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An IO Perspective on Afghanistan

An Appreciation for Tribal Complexity

Presented by LTC Brian Sweeney, USA

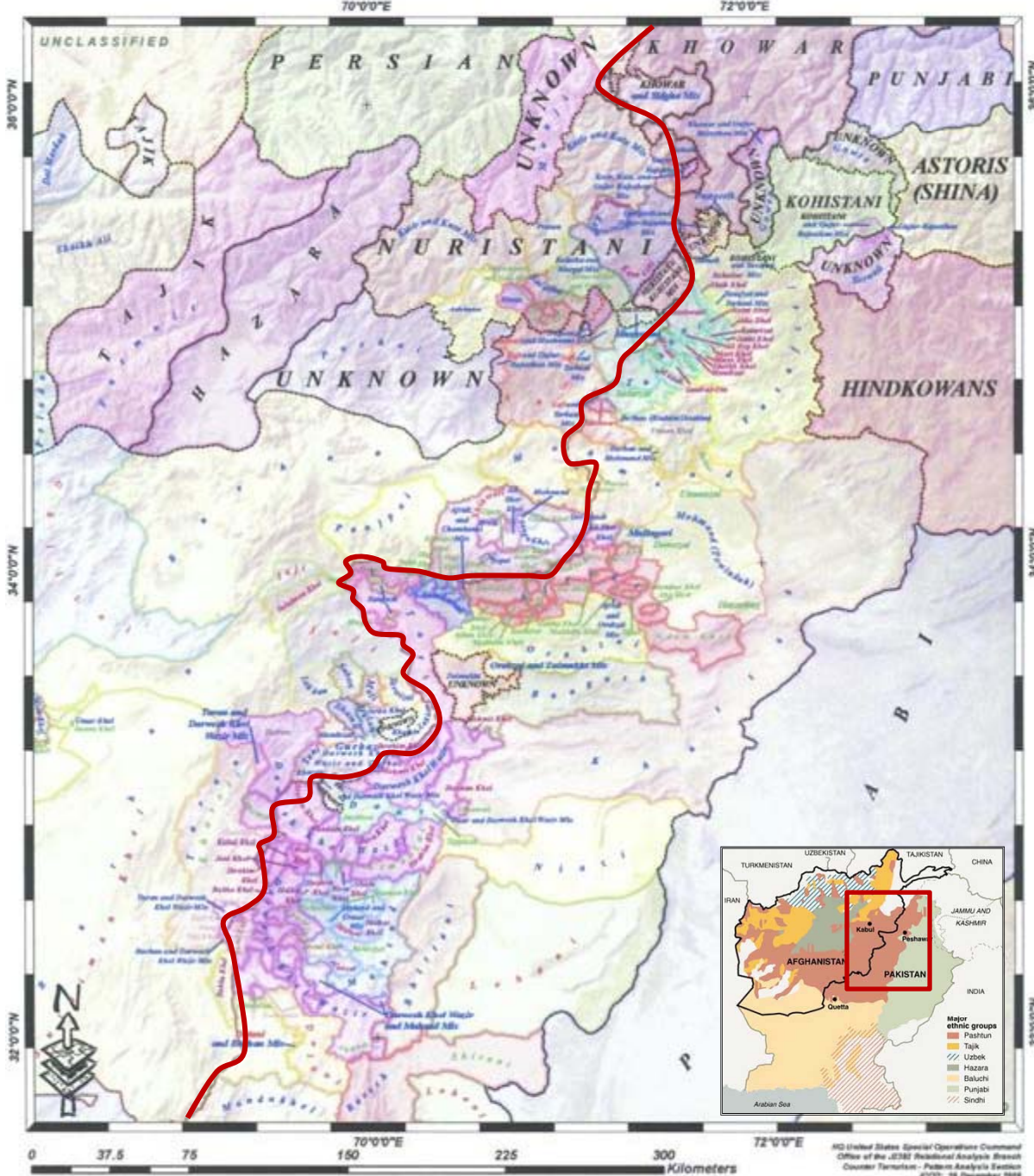
MORS Irregular Warfare Workshop

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Pashtun Tribes

AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN ETHNIC AND TRIBAL GROUPS



Geographic Distribution

- Across frontier of Afg & Pak
 - FATA & NWFP
- 3k-18k ft mountains
- Durran Line (Pol boundary)

Hierarchical Structure

- 20 Super tribes
- 70 Tribes
- 1000+ Khels & Fractions

Social Complexity

- Pukhtunwali code
- Segmented lineages
- Agnatic rivalry (cousins)
- Scarce resources
- Economic vulnerabilities
- External opportunists

Understanding the Problem

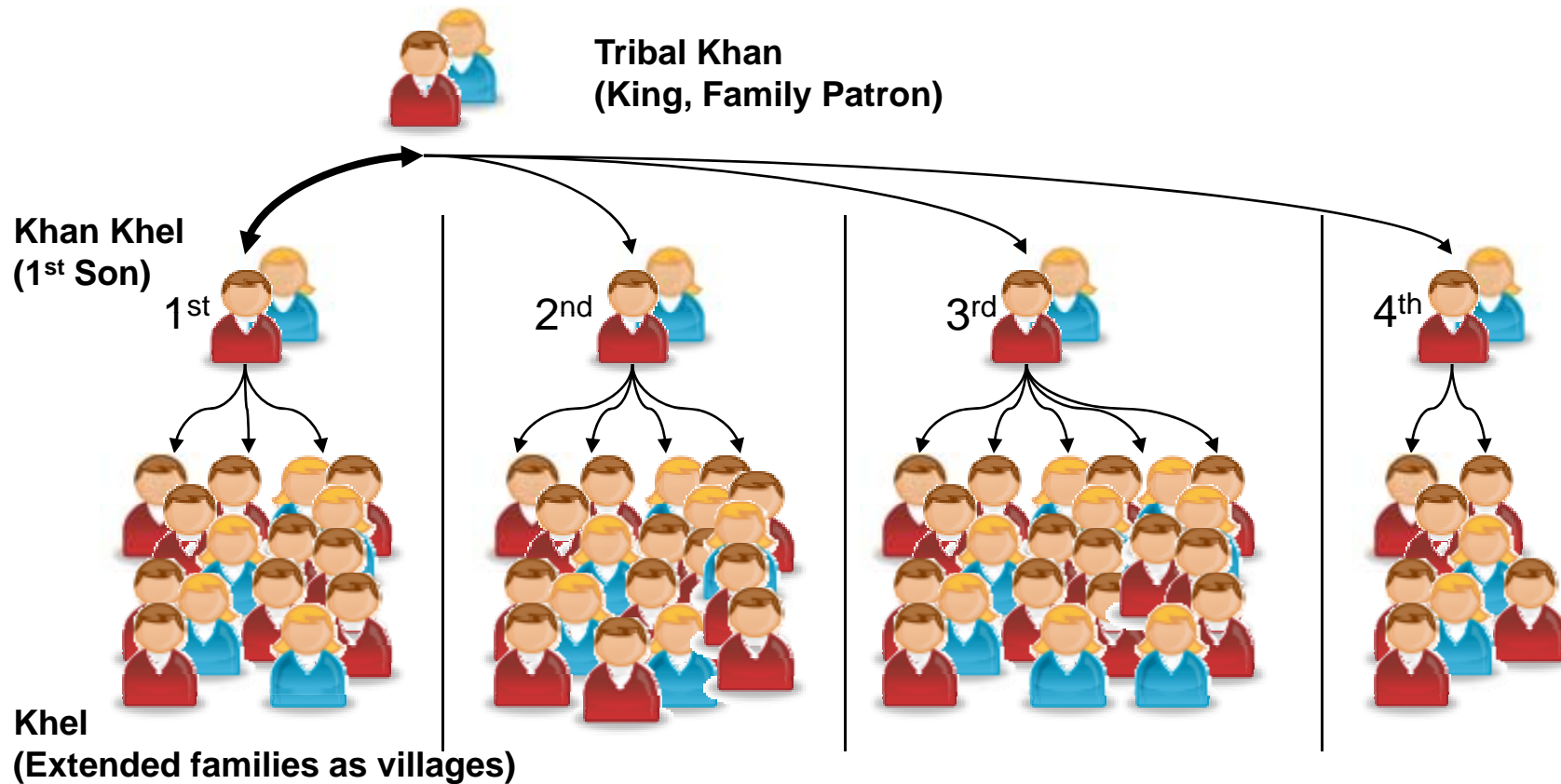
- Pashtun tribal society is undergoing an internal power struggle that has been exploited by militant Islamists to create a safehaven
 - Tribal traditionalists vs. militant Islamist “Talibanization”
- Myth of “Pashtun Nationalism”
 - Ethnic nation seeking a voice, but not a political state
 - Pashtun Identity: lineage, status and tribal code
 - Hereditary segmentation undermines integration
- Fallacy of a “Pashtun Insurgency”
 - Pashtun violently independent—*from everyone*
 - Conflict within Pashtun society: Talibanization
 - Revolutionary Islam vs. Reactionary Pashtun

Pashtun Tribal Culture

- Identity: Tribal Khel (tribal politics are local)
- Values: Tribal Interests & Islamic Ideals
- Beliefs: Concentric trust domains
 - Family before Khel; Khel before Tribe
 - Pashtun before Muslim; Muslim before Infidel
- Attitudes: Fiercely independent
- Norms: Social Structure and Dynamics
 - Hereditary succession and agnatic rivalry
 - Pukhtunwali Code: Honor, Revenge and Hospitality
 - Jirga: Consensus-based conflict resolution
- Behavior: Aggressive self-interest, survival, outcomes
 - Must advance the interest of the tribes for near-term and beyond
 - Must avoid violating tribal code and religious rules

Structure: Tribal Hierarchy

Segmentation & Status

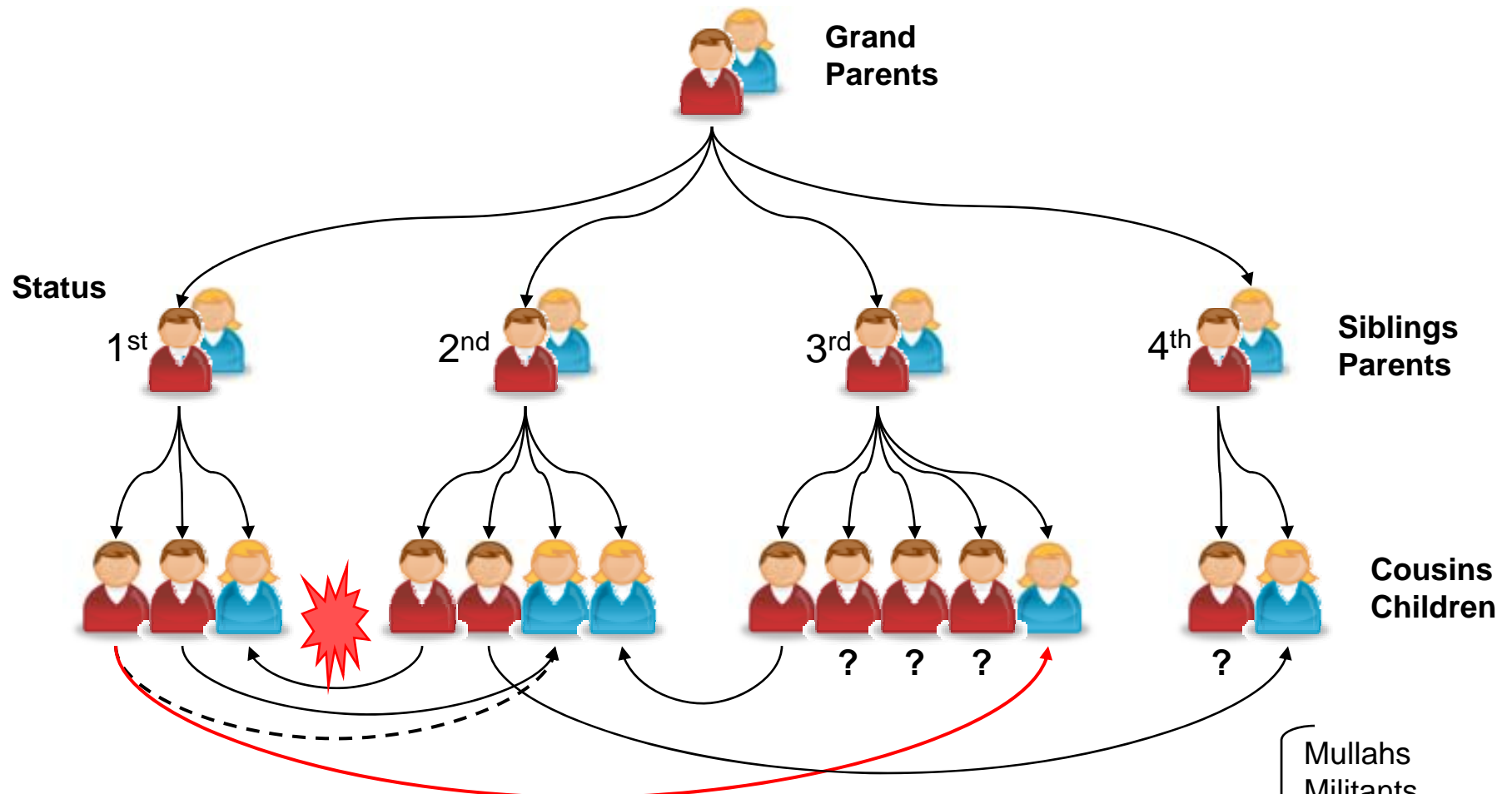


- Khan Khels are hereditary leaders, and arbitrate collective decision making
- Higher status provides inheritance and ensures tribal integrity and legacy

- Lower status provides service, and the source of tribal Mullahs
- Rivalry and imbalance is a source of discontent against the status quo

Dynamics: Tribal Status

Honor & Revenge



Pukhtunwali Code: Honor, Revenge and Hospitality

- Marriage Obligations, Rights, Alliances and Agnatic Rivalry
- Same rules apply to status, property disputes, crimes, blood feuds, etc

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Mullahs
Militants
Laborers
Sheppards

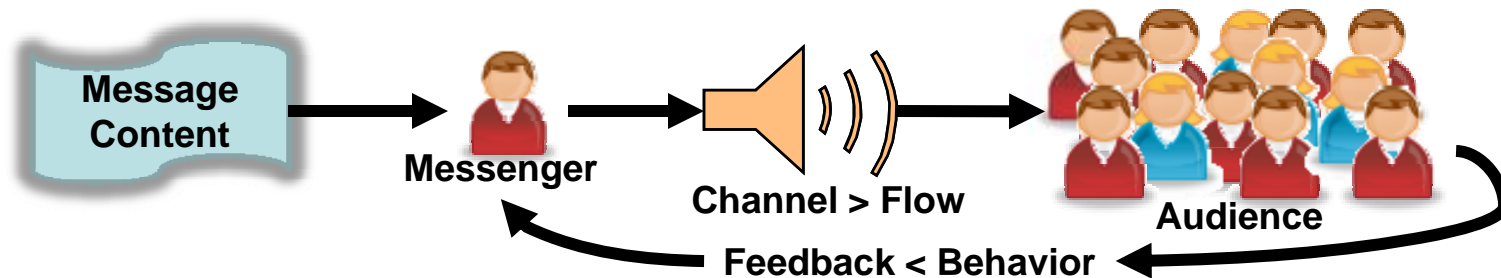
Societal Transformation

Function	Pashtun Society	➔	Taliban Society
Leadership	Elders & Maliks		Mullahs & Militants
Governance	Jirga of Elders - Participative		Shura Council of Mullahs - Authoritarian
Rules	Pukhtunwali Code		Sharia Islamic law
Religion	Mixed local Islam		Salafist-Takfir Islam
Education	Tribal customs		Deobandi Madrassas
History	>2000 yrs tribalism		30 years radical Islam

Evidence for Pashtun Resistance to Talibanization

- >500 elders & Maliks executed by Taliban since 2006
- 65% Political shift in FATA from MMA (Islamic) to ANP (Pashtun)
- Tribal Lashkars actively fighting against Taliban groups

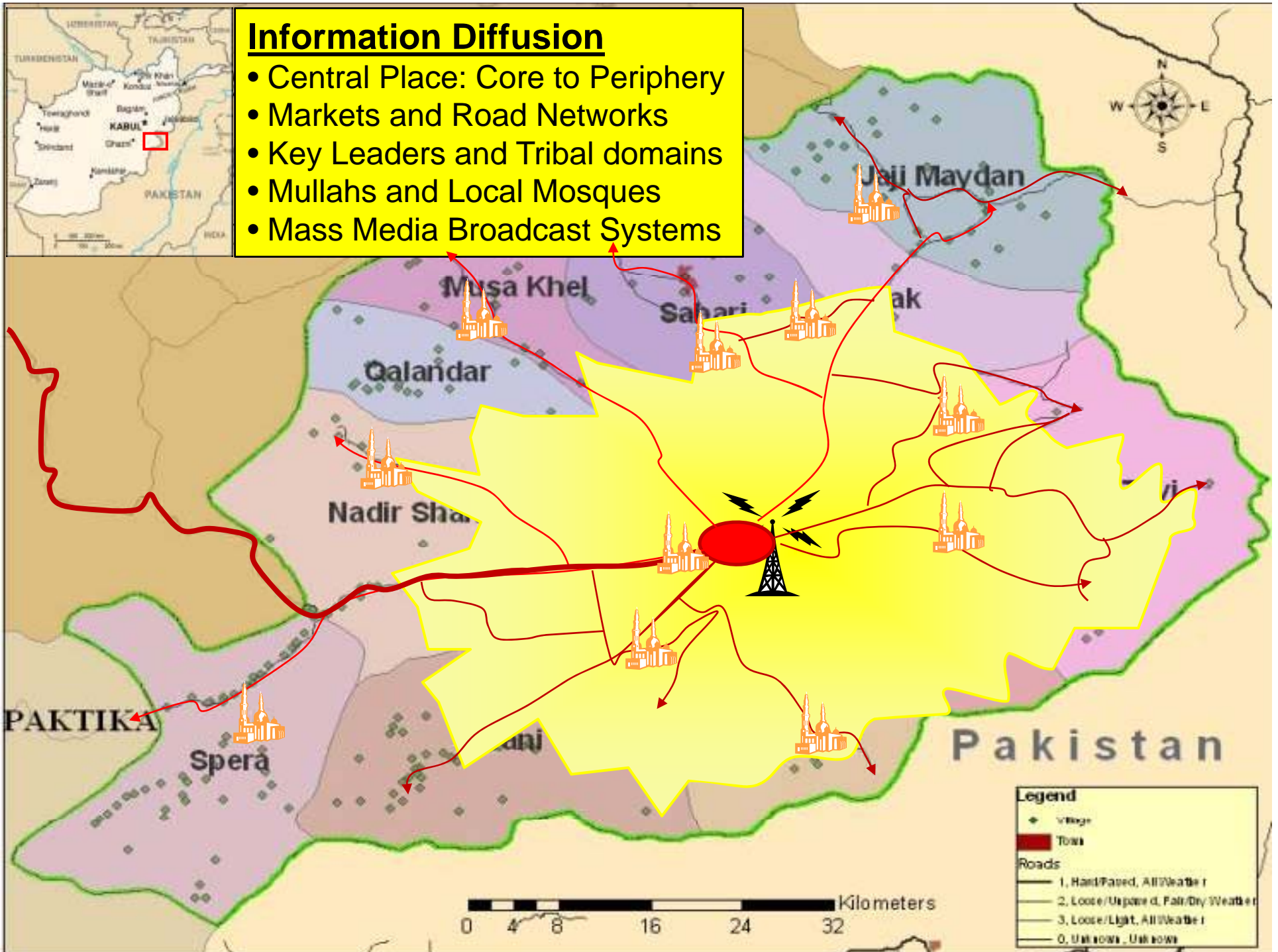
IO Environment



- **Social Networks: *Trust and Influence***
 - Elders thru Tribes to Families & Friends
 - Merchants thru Markets to Consumers
 - Mullahs thru Mosques to Masses
 - Limited P2P electronic capabilities such as phones, email, etc
 - ❖ *Engage key leaders thru venues/places to reach target audiences*
- **Mass Media Communications: *Reach and Persistence***
 - Print handbills and night letters, but illiterate audience
 - Broadcast coverage limited by high mountains
 - Few radios/TV available to population
 - Satellite TV expensive and targeted by Taliban
 - ❖ *Efficient, but effectiveness limited to accessible populations*

Information Diffusion

- Central Place: Core to Periphery
- Markets and Road Networks
- Key Leaders and Tribal domains
- Mullahs and Local Mosques
- Mass Media Broadcast Systems



Conclusion—Mixed Strategy

- Social Networks: *the medium is the message*
 - Social engagement is influential because it is based on establishing personal *trust*
 - Tribal society has a unique set of rules that must be understood to effectively engage
 - Information spreads through rumors, but is also subject to distortion, bias and attenuation
- Mass media offers reach and persistence
 - Much more efficient for providing broad themes and specific messages
 - Dependant on accessibility and credibility