

Geographische Rundschau

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Kabul – Afghanistan’s Capital as a Chessboard for International Donors

In rebuilding Afghanistan after 2001, national security and national development received equal importance. Both the National Security Programme and the National Development Programme require coordination of international assistance as there is an uncharted jungle of international organizations, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations active in Afghanistan. Overlapping interests cause competition which is fuelled by the fact that most organisations are located in Kabul due to security reasons. This “New Great Game” of international donors in the capital threatens to become an obstacle for the development of Afghanistan.

The existence of 854 international, bilateral and non-governmental organizations in Kabul (2005) reflects a worldwide trend over the past two decades of increasing international involvement in the face of natural and man-made disasters. For comparison at the end of civil wars, Lebanon had only 12 international NGOs operating by the end of the 1980s;

in Rwanda in the mid-1990s there were 160 of them. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA; www.unama-afg.org) was created by the Security Council in May 2002 to assist the Afghan government in coordinating the flood of activities provided and supported by aid organisations.

The National Security Programme for Afghanistan is a good example (*Table 1*). It aims at establishing a police and security force, reforming the army, clearing mines and disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating the various military fractions from the pre-2001 era. Especially in re-establishing internal security forces and institutions, many international donors, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and bilateral partners, such as Australia, Great Britain, China, Canada, Germany, Finland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, and the USA, involve themselves in large part because such an engagement will provide a good insight into the future structures of Afghan security and intelligence service.

Germany has taken the lead in organizing and training police and personnel for internal security. This makes necessary cooperation and coordination with the Afghan Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence as well as several intelligence services. Moreover Germany, UN organizations and other donors are helping to clear mines in connection with the National Security Programme (NSP).

Activities to counter narcotics have been another component of the NSP. Under the lead of the United Kingdom, this programme was coordinated with the help of the FAO, UNODC (United Office on Drugs and Crime) and UNAMA and Afghan institutions. Main donors were the USA, EU and especially Iran and Germany (*Table 1*). Considering the fact that drug cultivation has grown by about 600 % since the end of the Taliban regime (*Kreutzmann 2005*), one can not exactly call that “a problem solved”.

The tasks and goals for the National Development Programme (NDP) for Afghanistan were based on three pillars (*Table 1*). Pillar 1 comprises social protection and human capital, Pillar 2 deals with infrastructural development and Pillar 3 forms around institution-building and administration in trade, justice and economic planning. Assistance for Pillar 2 and 3 seems well organized, whereas assistance for “social protection and human capital” (Pillar 1) finds itself in a chaos of coordination.

An invasion of assistance

For the inhabitants of Kabul the “invasion” of development experts in the capital has immediate and not always beneficial consequences. The costs for rented apartments and real estate as well as prices for public and private



Photo: A. Dittmann

Photo 1: Checkpoint at the entrance of recently established “gated communities” in Kabul

Table 1: Donors in the National Development Programme for Afghanistan (as of November 2003)

	National Development Programmes											National Security Programmes					
	Pillar I - Human Capital & Social Protection			Pillar II - Physical Infrastructure				Pillar III - Environment f Developmt				Pillar IV					
	Returnees & IDPs	Education & VT	Health & Nutrition	Livelihoods & Social Protection	Culture, Media, Sport	Transport	Energy, Mining, Telecom	Natural Res Mgmt	Urban Mgmt	Trade & Investment	Public Admin & Econ Mgmt	Justice	National Police & Law Enforce	Afghan National Army (ANA)	Mine Action	Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (DDR)	
Ministry Chair	MRR	MoE	MoH	MRRD	MIC	MPW	MoC	MAG	MUDH	MCommerce	MoF	Judicial C	M Interior	MoD	MoFA	Disarm. Com. Demob. Reint. Com.	
Other Ministries	MUDH MRRD	MoHE MLSA MWA	MM&D MWA MRRD	MAG MoFS+LI MLSA, MMD MRR, MWVA ODP NSC	MWA	MCA&T MoC MoT	MoMI MW&P	MoFS+LI MRRD MWA	MPW MRR Municipality MWA	MoF	Cent. Bank GSCOM	Att. General HR Com. MoJ MWA Supreme Ct.	Defence MWA Office of NSA	Office of NSA	MoD, MoI MMD, MoAg MoE, MRR MRRD, MUDH ODP		
Focal Points	UNHCR	US / UNICEF	EC / US	EC / WB	UNESCO	ADB / Japan	WB	ADB	Habitat Donor?	Germany	WB / EC	Italy	Germany	USA	Canada / UNMACA	Japan	
UN Bodies	UNAMA UNDP UNICEF WFP	UNAMA UNESCO WB WFP ILO	FAO UNAMA UNFPA UNICEF, WHO WFP, WHO UNODC	FAO, ILO UNAMA UNDP UNHCR UNICEF UNOPS, WFP UNODC	UNAMA UNDP UNIFEM	UNAMA UNOPS WB	UNAMA UNIDO UNDP	FAO UNAMA UNEP UNOPS WB	UNAMA WB UNHCR	IMF UNAMA UNIDO WB	IMF UNAMA UNDP UNFPA UNOPS	UNAMA UNDP UNICEF UNODC WB UNHCR	UNAMA UNDP	UNAMA	UNAMA UNOPS UNDP UNHCR UNICEF	UNAMA UNDP UNAMA UNDP	
Int Orgs	ICRC IOM		ICRC	ICRC		ACTED	ICRC										
NGOs (nat/internat)	CARE, IRC, NRC	CARE, SCA	SCA														see *
Donors having Nat Prog as one of their Budget Focus areas	Canada ECHO Japan Norway Sweden Switzerland US	Denmark France Japan Korea Norway Sweden Germany	China France ECHO Japan Korea Turkey	Aga Khan Canada Denmark ECHO Japan Korea Norway Sweden UK, US	Aga Khan France Italy	EC India Iran Italy Kuwait Pakistan Saudi Arabia Sweden US	ADB Germany Iran Pakistan US	Aga Khan Canada China ECHO EC France Japan Turkey UK	China ECHO Germany Italy Qatar Russia UAE	India Iran Pakistan Turkey UK	ADB IMF Norway UK US	Canada USA	Canada China India Netherlands Norway UK Turkey Finland Japan Australia	France, Turkey UK	EC Italy Finland Germany Japan Netherlands Norway Saudi Arabia Sweden	Canada UK US	
Other interested Donors		ADB Canada China, India Iran, Saudi A. Turkey, UAE UK	ADB		EC Germany Greece Japan Norway Switzerland USA					Germany	UK						

* - AREA, DGG, MCPA, MDC, OMAR, HANDICAP INT., DAFA, HALO TRUST, ATC, META

updated on November 2003 modified from: Government of Afghanistan: Consultative Group Structure

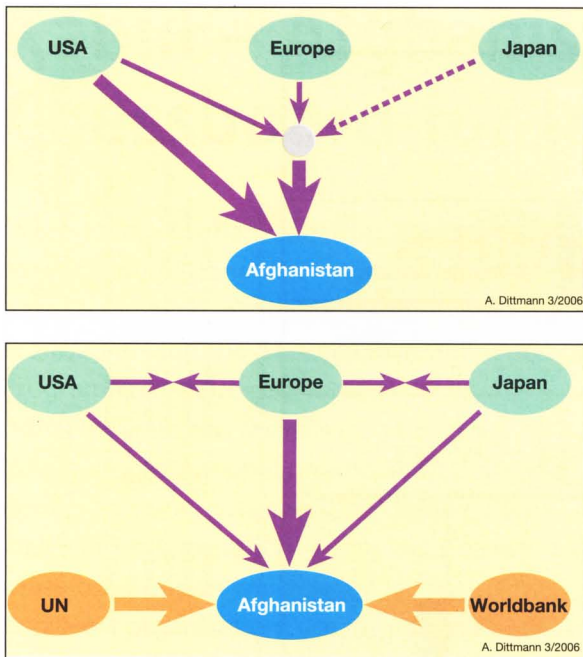
Explanations of Abbreviations (selection):

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
 UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
 UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
 UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund
 WFP: World Food Programme
 UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WB: Worldbank
 ILO: International Labour Organization
 UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
 WHO: World Health Organization
 UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
 FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation

UNOPS: United Nations Office for Project Services
 UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women
 UNIDO: United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme
 IMF: International Monetary Fund
 UNMACA: United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan

Design: F. Esselborn Source: Government of Afghanistan: Consultative Group Structure (modified)



To Figure 1: During the abolition of the Taliban regime in 2001, the so-called “western powers” (Europe, USA, Japan) worked together as partners in military coalitions. While the US took the major task of combat action directly, Europe together with the US, and to a certain extent Japan, combined to focus more on security and supply functions (Figure 1a). This coalition situation in military and security aspects changed completely in the face of the recent struggle for human resources and infrastructure necessary for helpers engaged in the recent reconstruction process of Afghanistan (Figure 1b). Former coalition partners now became competitors, not only following their own independent ways of controlling reconstruction activities and not only with a more intensive engagement of Europe, but also acting against each other within a “New Great Game” for development resources in Afghanistan.

services are increasing. There is an ongoing skirmish for the few intact and representative office buildings mainly concentrated in the district of Shar-e-Naw (= New City). In Shar-e-Naw representative residences and big houses are available only at “westernized” prices. The all-embracing recruitment of Afghans for different aid organisations proves to be another obstacle for the development of the country. Negative consequences result particularly from the wage policy of international governmental and non-governmental organisations. The monthly salary of a driver working in the foreign sector is about US\$ 500 to 600, more than the salary of a university professor. Anyone who speaks even rudimentary English has good promotion prospects. National and municipal institu-

Figure 1: From coalition to competition

Source: Dittmann 2006

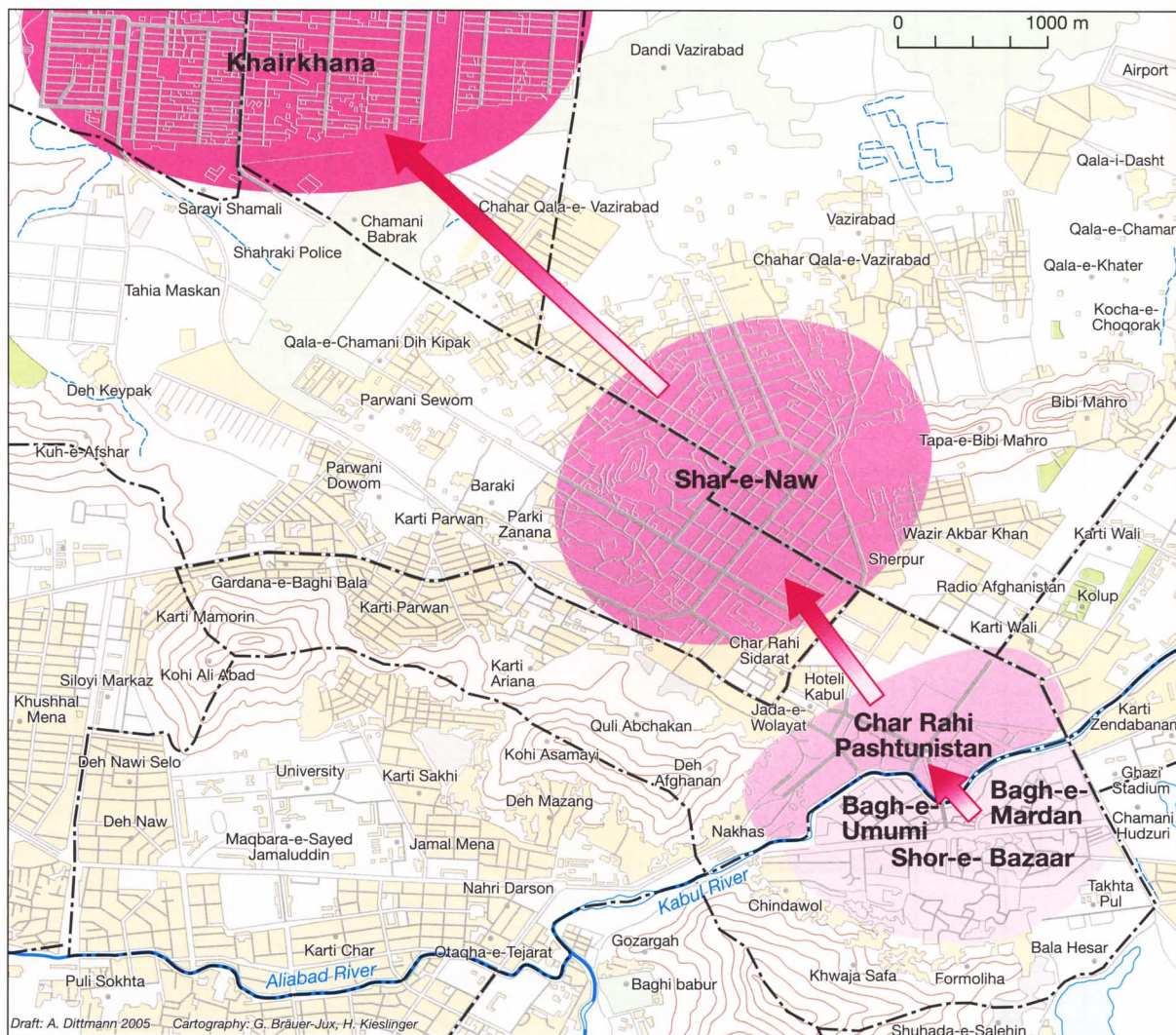


Figure 2: Shifting of concentrations of upper class population in Kabul

Source: Dittmann 2003

tions cannot compete with the wages paid by aid organizations and as a result cannot work efficiently anymore because the scarce well-educated manpower is working for foreign organizations. The “game” about human resources is mostly won by financially strong organizations from foreign countries (Figure 1).

Impact of donor presence on urban development in Kabul

One obvious result is a movement of Kabul’s upper class population away from their traditional residential area towards Khairkhana (Figure 2) and the adjoining districts of Qala-i-Malik Ashoor, Qala-i-Najama, Kitwaja Bughra, Hisa-i-Awal, Sra Mena and Purozha-i-Jadid. Those districts were not seriously damaged during the resistance against the Soviet invaders and the subsequent con-

Textbox 1: The City of Kabul – A Victim of Wars

Almost three years after the abolition of the Taliban regime, war damage was still visible everywhere in Kabul in 2004. However the most serious damage did not result from resistance against the Taliban or the combat operations of US-troops in late 2001 but rather can be traced back to the long lasting conflicts between different Mujahidin groups (Figure 3). After the Soviet withdrawal the capital of Afghanistan became one of the most important battlefields. The destruction of buildings, workshops, factories and infrastructure differed strongly within the city (Figure 4): most serious affected were the southern, southwestern and eastern districts as well as both sides along the Kabul River. The most severely affected district is Aliabad where Kabul University is situated. The northwestern sub-centres and the district of Shar-e-Naw stayed almost intact and suffered only minor destruction.

The reconstruction of infrastructure occurs only in a selective way. The most efficient progress is made in the government district north of the old city-centre and in Shar-e-Naw. The municipal supply of water and electricity is still not running permanently (Figure 5). Uninterrupted electricity can only be found in some isolated areas, such as the airport or the northwestern districts of the city which did benefit from special attention due to their strategic importance.

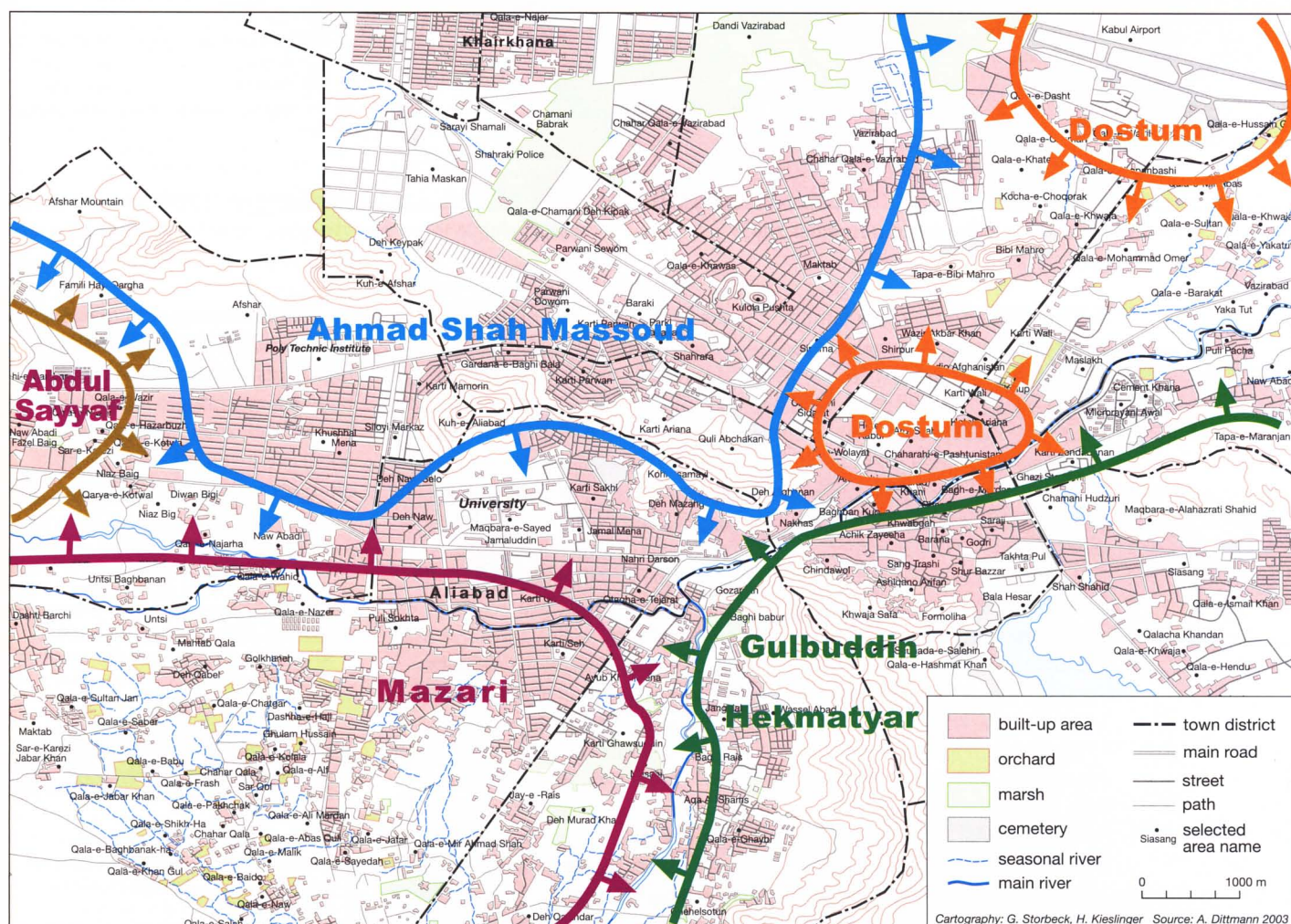


Figure 3: Frontlines of different Mujahidin forces struggling for control of strategic places in Kabul during the Afghan civil war

Source: Dittmann 2003

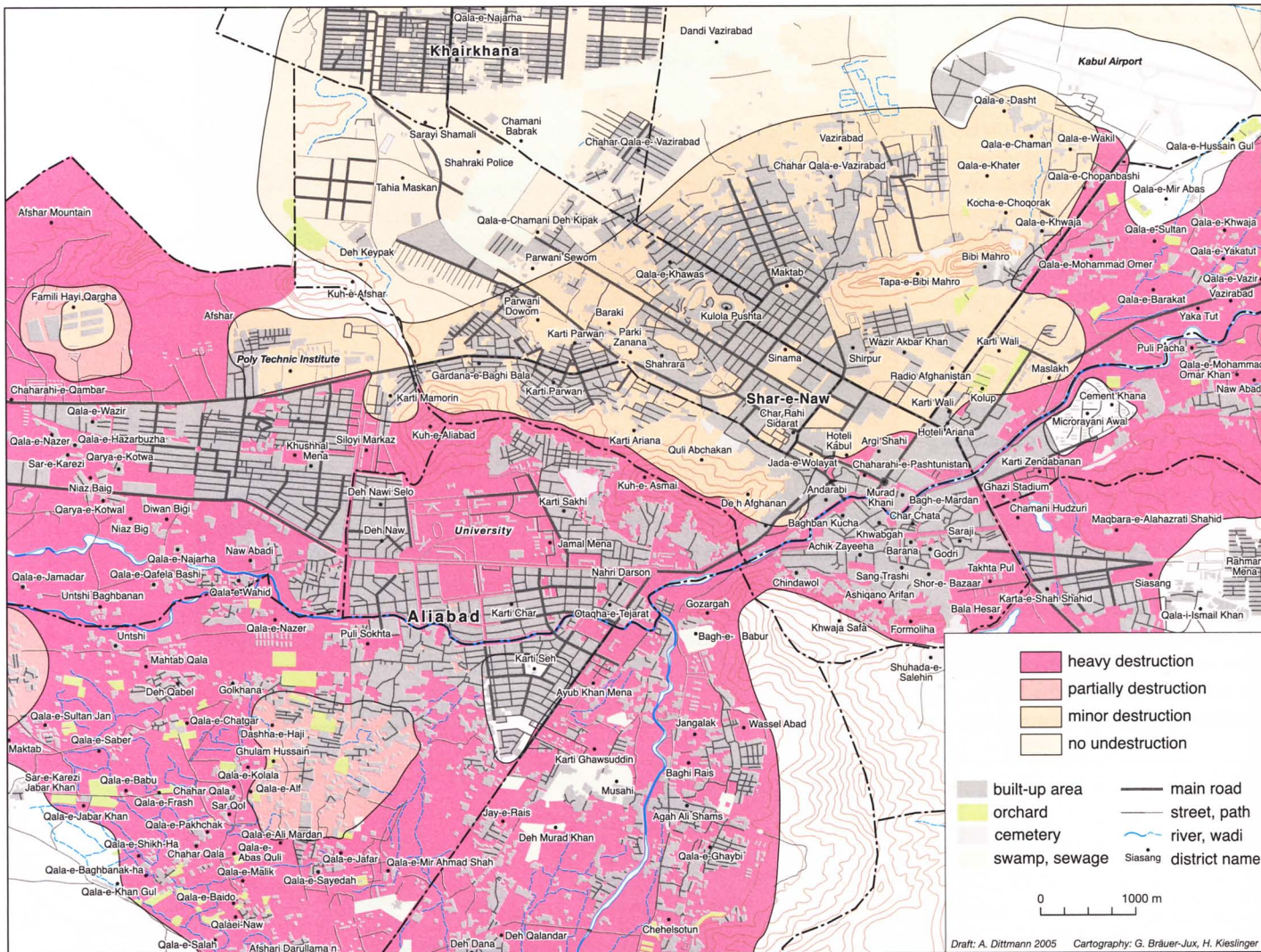


Figure 4: Level of destruction in Kabul (as of December 2003)

Source: Dittmann 2003; Cartography: Bräuer-Jux, Storbeck

flict between groups of Mujahidin. One reason especially makes Khairkhana and the district of Shar-e-Naw preferred residential areas: the distance to the city centre of Kabul and as a fundamental factor for security. However today both Khairkhana and Shar-e-Naw show indicators of becoming “gated communities” with episodic control of several streets (*Photo 1*), single apartment blocks with hired security services and – an exception in Kabul – regular supply of water and electricity.

To a certain extent the displacement of the upper class population from the centre of Kabul can also be considered a continuation of earlier trends in Kabul's urban development going back to the second half of the 19th century. In the course of the British-Afghan wars, parts of the old town on

the southern banks of the Kabul River were destroyed (Shor-e-Bazaar). The reconstruction of Kabul took place on the northern side of Kabul River. The construction of the royal palace in 1888 provided a decisive impulse for the upper class population of Kabul which started to settle in the neighbourhood of the royal buildings. In the 1930s and '40s the upper classes shifted further north-west to Shar-e-Naw where they settled down next to members of the royal family (*Figure 2*).

Though the move of the upper class population to Khairkhana initially seemed to be a reaction to the civil war from 1989 to 1996 and to insufficient water and electricity supply, today the “invasion” of aid organisations in Shar-e-Naw constitutes without doubt a push-factor due to the enormous de-

mand and consequent prices for representative buildings. These high costs are affordable only for high-salary (foreign) experts of NGOs and other institutions and leave even well-off Afghans no alternative than moving away. ■

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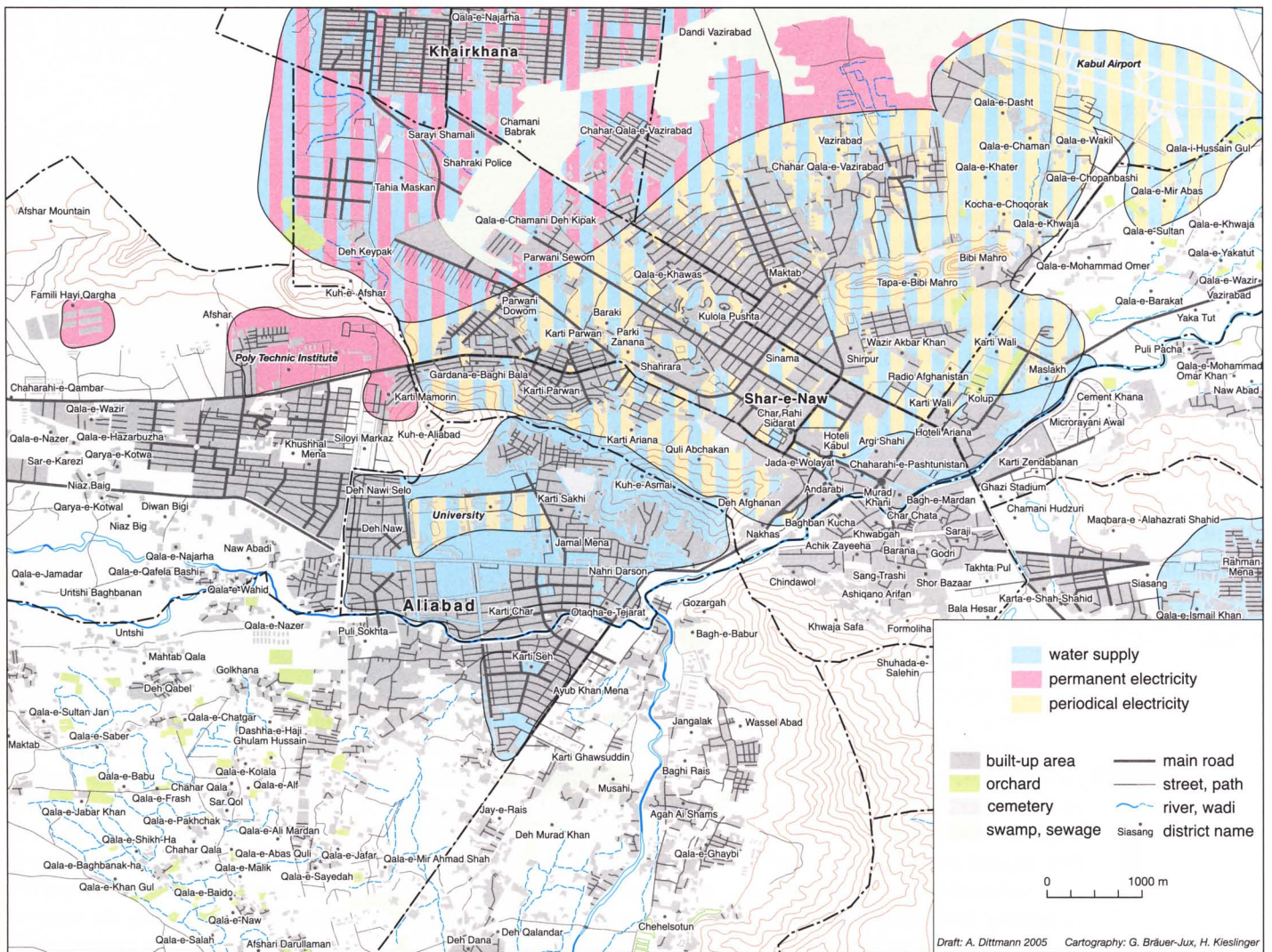


Figure 5: Rehabilitation of electricity and water supply in Kabul

Source: Dittmann 2005; Cartography: Bräuer-Jux

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