Sebghatullah Sanjar); Hezb-e Kar wa Tause'a (Zulfeqar Khan Omid); Hezb-e Refah-e Mardom-e Afghanistan (Mia Gul Wasiq); Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Melli-ye Aqwam-e Afghanistan (Muhammad Zarif Naseri); De Milli Yauwalai Gund (Abdul Rashid Jalili); Sazman-e Islami-ye Afghanistan-e Jawan (Seyyed Jawad Hossaini); Hezb-e Arman-e Mardom-e Afghanistan (Serajuddin Zaffari); Hezb-e Tafahum wa Demokrasi-ye Afghanistan (Ahmad Shahin); Hezb-e Taraqi-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan (Asef Baktash); Hezb-e Sa'adat-e Mardom-e Afghanistan (Muhammad Zubair Piruz); Hezb-e Liberal-e Afghanistan (Ajmal Sohail); Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Afghanistan (Abdul Khaleq Nemat); Nohzat-e Azadi wa Demokrasi-ye Afghanistan (Abdul Raqib Jawed Kohestani); Hezb-e Azadi-khwahan-e Mardom-e Afghanistan (Feda Muhammad Ehsas). Zulfeqar Omid became its provisional spokesman. Hezb-e Resalat-e Mardom (Nur Aqa Ru'in) and Hezb-e Afghanistan-e Wahed (Muhammad Wasel Rahimi) joined the AC-NDP later.

parliamentary candidates. Even on Election Day, some parties had left the Commission already. The Republicans decided to avoid the tiring discussions and concentrated on building their own structures in the longer term. *Milli Yauwalai* rejected replacing its leader Jalili¹⁹⁷ and joined hands with other former Khalqis. Jamil Karzai's YSP was seeking more potent allies and joined the President's camp - while Hosseini's *Afghanistan-e Jawan* did the same and joined Qanooni while also staying in the AC-NDF.¹⁹⁸ As a result, the AC-NDP parties split their votes all over the country. In Kabul alone, the leaders of ten of them – plus four of former member parties – competed with each other.¹⁹⁹ With one exception – Jamil Karzai - all suffered heavy defeats. Currently, the AC-NDP continues to work on a low key while some of its member parties simultaneously explore other ways of coalition-building or unification. There is little proof that they have any control over the eight MPs they lay claim to as members or sympathisers, or that these MPs cooperate regularly amongst each other. Apart from a lack of parliamentary experience, it is still extremely difficult for them to withstand the gravitational attraction of the armed factions and their ethnic mobilisation. The democratic forces still have a long way to go before becoming a force to reckon with.

From amongst the former Maoist groups, some remain active, but it is not clear whether they maintain independent organisations. *Raha'i*, that was particularly strong in Western Afghanistan, still seems to have support there. Some have joined forces with former *mujahedin* in the newly founded *Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Afghanistan*, or 'Solidarity Party of Afghanistan', a member of the AC-NCP. Most strikingly, some of their prominent members like ministers Spanta and Dadfar²⁰⁰ have evolved – similar to European politicians José Manuel Barroso and Joschka Fischer – from radical into moderate leftists. SAMA has a clandestine leadership abroad. It does not trust that the democratic development is irreversible, rejects exposing its remaining structure and has criticised comrades who have opted for starting legal political parties. Some other groups founded *Hezb-e Kamunist (Mao'ist)-e Afghanistan*, or 'Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan', in 2004. It seems to be mainly active in exile, where it has started publishing *Shola-ye Jawed* again.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ The AC-NDP had decided that no member party should have former PDPA leaders (Polit Bureau and cabinet level) as its leader – in order to avoid attacks from mujahedin forces during the election campaign.

¹⁹⁸ Only Jamil Karzai's HAMJA officially terminated its membership in the AC-NDP by a declaration issued on 17 Jaddi 383 (6 Jan 2005). Hossaini's party used an AC-NDP decision that member parties are allowed to simultaneously participate in other coalitions. One of the party leaders told the author that the only reason for changing coalitions was that financial support was supplied elsewhere.

¹⁹⁹ Ru'in, Naseri, Baktash, Nuria Haqnegar, Wasiq, Rahimi, Piruz, Sobhani, Shahin, and Hossaini plus Jamil Karzai, Sanjar, Ramezpur and Qiam.

²⁰⁰ See their efforts to establish a social-democratic party. Both were formerly with *Raha'i*.

²⁰¹ This is a merger of four Maoist organizations (amongst them *Paikar*). It belongs to the 'Revolutionary Internationalist Movement', a tendency that also includes *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru. The new party stated in 2004

The moderate void and the lack of a 'presidential party'

Since the poet and advisor of King Zahir Shah, Khalilullah Khalili, failed in the mid-1960s to set up *Hezb-e Ittehad-e Melli*, or 'National Unity Party', there was never again any organised moderate non-leftist and non-Islamist pro-status quo party. Its place could have been taken by the monarchist movement – *Tehrik-e Wahdat-e Melli-ye Afghanistan*, or 'National Unity Movement of Afghanistan (NUMA)', a political party emerging from the Rome group that appealed both to non-Islamist tribal leaders and moderate intellectuals. When it was officially launched as one of the first political parties, with some 2000 people in a wedding hall in north-western Kabul on 9 August 2003, it attracted much attention. Its 11-member founding council included: Azizullah Wasefi the Rome group's political spokesman, who earlier had supported the Daud's 1973 putsch against the King, professors Abdul Shukkur Reshad, Rassul Amin and Abdulsattar Sirat, who was Karzai's rival within the Rome group at the Bonn Conference, and even the Princes Mir Wais and Mustapha, were listed among. Another member of the King's family, Sultan Mahmud Ghazi, son of former Prime Minister Shah Mahmud, was made leader of the party, while deputy intelligence chief Abdul Hakim Nurzai, a former communist who had quit his position to join the party, became its main organiser. With this background, the party could have acquired an extraordinarily broad base and – together with the new democrats - filled the void between the old left and the Islamist right.²⁰² But the party suffered a first blow when the King was forced to renounce all political ambitions during the ELJ²⁰³ and when the monarchist option finally became obsolete during the Constitutional Loya Jirga 2003/04. By early 2006, most of their main protagonists had joined the Karzai camp, while Nurzai has created his own faction, *De Afghanistan de Melli Wahdat Wulusi Tahrik*, or 'People's National Unity Movement of Afghanistan'.²⁰⁴ Only a small group led by Hodayun Shah Asefi remains independent. The original party leader Mahmud Ghazi retired to France.²⁰⁵

that it is its aim to start a 'People's National War of resistance against the occupying forces and the United States of America'. Its influence inside Afghanistan is unknown. See: <http://www.sholajawid.org/>.

²⁰² Many of the leaders of this potentially third force were already killed in exile by Islamists, like Prof. Seyyed Bahauddin Majrooh and Azizulrahman Ulfat, the son of the *Wesh Dzalman* leader. See: Kakar, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

²⁰³ In fact, it was US special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad who announced at a press conference on 9 June 2002, that the former king would make clear on the next day that he would not accept the post as head of state. The King did so indeed but not personally. A spokesman read his statement. At the same time, the US put immense pressure on deputies not to put up an alternative Pashtun candidate to Karzai. See: 'Logistics and politics delay Afghan grand council', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2002.

²⁰⁴ Wasefi, who was involved in the Daud coup against the monarchy in 1973 and subsequently became a minister, is now an advisor to President Karzai (working, amongst other issues, on the Law on Provincial Councils), while Nurzai, a former Khalqi official, again became Deputy Director of NDS in 2005/06.

²⁰⁵ In the 2004 Presidential Election, Asefi scored 0,3% of the vote.

That would have made it even easier to create a ‘presidential party’ which many deemed necessary to implement Karzai’s declared reform agenda²⁰⁶. But Karzai has made it publicly clear many times that he deeply dislikes political parties. In an October 2003 BBC interview he said that: ‘Afghanistan was destroyed, tormented, put through lots of suffering because of the bickering, because of the in-fighting, because of the political agendas of the parties that were not national. Afghanistan needs to have a day off on that.’ He continued stating: ‘I don’t know if I will lead a political party, but definitely a movement amongst the people’.²⁰⁷ He repeated this in his opening speech at the Constitutional Loya Jirga when he called ‘parties and armed groups’ in general ‘weak’ and with ‘no big following’. Prior to the parliamentary elections, he urged Afghans twice to vote for candidates that do not belong to political parties and established a link between the ‘independence’ and the ‘honesty’ of candidates.²⁰⁸

There were, however, at least three attempts to set up a pro-Karzai ‘movement’. During a visit to the USA and Canada in autumn 2003, the President announced that he would lead a ‘movement amongst the people’ for his reelection - but ‘not a *political* movement’. On 5 October, he publicly distanced himself from the Northern Alliance for the first time, declaring that the current ‘coalition government’ had not succeeded in implementing reforms and that he would not participate in a coalition government again. That caused panic amongst Jihadi leaders who convened a series of meetings to choose their own candidate – which ended in disarray after Rabbani, prematurely, stated publicly that he was chosen and other participants denied this.

Subsequently, the President’s brother Qayyum Karzai was put in charge of bringing together a ‘moderate and reformist political force’²⁰⁹ from three social groups - tribal leaders, the democratically-minded educated (partly organized in political groups) and the youth. It was called *Shura-ye Maslahat-e Melli*, or ‘National Expediency Council’. Karzai mobilised youth groups and contacted the NFDA and *Paiman-e Kabul*. With the democrats, a joint paper on common positions was drafted including commitment to democratic principles, to internationally accepted human rights and to the creation of a ‘national government that is based on the principles of democracy’. A five-member coordination team was chosen,

²⁰⁶ Karzai’s top priorities were declared as ‘dealing with drug trafficking, institutional reforms and spreading the government’s writ and development projects to the country’s 34 provinces’. See: Ahmed Rashid, ‘Peaceful Afghan election marred by irregularities’, *The Nation* (Pakistan), 13 Oct 2004.

²⁰⁷ BBC interview, 1 Oct 2003.

²⁰⁸ First in a conference with 350 representatives from local NSP shuras from all over Afghanistan on 8 Sept., then over the radio. See: Amir Shah, ‘Afghans Urged to Back Honest Candidates’, *Associated Press*, 13 Sept 2005. For a discussion why the President is so adamant in rejecting to found his own party, see: Citha D. Maass, *Afghanistan without Political Parties: Can the New Parliament Function?*, SWP Comments 6, March 2006.

²⁰⁹ M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op. cit.)*, p. 128-129.

consisting of Qayyum Karzai, three recently returned intellectuals (Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Najib Roshan, Azam Dadfar, all linked to *Paiman*) and Hossain Ramuz for NFDA.²¹⁰

This gave new impetus to the democratic forces. On invitation of *Hezb-e Ashti-ye Melli-ye Afghanistan* (HAMA), or ‘Afghanistan National Reconciliation Party’, a group driven by non-Jihadi young Hazara intellectuals, a coordination effort was started on 13 October that not only includes the NFDA core but also the monarchist NUMA, Ishaq Gailani’s NSM, *Afghan Millat* and some smaller groups.

But the effort soon fizzled out again due to the protracted absence of the main protagonists and, perhaps more importantly, because in the eyes of the Karzai brothers only ‘the wrong people’ were interested - former leftist or, as they put it, ‘communists’. Almost parallel, but in a 180-degree turn, the President’s camp, including some Pashtun technocrats, pursued an offer by the Panjshiri group (including the Mas’ud brothers) and *Hezb-e Wahdat* leader Khalili to make *Nohzat-e Melli* the presidential party. This also failed after Karzai decided to drop Fahim as his running mate for the presidential election.

In April 2004, *Majmu’a-ye Melli bara-ye Amniyat wa Eslahat-e Afghanistan*, or the ‘National Gathering for Security and Reforms in Afghanistan’, was set up - a loose federation of some 60 political and social groups, local *shuras* and individuals, who saw themselves as ‘the nucleus of a future nation-wide, supra-ethnic moderate political party’ supporting the President.²¹¹ His circle finally took up the offer in fall 2004 but downgraded the group into a channel through which resources were distributed to candidates during the 2005 parliamentary election campaign. Its grey eminence was the presidential adviser for cultural affairs, Zalmai Hewadmal. It remains questionable whether this structure can provide sustainable political support to the President’s camp.

Political Parties during the 2004 Presidential and the 2005 Parliamentary Elections

According to the Bonn agreement, parliamentary and presidential elections were to be held simultaneously but the Afghan government decided otherwise. This showed the unwillingness of President Karzai and his main foreign backers to have his power checked by an elected legislative. Consequently, most of the political parties criticised this decision. This was linked to sharp criticism of the President’s pre-election negotiations with the warlords.

²¹⁰ Author’s interview with Ramuz, Kabul 2006; see also: ²¹⁰ M.I. Akbar, *Fasl-e akher (op. cit.)*, p. 128.

²¹¹ Author’s interview, Kabul 2004.

While Karzai declared himself an ‘independent candidate’, only three of his competitors ran in the name of a political party: Qanooni for *Nohzat-e Melli* – disputed by one Mas’ud brother,²¹² Pedram for Hezb-e Kangara and Ghulam Faruq Nejrabi for the small *Hezb-e Istiqlal-e Afghanistan*, or ‘Afghanistan Independence Party’²¹³. Known party leaders, such as Mohaqqueq, Dostum, Gailani, Ahmadzai and Asefi also ran as ‘independents’.

Apart from the lack of security, the most important discussion in the electoral process was about which electoral system to choose. The Electoral Law passed on 27 May 2004 foresaw the SNTV system (Single Non-Transferable Vote) without any role for political parties lists²¹⁴ which clearly violated Art. 12 of the Political Parties Law - ‘A registered political party shall enjoy the following rights: (...) (h) Introducing candidates at all elections’ - as well as its Art. 47: ‘(...) the Independent Election Commission must compile and exhibit a list of the eligible registered political parties and independent candidates including final lists of candidates for each of those parties.’

Although it was agreed that this decision would be taken in consultation with the parties, this was done very late and only as a formal exercise – whereas the parties had made clear their opinion long before the election. Most significantly in January 2005, 34 parties from the whole spectrum demanded an amendment of the Electoral Law in order to conduct the elections on the basis of a Proportional Representation system.²¹⁵ The President wasn’t moved and called a cabinet meeting only a few days later that decided in favour of the SNTV system.

International observers shared the parties’ criticism about the SNTV system²¹⁶: ‘[P]olitical parties are vital for the creation of successful parliamentary democracies’²¹⁷ and their effective exclusion from the elections would do harm to the further development of an Afghan democratic system established as a political aim in the preamble of the Bonn Agreement: to

²¹² The other brother, Zia Ahmad Mas’ud, was one of his vice presidential running mates.

²¹³ He received 0.3% of the vote.

²¹⁴ There were no party lists. The candidates could only mark a possible party membership on the registration form for statistical reasons but this did not appear on the ballot paper.

²¹⁵ ‘E’lamia-ye ahzab-e siyasi-ye Afghanistan dar maured-e intikhabat-e parlamenti-ye keshwar’, *press release*, Kabul, 27 Jaddi 1383 (16 Jan 2005). Only Prof. Mujaddedi’s ANLF supported President Karzai and the SNTV system at the meeting. Before, participating parties had made it clear that they actually favoured a mixed system, with four of the first registered parties (Republicans, YSP, Monarchists, *Milli Yauwalai*) demanding that (only) 49 of the 249 Wolesi Jirga seats should be reserved as ‘national seats’ for party list candidates. In January 2005, the AC-NDP member parties spoke out for a mixed system with –a relatively high - 70 per cent of the seats to be allocated to political parties. See: ‘E’lamia-ye mushtarak-e chahr hezb-e siyasi ke az janeb-e Daulat-e Inteqali-ye Islami-ye Afghanistan ba rasmiat shenakhta shuda and’, *press release*, Kabul, 2 May 2004; Declaration of [the] Join[t] Commission of National and Democratic Political Parties of Afghanistan regarding the coming parliamentary polls in the country, [Kabul], 12 Jan 2005.

²¹⁶ On SNTV, see: ‘Afghanistan: From Presidential to Parliamentary Elections’, *International Crisis Group*, Asia Report N°88, 23 Nov 2004, p. ii; Andrew Reynolds and Andrew Wilder, *Free, Fair or Flawed: Challenges for Legitimate Elections in Afghanistan*, AREU Briefing Paper, Sept. 2004, p. 3, 12ff; ‘Statement of the NDI Pre-Election Delegation to Afghanistan’, *National Democratic Institute*, Kabul, 1 July 2005, p. 3; European Union Democracy and Election Support Mission, *Afghanistan: Presidential Election 9 October 2004, Final Report*, p. 31.

²¹⁷ Reynolds and Wilder, *Free, Fair op. cit.*, p. 17.

acknowledge ‘the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, *democracy*, pluralism and social justice’.²¹⁸

Sedra and Middlebrook put it in the shortest possible way: ‘The system was chosen to discourage the formation of political parties’.²¹⁹

The elections were held, after two delays, on 18 September 2005 based on the SNTV system. According to UN statistics, only 12 per cent of the *Wolesi Jirga* candidates (381 out of 2381) registered under the name of a political party – a figure the UN interpreted as a reflection of the parties’ unpopularity. In reality, the figure was much higher and 53 of the (at that time) 72 registered parties fielded candidates under their name.²²⁰ For security reasons, the democratic parties only fielded some candidates under their name while most of them ran as ‘independents’ – in the case of the NFDA the relation was 19 ‘party’ to 120 ‘independent’ candidates. Most of the registered mujahedin parties fielded none or very few candidates under their name (Qanooni’s *Afghanistan-e Newin* and *Jam’iat* none). AIHRC officials and candidates estimated that 60 per cent of the candidates were linked to political parties, in Kabul even 90 per cent. Around 200 of the 249 MPs that were elected are believed to be members or sympathisers of political parties. They represent 33 political parties, 19 Islamic, seven new democratic, 4 leftist and 3 ethno-nationalist parties.²²¹

Another prediction regarding the SNTV system also became true. Maley had written: ‘The electoral system used in the 2005 parliamentary elections worked directly against political parties, but with the result that those who wished to craft a bloc in the parliament to promote new legislation then resorted to ethnicity as a basis for mobilising support’.²²² This is exactly what happened: The well-organised and -funded Mujahedin *tanzim* – all mainly ethnically-based - control the presidium of the house and its most important committees. In the issue of the election of the *Wolesi Jirga* speaker, however, the ethnicisation worked against the President’s camp whose candidate Sayyaf was narrowly defeated.

²¹⁸ ‘Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions’, www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm; highlight by the author.

²¹⁹ Mark Sedra and Peter Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p. 2. For the arguments of the other side, see one paper that circulated in Kabul during the pre-decision making period: ‘Its [sic] true that SNTV will weaken the power of the parties in Afghanistan, but if the parties are not democratic, are in fact informal militia groups in sheep’s clothing, that may not be a bad thing.’ This argument overlooks the fact that not all of the parties are ‘informal militia groups’. Tim Meisburger: *PR vs SNTV. Election Systems in Developing Democracies*. The Asia Foundation, November 18, 2004.

²²⁰ The two largest groups came from the presidential camp (*Afghan Millat*, NIFA).

²²¹ Author’s interviews, Kabul 2005. For more details on *Wolesi Jirga* composition, see: Andrew Wilder, *A House Divided? Analysing the 2005 Afghan Elections*, AREU, Kabul, Dec 2005. This author contributed to this paper. See also: Noman Dost, ‘Why intellectuals and technocrats failed’, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 13 Nov 2005. For the ‘accommodationist stance’ (Sedra and Middlebrook, *op. cit.*, p. 9) on candidates’ vetting for links to illegal militias, see: ‘A Glass Half Full – An Opportunity Wasted’, *The Economist*, 15 Sept 2005; ‘Rights Body Warns of Warlords’ Success in Elections’, *IRIN*, 18 Oct 2005.

²²² William Maley, ‘Fledgling democracy a target for destruction’, *The Australian*, 12 Sept 2006.

Conclusion: Three historical currents - plus a new and a missing one

In the post-Taleban period, the three historical Afghan politico-ideological currents re-emerged, but even more factionalised than before. In addition to a number of historical parties still in their old structures, spin-offs from the major groups and completely new parties appeared. But the three currents are still visible as the skeleton of today's Afghan political part landscape.

Also, a fourth current emerged – the 'new democrats'. Common amongst those elements was the realisation that it was time to start something new, across the old ideological barriers. Their major forces in this new current are the AC-NDF, the Republican Party, YSP and *Paiman-e Kabu,l* most of whom are currently exploring ways of unification.

The real demarcation runs between the new democrats, the post-PDPA left and most of the ethno-nationalists on one hand, and the Islamists on the other, on their intransigently divergent positions on the relation between government and religion, i.e. Islam. While the latter support an Islamic republic, the former favour secularism. This is often not reflected in their programmes for the fear that Islamists who view secularism as deeply 'anti-Islamic' would immediately seize this opportunity to crack down on them through the justice system – the constitution as well as the Political Parties Law ban parties that 'pursue objectives that are opposed to the principles of the holy religion, Islam'.²²³ 'We cannot include secularism in our party programme', confirms Dr. Mas'ud Matin, spokesman of *Hezb-e Hambastagi-ye Afghanistan*, 'but we have mentioned it publicly a few times'.²²⁴ The NFDA was more daring, both emphasizing 'freedom of expression, thought and religion' and 'that Islam should be separated from politics' in its official documents.²²⁵

A secondary demarcation is the one between parties that participated in the resistance against the Soviet-backed PDPA regime, and those who were part of it. But groups that belong to the former category are to be found on both sides of today's secular-Islamist divide. Thirdly, there is also a divide between a federalist programme of some of the minority ethnic parties, and the centralism of some *tanzim* and of the Pashtun 'Nationalists'.

The space in the centre of the political spectrum remains void. The moderate tribal-Islamic, monarchist NUMA, that could have filled it together with the secular new democrats, was torn apart after the Constitutional Loya Jirga. A pro-reform, pro-Karzai party never came into being, prevented by 'the hostility of Karzai and his associates' towards parties in general and the lack

²²³ Art. 6 (1), Political Parties Law. <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/partylaw-engl.htm>.

²²⁴ Interview with the author, Kabul 2006.

²²⁵ Platform Document of the National Front for Democracy of Afghanistan (NFDA), [Kabul, 2003].

of openness to coalition-building.²²⁶ Many other moderate intellectuals and politicians never organised politically.

Apart from organisational continuity, manifest in the four currents – and even in some of the parties -, there is also a lot of personal continuity. Some of the early *mashruta-khwahan* continued to be active during the first and second democratic periods. *Wesh Dzalmian* activists, or their relatives and friends, were to be found in almost all later political currents. And those who had fought the Soviets and Taleban – and very often each other - continue to be active in this latest period of political opening after the fall of the Taleban.

Most of the parties do not conform to modern, Western categories. If those described by Niedermayer²²⁷ are applied to political parties in Afghanistan, the most striking feature that will emerge is the ‘leader-followers principle’ and the ‘strict hierarchical structure’. There are only few parties – and mainly young ones – that held genuine elections for their leaderships. Personalities dominate the political landscape, and the ‘party central offices’ dominate the parties. The ‘party basis’, with little but growing distinction between members and sympathisers²²⁸, constitutes a potential ‘party-in-the-electorate’ - if parties only could stand for election. But it has little influence on the composition of the leadership, the programme and the practical policies of the parties. Very often individuals attend meetings of different parties which makes it difficult for their leaderships to know on whom they can really count. A ‘party in office’ is clearly missing, despite the fact that some party leaders are in office, in parliament and even in the cabinet.

Party programmes do not play much of a role. They are not very distinctive and repeat the same catchwords: independence, national unity, democracy, often even human and women’s rights etc. There are, however, subtle differences in terminology: an emphasis on ‘social justice’ characterises leftist groups (although Islamist groups also support this but with a different connotation), while an emphasis on the rights of the *mujahedin* points to the Islamist side. New democratic and other secular groups emphasize ‘democratic values’ and the ‘rule of law’. But it is mainly the ‘past story’ of the party and its leader(s) that make parties distinct in the eyes of the Afghan public – ‘once a *Hezbi*, always a *Hezbi*’.

The Afghan party system is highly polarized between the religious (Islamist) right and the secular spectrum, as shown above, and relatively fragmented. More than 30 parties have

²²⁶ William Maley, *Rescuing Afghanistan*, London, 2006, p. 48.

²²⁷ See e.g.: Niedermayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-169.

²²⁸ Parties’ information on membership figures are highly untrustworthy. Only a few register their members carefully and distribute membership cards. When people accept membership cards, however, this does not necessarily mean a sustainable commitment to the party, it might just reflect the expectation that it might help in acquiring support – like beneficiary cards distributed by the UN or NGOs. Other parties still count signatures collected during the fight against the Soviets.

members or sympathisers in the *Wolesi Jirga*. They still stand to gain legitimacy through citizens' support. This will only happen, however, if they can prove they are willing to adopt the new political culture of political pluralism outlined in the constitution and the Political Parties Law.

Afghan parties have indeed been 'organised attempts to get power'. Until today, the biggest threat to the democratisation envisaged by the Bonn process and for the Afghan political system as a whole emanate from the fact that the dominating forces still keep armed militias. Now it is time for them to leave behind old habits of getting power by force and of playing the ethnic card to achieve this end. Instead, they must involve themselves in a peaceful political competition of ideas and in building up their potential electorate. As an often used Afghan phrase puts it: the parties have to become 'truly national'. Some of them are already on this way.

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