

## THE FORMATION OF ELECTORAL ALLIANCES IN THE 2014 PRESIDENTIAL SEASON

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**K**ey Takeaway: Candidates for Afghanistan's 2014 elections will declare their intent to run for office by October 6, 2013. The most prominent candidates to emerge are Zalmay Rassoul and Abdullah Abdullah. They represent the two main electoral factions that will decide the 2014 election: the Karzai-Establishment and an anti-Karzai opposition. Although it appears that a large number of electoral alliances have formed and are backing a wider pool of high profile candidates, these two factions will predominate. The Karzai-Fahim electoral alliance that has characterized Afghan politics since 2009 seems to have broken, and Fahim has joined Abdullah Abdullah. Northern powerbrokers are reorienting, but some influential Tajiks such as Mohammad Atta Noor are likely to join the pro-Karzai establishment candidate. Rassoul is either a Karzai puppet or a placeholder for another candidate. He will need the Karzai family for electoral support.

From now until October 6, candidates for the 2014 Afghan presidential election can officially declare their intent to run for office. The Afghan political rumor mill has proffered a number of viable contenders, with early speculation centering on President Karzai's older brother Qayum Karzai,<sup>1</sup> controversial Islamist figure Abdurrahman Rasul Sayyaf,<sup>2</sup> popular former Ambassador to Pakistan and recently appointed Interior Minister Omar Daudzai,<sup>3</sup> and former National Security Advisor and current Foreign Minister Zalmay Rassoul. Rassoul is reportedly<sup>4</sup> the latest candidate to be favored by President Karzai, but that rumor is almost a month old.<sup>5</sup> All discussions of potential contenders also include 2009 runner-up, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, presently the leader of the opposition National Coalition of Afghanistan (NCA).<sup>6</sup> But in Afghan politics, coalitions, not just individuals, are the keys to electoral success.

A number of new electoral alliances have formed and have stated their intent to put forward candidates for the presidential contest. Most of these alliances seem to have coalesced during and after Ramadan, which ended on August 7 of this year. Tracking the development of these electoral alliances provides an early indication of how the 2014 presidential contest may unfold. The presence or absence of certain influential Afghan political players within these alliances will partially determine election outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Two major factions are emerging, one dedicated

to the Karzai-establishment, and the opposition organized to defeat it. The opposing forces reflect significant trends that cut across ethnic lines and demonstrate that the players are pursuing a real strategy to form coalitions with electoral and power political strength.

### THE ANTI-KARZAI FACTION-THE ELECTORAL ALLIANCE OF AFGHANISTAN (EAA)

The anti-Karzai faction is primarily composed of Tajik and Uzbek former Northern Alliance warlords (see graphic). This overarching group of powerbrokers has typically had difficulty uniting under a single Tajik leader, as well as attracting Pashtun support. On August 27, 2013 a meeting took place at General Abdul Rashid Dostum's residence in Kabul, and a host of the major power players in Afghanistan participated.<sup>8</sup> Included were Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Qayum Karzai, National Front Leader Ahmad Zia Massoud, Governor of Balkh Province Atta Mohammad Noor, former U.S. ambassador to United Nations and Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, Former Afghan Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali, Member of Parliament and Hezb-e-Wadhat leader Mohammad Mohaqiq, former Afghan spy chief and leader of the Green Movement Trend Amrullah Saleh, and Former Speaker Mohammad Yunus Qanooni. One of the main purposes of the meeting was to supposedly persuade Khalilzad, Jalali, and Qayum Karzai to join a "grand coalition" in an attempt to attract

ANTI-KARZAI FACTION	
 <p><b>DR. ABDULLAH ABDULLAH</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Candidate for the 2014 Presidential Election, Leader of the Opposition, the National Coalition of Afghanistan, Opposition Candidate for the 2009 Presidential Election</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Minister of Foreign Affairs (01-06), Director General of the Ministry of Defense (93-96)</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Mixed Tajik and Pashtun, b. Kabul</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Advisor and physician to Ahmad Shah Massoud</p>
 <p><b>MARSHAL QASIM FAHIM</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> ANNOUNCED SUPPORT FOR ABDULLAH</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of Jamiat-i-Islami, First vice president (09-present)</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Minister of defense and vice president (02-04)</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Tajik, b. Panjshir province</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Head of Intelligence &amp; Minister for National Security, Northern Alliance</p>
 <p><b>AHMAD ZIA MASSOUD</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Opposition Leader of the National Front of Afghanistan</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Vice President (04-09), Afghan Ambassador to Russia (01-04)</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Tajik, b. Ghazni Province</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Member, Northern Alliance</p>
 <p><b>AMRULLAH SALEH</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Opposition leader, Afghanistan Green Party</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Head of intelligence, National Directorate of Security (2004-2010)</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Tajik, b. Panjshir province</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Appointed by Ahmad Shah Massoud to head the Northern Alliance's liaison office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan</p>
 <p><b>GUL AGHA SHERZAI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Governor of Nangarhar Province</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Governor of Kandahar province (early 92-94, 01-03), Former Minister (Advisor) in Hamid Karzai's Cabinet</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kandahar</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Assisted in the American capturing of Kandahar city from Taliban forces</p>
 <p><b>ABDUL HADI ARGHANDIWAJ</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Minister of Economy (2010-Present), Head of Hizb-i-Islami</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Advisor to President Karzai over tribal affairs (2009), Secretary, High Economic Council (2012)</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kabul Province</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Migrated to Pakistan</p>
 <p><b>MOHAMMAD MOHAQIQ</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of the Hezb-e Wahdat</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Former Member of Parliament, Vice-President and the Minister of Planning of the Interim Government of Afghanistan</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Hazara, b. Balkh Province</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Leader of United Front resistance forces (1996)</p>
 <p><b>ATTA MOHAMMAD NOOR</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> MEMBER OF EAA, BUT OFFERED FIRST VICE PRESIDENT POSITION BY RASSOUL</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Governor of Balkh Province (2004-present)</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Governor of Balkh Province, Supporter of Abdullah Abdullah in 2009, Member of Jamiat-e-Islami</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Tajik, b. Balkh Province</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Commander of 7th Corps, Northern Alliance which, with Abdul Rashid Dostum, drove the Taliban out of Mazar-i Sharif</p>
 <p><b>MOHAMMAD KHAN</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> EAA</p> <p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Deputy leader of Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan--Arghandawal branch</p> <p><b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Former Member of Wolesi Jirga</p> <p><b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Ghazni</p> <p><b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Former commander</p>

potential Pashtun supporters. Through another lens, this was an attempt to attract a Pashtun power player into an opposition grouping heavily dominated by Tajik and Uzbek politicians. Jalili's and Qayum's attendance is therefore significant.

On August 29, the Electoral Alliance of Afghanistan (EAA) was formed, a coalition dedicated to forming a unified opposition against the pro-Karzai establishment. Formed from the remnants of the Cooperation Council of Political Parties and Coalitions of Afghanistan (CCPPCA), it is composed of several influential political parties and individuals including Mohammad Mohaqeq's Hezb-e-Wahdat, Salahuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah's National Coalition Party, Ahmed Zia Massoud's National Front Party, Amrullah Saleh's Afghanistan Green Trend Movement, and Abdul Rashid Dostum's Junbish-i-Milli Islami.<sup>9</sup> Governor Atta Mohammad Noor also joined the alliance. On September 1, Ahmad Zia Massoud also announced that "Mirwais Yasini, the First Deputy Speaker of the Lower House and Gul Agha Sherzai, Governor of Nangarhar, among others, would join his coalition."<sup>10</sup>

The Eastern powerbrokers are banding together in order to have a stake, but it is not clear that they have cemented their alliance with the EAA. On September 8, Mirwais Yasini and a group of parliamentarians from Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, and Nuristan provinces formed the "Eastern Movement of Unity" (EMU) in order to field a consensus candidate for the presidential election.<sup>11</sup> Yasini said the group would not be limited to the eastern part of the country, and it would support other candidates if they were best for the national interests. This followed his statement on July 10 that he would support a "good candidate [who was] in front."<sup>12</sup> Yasini opposed Karzai in the 2009 election, and recently said the Karzai government should act "in the national interest and finalize the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States."<sup>13</sup>

Massoud's September 1 announcement expressing the inclusion of the Governor of Nangarhar Gul Agha Sherzai into the EAA suggests the opposition alliance might add further depth beyond the core provinces by incorporating the EMU, but it may also indicate that this group is leveraging its power in order to be wooed effectively even by a pro-Karzai candidate. Prior to his nomination as the governor of Nangarhar, Sherzai had

been governor of Kandahar and still possesses influential family ties there, which compete directly with Karzai's influence. Sherzai's inclusion therefore provides the EAA with a coveted and influential Pashtun figure. Sherzai's affiliations with the EAA do not cement an EMU-EAA alliance, but it is possible given Sherzai's influence and Yasini's past opposition to Karzai. On October 2, Sherzai announced he was resigning as Governor of Nangarhar to seek a presidential bid.<sup>14</sup> He is most likely using this tactic to increase his leverage with both the EMU and the EAA to secure the best deal for himself.

Support began consolidating within the EAA in late September. On September 24 a formidable EAA ticket was announced. Mohammad Mohaqiq stated he was resigning from Parliament "due to elections activities for the forthcoming presidential" election.<sup>15</sup> The EAA then announced Mohaqiq would join Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal on a joint presidential ticket. Mohaqiq, along with current Second Vice-President Muhammad Karim Khalili, is the most prominent Hazara politician in Afghanistan. Reports of dissension in the EAA immediately surfaced when Dostum's Junbish-i-Milli Islami said they would not support the ticket, likely due to its lack of Uzbek representation.<sup>16</sup> Arghandiwal also did not stick with the ticket. He replaced himself on September 30 with Engineer Mohammad Khan, the deputy leader of his party Hezb-e-Islami.<sup>17</sup> The ticket needs a Pashtun, but Engineer Mohammad Khan has less national stature than Arghandiwal. He nevertheless is trying to play the multi-ethnic card, stating "You can very easily see all ethnic groups together in this coalition. This is good for the future of our country, the unity and coalition of different ethnic groups."<sup>18</sup> Abdullah officially registered to run with the Independent Electoral Commission on October 1.<sup>19</sup>

For a while, Marshall Fahim, the powerful Tajik First Vice President, appeared to be noticeably absent from the electoral process. He supported April elections during his remarks on September 9 at a gathering to observe the anniversary of Ahmad Shah Massoud's death, one of the most important occasions when the former Northern Alliance gets together. He stated: "We are in the government; it's our responsibility to make last minute efforts until the government of President Karzai comes to an end to ensure that the elections took place on the scheduled time."<sup>20</sup> A significant development occurred on September 28, when Fahim's spokesman announced that he would support Dr. Abdullah Abdullah.<sup>21</sup> Fahim

is a major source of power in the Tajik north, giving Dr. Abdullah Abdullah a significant ally. It also breaks up the Karzai-Fahim alliance that has been in place since 2009. It also indicates that powerful Balkh governor Mohammad Atta Noor may be planning to align with the pro-Karzai camp, as will be discussed below.

## THE PRO-KARZAI ESTABLISHMENT CAMP

The pro-Karzai establishment mainly consists of the most influential Pashtun politicians in the country. (see graphics for details). They have not formed a single alliance as the EAA, but they share the common vision of continuing the national system President Karzai established over the past decade. These men have directly benefited from the Karzai presidency. The Karzai family has enjoyed enormous privileges throughout Hamid's tenure.<sup>22</sup>

And other potential candidates have stakes in maintaining the Karzai political order. Hezb-e Islami factional leaders such as Omar Daudzai and Farouq Wardak have had numerous and influential positions throughout the Karzai government. Khalilzad developed a close relationship with Karzai while U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, and shares his vision of stable Afghan state. Rassoul has held a variety of administrations positions throughout the Karzai presidency, and as Foreign Minister travels with Karzai on nearly all of his foreign visits.

Several developments suggest the Karzai establishment is preparing for the challenge presented by the EAA. Major political players within this group have rejected offers to join the EAA and are consolidating their own support. Qayum was not co-opted at Gen Dostum's house, Khalilzad's new alliance directly challenged the EAA at its inauguration, and there has been no indication Rassoul has spoken seriously with the EAA. President Karzai has kept his cards close, and speculation abounded as to which candidate he would back.

In mid-August, several possible pro-Karzai contenders garnered headlines. On August 14, rumors circulated that Abdul Rassoul Sayyaf might be Karzai's preferred successor, as previously reported on by ISW.<sup>23</sup> The Presidential Palace quickly rejected those speculations, stating on August 15 that President Karzai was not backing any particular candidate.<sup>24</sup> On October 2, Sayyaf announced he had resigned from parliament and was running for the presidency with Minister of Energy & Water Ismail

PRO-KARZAI FACTION	
 <p><b>ZALMAI RASSOUL</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Foreign Minister (2010-Present)  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> National Security Advisor (2002-2010)                      Minister of Civil Aviation (2002)                      Delegate to Bonn Conference (2001)  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kabul Province  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Director, Secretariat of Mohammad Zaheer Shah (1998)</p>
 <p><b>OMAR DAUDZAI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Minister of Interior  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Chief of Staff of President Karzai (03-05; 07-10), Member of the Hezb-i Islami (05-07), Former Ambassador to Iran (2007), Former Ambassador to Pakistan (11-13)  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kabul Province  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Student at Oxford, "Area Development Specialist" in UN Development Program Geneva (2001)</p>
 <p><b>ABDUL QAAYUM KARZAI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Brother of Hamid Karzai, Presidential candidate  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Delegate at the Loya Jirga (2002)                      Member of Parliament (2002-2008)                      Member of the Narcotics Committee at the Wolesi Jirga (2005)  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kandahar Province  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> American businessman</p>
 <p><b>ABDURRAB RASUL SAYYAF</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of Dawat-e Islami, Parliamentarian (2007-Present)  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Representative at the Loya Jirga (2003), Professor at the Shariat University, Kabul (Unknown-1973), Member of Ikhwān al-Muslimīn  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kabul Province  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Member, Northern Alliance</p>
 <p><b>MUHAMMAD KARIM KHALILI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Vice-President of Afghanistan (2002-Present)  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Leader of the Hezb-e-Wahdat party, Minister of Finance, Former Chairman of for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Hazara, b. Wardak Province  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Led Wahdat resistance forces</p>
 <p><b>ZALMAI KHALILZAD</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of "Doctors without Borders", Counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, President of Khalilzad Assoc.  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> US Ambassador to the UN (07-09), US Ambassador to Iraq (05-07), US Ambassador to Afghanistan (03-05), Deputy Undersecretary for Policy Planning at the US Department of Defense (90-92)  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Balkh Province  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Director, Strategy, Doctrine, and Force Structure at the RAND Corporation (93-00)</p>
 <p><b>ALI AHMAD JALALI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS  <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of "Doctors without Borders"                      Distinguished Professor at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies of the United Professor at the National Defense University, Washington (2005-Present)  <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Interior Minister of Afghanistan (03-05), Director of the Afghan Radio Network Project at Voice of America, Top Advisor at the Afghan Resistance Headquarters in Peshawar during the Soviet invasion  <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kabul  <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Academic</p>

meeting with High Peace Council officials.<sup>26</sup> On August 16, Qayum's name appeared in the papers again when Karzai's brothers Mahmood and Shah Wali Karzai reportedly reached an agreement settling a long-held family dispute over a large property development in Aino Mena, Kandahar.<sup>27</sup> An ongoing quarrel within the Karzai family could have reduced the political power and patronage of the Karzai family network. Mahmood, consistently the biggest champion of a Qayum presidential run, stated that Qayum would "soon travel to Kandahar as he rallies support for the country."<sup>28</sup> Mahmood announced on September 25 that Qayum would officially run for President, but he has not filed with the IEC officially.<sup>29</sup> President Karzai has not endorsed Qayum, but Mahmood reports that Qayum has collected 350,000 signatures. This means that he will likely replace Rassoul.

On August 17, Omar Daudzai officially declared he would consider a run for president. Once again, President Karzai personally stated he was not behind any particular candidate when he spoke to a delegation from the Afghanistan's Women's Network on August 21.<sup>30</sup> However, Karzai effectively removed Daudzai from the presidential race when he appointed him Acting Interior Minister on September 1.<sup>31</sup> On September 2, Daudzai pledged to stay neutral during the 2014 election.<sup>32</sup> Karzai may have removed Daudzai from the race because he had reportedly fired a senior security official in Nangarhar province for "working in favor of a particular presidential elections candidate," who remains unnamed.<sup>33</sup> More likely, he simply co-opted him as the correct person to run his political campaign. Interior Minister is a powerful position that will have a significant impact on 2014 elections. With someone loyal in that position, Karzai can influence voter registration, which voting centers have security details, and the deployment of the National Police during the election.

Two names not mentioned in the rumor mill have been Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad and Ali Ahmad Jalili. On September 3, the positions of the two men became clearer when it was announced they would form a new coalition not associated with the EAA.<sup>34</sup> Some have referred to this coalition as "Doctors without Borders" because its primary members are composed of Afghan expatriates without broad organized support within Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup>

Khan.<sup>25</sup> Ismail Khan, a Tajik and the former governor of Herat province, is an influential mujahedeen leader who holds sway in western Afghanistan. Sayyaf, discredited as a viable presidential candidate, is most likely allying with Khan to increase their leverage to secure favorable positions in the new government.

Qayum Karzai appeared in Dubai on August 9, possibly attempting to re-enter the national spotlight. Qayum reportedly met with Taliban officials that day in an informal

One issue on which they sharply differ with the opposition is the EAA's call for a parliamentary system. Jalili "was loud in clear [sic] in voicing his stance against a parliamentary system."<sup>36</sup> A parliamentary system would severely weaken the executive power Karzai has gained, and runs counter to the national system Khalilzad and Jalili embrace. A pro-Karzai leaning is therefore suggested by the group's disagreement on the parliamentary system, their lack of broad support within the country without Karzai, and their Pashtun background. Another leader in discussion with this hypothetical new coalition is Mahaz-i-Milli leader Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani. Strongest in Nangarhar province, Gilani's party would add additional organization and support to Khalilzad and Jalili's nascent alliance. On September 5, there were talks to form a separate alliance between Khalilzad and Gilani, but this meeting produced no agreement.<sup>37</sup>

The most recent rumors concern Foreign Minister Zalmai Rassoul. While President Karzai was at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit on September 14, he said that Rassoul, a Pashtun, was a "probable candidate," to date the most positive affirmation Karzai has made towards any candidate.<sup>38</sup> More telling, the Presidential Palace did not issue a statement refuting these rumors of Karzai's support as was done with Qayum and Daudzai. Meanwhile Rassoul is working to build a powerful ticket. On September 11 Rassoul reportedly offered powerful Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor, a Tajik, the post of First Vice-President.<sup>39</sup> Noor is currently affiliated with the EAA, and according to his spokesman Munir Farhad, Noor stated he would discuss the offer with the alliance.<sup>40</sup> With Fahim's September 30 announcement declaring his support of Dr. Abdullah, it appears likely Atta Noor will not be associated with the EAA. Atta Noor and Fahim are longtime rivals, and have struggled for control of Balkh province for many years. While Fahim went to Kabul with Karzai and "invested in national and international business", Atta "focused on local politics" and has run Balkh province since 2004.<sup>41</sup> They would not rally behind a single candidate due to this animosity.

Rassoul does not have a large constituency, but that may be one reason why Karzai favors him. Rassoul's close relationship to Karzai and his role in negotiating with the Taliban to restart peace talks with the Taliban are potential reasons for this support. Rassoul's historical ties to Saudi Arabia, one suggested location for the resumption of peace talks, cannot be overlooked. The Foreign Ministry issued

three separate statements on August 11,<sup>42</sup> August 13,<sup>43</sup> and August 18,<sup>44</sup> highlighting the importance of peace talks with the Taliban and Pakistan's incorporation into the process. Rassoul then accompanied Karzai to Pakistan and, apparently, secured the release of former Taliban deputy commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar after nearly two years of unsuccessful attempts by the Afghan government to secure his release.

Rassoul may be the loyal placeholder for the final candidate who will declare, presenting a reasonable and uncontroversial face to the international community while the final arrangements are being made by the pro-Karzai faction for someone who may be more controversial, but actually comes with a political support base. If Mahmood Karzai's reports concerning Qayum's attained signatures are correct, Rassoul is likely holding place for Qayum.

## THE UNDECIDED

Smaller alliances do not appear to have joined either camp, and are most likely jockeying for leverage with each faction. On August 20, a four-party alliance called the National Trust Front (NTF) was formed, consisting of Itedal-i-Milli Islami, Wahdat-i-Milli Islami, Insijam-i-Milli Islami and Kaar Wa Tawse.<sup>45</sup> The parties are Hazara dominated. Wolesi Jirga member Mohammad Akbari stated the NTF's goal was to bring transparency to the 2014 election. No major political players from either faction were present at the announcement. Akbari, an MP from Bamiyan and a Hazara, fought with Second Vice-President Karim Khalili against the Taliban. He also then declared loyalty for the Taliban during their rule, only to disavow them during the U.S. invasion in 2001. With Akbari their spokesman is an indication, the NTF will go with whoever appears to be winning and is likely to influence the direction of the Hazara vote. Khalili and Mohaqiq are the main Hazara heavyweights, and the NTF will ally itself with one of them. Khalili is still undeclared and is a likely Second Vice President for the pro-Karzai ticket.

One other prominent figure who will support the pro-Karzai establishment is Anwar-ul-Haq Ahadi, Minister of Commerce and Industries." Ahadi is a Pashtun, and has held numerous positions in the Karzai government since 2001. Ahadi is also the leader of the Afghan Millat Party. He has since declared himself Afghan Millat's candidate, but that does not necessarily indicate he is going to campaign

NON-AFFILIATED POWER PLAYERS	
 <p><b>ABDUL RASHID DOSTUM</b></p>	<p><b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of Junbish-e Milli Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief (2003-2008, 2009-Present) <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Deputy Minister of Defense (2003) <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Uzbek, b. Jowzjan <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Member, Northern Alliance</p>
 <p><b>SYED ISHAQ GILLANI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> ANAA <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Leader of National Solidarity Movement Represents Paktika Province in the Wolesi Jirga <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Founder and Chairman of the National Solidarity Movement of Afghanistan (2002-Present) <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Pashtun, b. Kabul province <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Exiled in Pakistan</p>
 <p><b>ISMAIL KHAN</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED/INFLUENTIAL LEADER IN WESTERN AFGHANISTAN <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Minister of Water and Energy (2005-present) <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Governor of Herat Province (2002-2004) Commander, 4th and 6th Corps <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Tajik, b. Herat Province <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Fled to Iran, later captured by the Taliban</p>
 <p><b>SALAHUDDIN RABBANI</b></p>	<p><b>ELECTORAL AFFILIATION/ALLIANCE:</b> UNAFFILIATED <b>CURRENT POST:</b> Chairman of the High Council for Peace &amp; Reconciliation (2012-present) <b>RELEVANT POSTS:</b> Afghan Ambassador to Turkey (2010-2012), Chairman of the High Peace Council (2012), Counselor, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations (2003-2006), Political Department, Jamiat-e Islami <b>ETHNICITY:</b> Tajik, b. Kabul <b>ACTIVITIES DURING THE TALIBAN ERA:</b> Worked for Saudi ARAMCO in both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, later attended business school in London</p>

until April, knowing he lacks the strength or support to make a successful presidential run.<sup>46</sup> Positioning for a run for president, however, can be a good bargaining position.

A recently formed alliance has publicly criticized the Karzai government for its handling of peace talks with the Taliban. On September 5 the Association of National Amity of Afghanistan (ANAA) was announced.<sup>47</sup> The ANAA is led by National Solidarity Movement leader Syed Ishaq Gilani, a Pashtun, and comprises 10 political parties and 110 social organizations. Syed Ishaq Gilani is the nephew of Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani, who on the same day at the ANAA inauguration, tried to form an alliance with DWB in the pro-Karzai faction. The political groups within the ANAA include the National Solidarity Movement, the People’s Mission, United Afghanistan, People’s Wish, Freedom and Justice, Movement of Afghan Sovereignty, Movement of Democracy, Welfare and Justice and the National Movement. Syed Ishaq Gilani ran against Karzai in 2004, but most of his support from Paktika province where he has served as a parliamentarian for many years. Gilani suggested that the ANAA is in talks with the Taliban, and that Taliban representatives attended the coalition’s inauguration. Gilani criticized the High Peace Council

for not making any progress in talks with the Taliban, and implied he could bring them to the negotiating table. But, according to Thomas Ruttig of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, Gilani’s claims were exaggerated; “Everyone was searching to see a Taleban representative in the audience but no one managed to find one.”<sup>48</sup> The ANAA is leaning anti-Karzai and, if co-opted by the EAA, could deliver parts of the Pashtun vote to the EAA.

Reconciliation, and the progress of peace talks with the Taliban, will be a central issue amongst the major candidates. The Taliban for their part have said they will not take part in the electoral process. In his annual Eid message on August 7, Taliban leader Mullah Omar said: “As to the deceiving drama under the name of elections 2014, our pious people will not tire themselves out, nor will they participate in it.”<sup>49</sup> The Taliban’s primary goal in April 2014 is disrupting the vote.

### CONCLUSION- BUILDING THE PERFECT TICKET

We should not expect a major shift in how the Afghan national political balance is maintained within the executive office. A Pashtun, a Tajik, and a Hazara currently hold the Presidency and the two Vice-Presidencies. The Abdullah, Khan, and Mohaqiq ticket indicates the EAA intends to preserve this system.

For the anti-Karzai camp, solidarity will be a challenge. The EAA will most likely be unable to unite around a single candidate and throw its full weight behind only one of the powerful Tajik powerbrokers in the EAA. Another major challenge will be the alliance’s need to attract a major Pashtun player. As evidenced by the August 27 meeting at General Dostum’s house, this will be a key issue. The EAA must co-opt a Pashtun in the same manner that Karzai has been co-opting Tajik and Uzbek politicians to split his opposition. Engineer Mohammad Khan is not the charismatic, influential candidate they were looking for, however. He is not strong enough to rally the Pashtun vote.

The prospect of facing a potentially unified alliance of former Northern Alliance power players would be daunting for the pro-Karzai camp, if indeed that unity transpired. The EAA is experiencing internal dissent, less than two months after its inception. Automatically, the lack of support for this ticket from Dostum’s Junbish-i-Milli Islami along with the potential defection of Atta Noor

shows the coalition's tenuous nature. Further evidence of this tension appeared further on September 28 when Mohaqiq criticized Dostum and the Uzbeks for demanding the vice-presidency, and the exchange deteriorated from there.<sup>50</sup>

Karzai supporters appear to lack the overall organization that the EAA possesses, and are not unified in a single organization, but they do share a belief in the "Karzai establishment" that has formed throughout the country for the past decade. Yet the pro-Karzai alliance will be announced at the last minute, as in 2004, and it is likely that private discussion is not observable. Rassoul is a possible candidate, but if so, he would remain a Karzai loyalist and puppet during the election as he has no independent power base.

As ISW analyst Mara Tchalakov points out,<sup>51</sup> "the President is unlikely to publicly anoint his political heir until [that successor] has co-opted at least one or two influential Tajik politicians." The ticket is cohering around two available vice presidential candidates who have not yet affiliated, namely, Mohammad Atta Noor and Karim Khalili. A Rassoul-Noor alliance might signify a pro-Karzai-backed Pashtun-Tajik ticket, and prove a strong challenge to the EAA. As of October 1st, Noor has neither accepted nor rejected the offer, but Fahim's support of Abdullah Abdullah might be the indirect confirmation needed that Noor will run with Rasoul. The co-opting of Hazara leader Mohaqiq into the anti-Karzai camp is significant. The question for the Karzai camp is whether Karim Khalili, the only other major Hazara leader in Afghanistan, will join the Rassoul ticket.

The Pashtun base in the South will largely rally around Karzai and whomever he anoints as his successor, and the Pashtun nominee that can build the largest coalition of northern power players while simultaneously receiving Karzai's blessing will likely win the election. And it is possible that President Karzai is seeking a competition among successors who favor the Karzai order, believing that a Pashtun candidate will win, regardless.

Candidates have a chance to declare their candidacy until Sunday, October 6. Bargaining, co-opting, and back-rooms negotiations will almost certainly last until April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and then again, after the elections. A strictly "two-party" race during the election season is unlikely.

However, the outcome of the struggle between the Karzai-backed, pro-establishment camp and the Electoral Alliance of Afghanistan will shape, and ultimately determine, who wins.

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