

AN ASSESSMENT OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT AND THE TALIBAN INSURGENT GROUP, 2001-2018

by
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Abstract

This paper examines peace negotiations between the United States government and the Afghan Taliban insurgent group from 2001 to 2018. Although the U.S. government has attempted several times in the last 17 years to hold direct peace talks with the Afghan Taliban leaders to end the war in Afghanistan, no significant breakthroughs have been made. Every attempt to negotiate a political settlement has fallen apart. Different studies and reports largely consider the failures due to the Taliban's lack of autonomy and authority in furthering the peace talks as well as Pakistan's overwhelming influence on the insurgent group. This paper has used qualitative research analysis to examine how Pakistan's security agencies have prevented the U.S.-Taliban peace negotiations from producing a tangible outcome and have caused the talks to fall apart when Pakistan was kept out of the negotiations and its strategic interests in Afghanistan were overlooked. This research confirms that the U.S. government focused excessively on negotiating directly with the Taliban leadership, who appeared to lack the authority and autonomy to strike a peace deal with the U.S. It also asserts that Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies maintain a significant amount of influence over the Taliban leadership and the insurgent group in general. A better understanding of the reasons for failures and shortcomings in the peace talks with the Taliban would contribute to the existing literature and help inform future peace negotiations with insurgent groups.

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Acknowledgement

To all the brave soldiers of my two homes (U.S.A. and Afghanistan), who fearlessly fought for a noble cause and are no longer with us. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

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Introduction

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the United States' military intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001 overthrew the Taliban regime in Kabul. With the Taliban gone, the U.S. poured billions of dollars in aid into the country to build everything from the ground up, including permanent government institutions, which were destroyed during the previous civil wars, but less effort was focused on reintegrating the remaining elements of Afghan Taliban into the Afghan society to prevent any potential resurgence of the group in the future.

The newly liberated Afghanistan and the Afghan people experienced a few years of relative peace and stability before the misery returned. Although rumors of reemergence of Afghan Taliban had spread earlier, in 2006, the U.S. intelligence sources officially reported that the Taliban insurgency had returned and was growing, posing a great threat to peace and stability in Afghanistan.¹ “An ever-more deadly insurgency with sanctuaries in neighboring Pakistan, where leaders of the Taliban have found refuge” was growing rapidly.²

Over the last 17 years, the U.S. government has attempted several times to hold direct peace negotiations with the Afghan Taliban leaders to end the longest running U.S. war in history, but no significant breakthroughs have been made. Every attempt to negotiate a peace accord, since 2001, has fallen apart prematurely. This research study will examine the U.S. peace talks with the Afghan Taliban insurgent group and factors that have prevented the talks from producing a negotiated settlement, resulting in

¹ Barnett Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 227.

² Ibid.

prolonged U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan. This research study is, therefore, guided by the following question:

Why have U.S. peace negotiations with the Afghan Taliban constantly fallen apart?

A better understanding of the reasons for failures and shortcomings in the peace talks with the Taliban would contribute to the existing scholarship and help inform future peace negotiations with insurgent groups.

Historical Background

This section will briefly describe Afghanistan, where the war has been going on for more than 18 years, and explain how the Taliban movement came into being and its relationship with Pakistan's security agencies.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan officially appeared on the world map in 1774 after a Pashtun warrior, Ahmad Shah Durrani, conquered large portions of modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and India and united the region's desperate Pashtun tribes.³ "The graveyard of empires," as Seth Jones of Johns Hopkins University has called it in his 2009 book *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan has historically been a fierce battleground for major empires and legendary conquerors, including Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, who suffered staggering losses in their struggles to conquer and hold the region.⁴ In the first Anglo-Afghan war fought between 1839 and 1842, only a single soldier out of 16,000 British troops managed to escape alive out of Afghanistan. The Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 ended in defeat in 1989 with the

³ "The World Factbook: Afghanistan," *CIA*, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>.

⁴ Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009), 25.

deaths of 15 thousand Soviet soldiers. The Soviet defeat in Afghanistan significantly contributed to the later collapse of the Soviet Union. During the 10-year Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Afghan Mujahidin received enormous financial support from the U.S. and many Arab countries, chiefly Saudi Arabia. This support was mostly channeled through Pakistan's intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

The Taliban and their Relationship with Pakistan

The Taliban movement initially emerged as a small religious militia in the spring of 1994 in the district of Maiwand, west of Kandahar city, as an uprising against the strife inflicted on the region by the Mujahidin warlords. The group found early success clearing highways that connect Afghanistan's Kandahar province to Quetta city, the capital of Pakistan's Baluchistan province of highway extortionists.⁵ Mullah Mohammad Omar, who found early success in this campaign as a guard to an Islamic judge, would later become the Taliban's supreme leader.⁶ After successfully clearing multiple checkpoints and disarming highway extortionists, the movement won great popularity and local support among ordinary Afghans and came to be known as Taliban, meaning "religious students" in the local language.⁷ As Carlotta Gall has noted, "although Pakistan did not create the Taliban, it acted swiftly to co-opt the movement," and soon Pakistani intelligence advisors and commandos were spotted in Kandahar city and around Mullah Omar.⁸

The Taliban's swift and aggressive military campaigns from 1994 to 1996 left many in shock and awe. In just less than two years, they seized over 80 percent of

⁵ Carlotta Gall, *The Wrong Enemy: America In Afghanistan 2001-2014*, (New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2015), 41.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, 41-45.

⁸ Ibid, 43-45.

Afghanistan. With support of Pakistani commando units and intelligence advisors, they crushed their opponents in fierce conventional battles.⁹ Behind the scenes, Brigadier General Sultan Amir Tarar (also known as Colonel Imam and Taliban's Godfather), a senior ISI officer as well as Pakistani special force trainer, who had trained Mullah Omar during the Soviet occupation, was, in fact, the Taliban's chief military commander.¹⁰ Mullah Omar referred to him as "Ustad," meaning "teacher" in the local language.¹¹

After seizing almost the entire country in 1996, the movement established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Kabul. Of the three countries, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates that ever officially recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Pakistan was the first to do so and also the last to break official ties with the Taliban following the September 11th terrorist attacks. Historically, Pakistan has deep connections with Afghan Taliban, which go back several decades. Many Afghan Taliban leaders and co-founders, including the Taliban's deceased leader, Mullah Omar, were part of the U.S.-backed Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. They lived in Pakistan for many years where they were trained by Pakistani army and intelligence officers. Following the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul in 1992, millions of Afghans, who sought refuge in Pakistan during the Soviet occupation, returned to Afghanistan, but most Afghan Mujahidin commanders and leaders remained in touch with their ISI handlers.

Literature Review

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The use of insurgency as a foreign policy tool became common during the Cold War era. Superpowers, including the United States and the Soviet Union, and regional powers such as China, South Africa, Ethiopia, Iran, and Pakistan are among the nation states that have supported insurgencies to further their political agendas and to promote their national security interests. The U.S., for instance, supported the Mujahidin in Afghanistan, Buddhist rebels in Tibet, and the contras in Nicaragua to contain the Soviet Union and the spread of communism. Conversely, the Soviet Union used communist insurgents in Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, and different other countries to promote their interests. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War ended. The use of insurgency as a foreign policy tool, however, has still remained common in certain parts of the world and has largely replaced large-scale conventional wars that were once more commonly waged between nations states.

A comprehensive research on “Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements” conducted at the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center (ISDPC) states:

Insurgency is a protracted political-military activity directed toward completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. Insurgent activity—including guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political mobilization, for example, propaganda, recruitment, front and covert party organization, and international activity—is designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control and legitimacy. The common denominator of most insurgent groups is their desire to control a particular area. This objective differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations, whose objectives do not include the creation of an alternative government capable of controlling a given area or country.¹²

¹² Daniel Bayman, *Trends In Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 4.

The literature on insurgency is rich. The topic has been well researched over the last several decades. An analysis of 89 case studies conducted by the RAND National Defense Institute, titled “How Insurgencies End,” shows that modern insurgencies, on average, last around ten years.¹³ They gradually fade away as they hit the ten-year tipping point, and chances of the government’s victory increases as insurgencies go beyond this time threshold.¹⁴ According to the same study, “most insurgencies fail, since states, no matter how weak or feckless, are typically stronger, better organized, and more professional than nonstate forces.”¹⁵ The study has highlighted “Fidel Castro’s victory in Cuba, Mao Tse-tung’s in China...., and” the Afghan Mujahidin’s success in Afghanistan in 1992 as rare cases of successful insurgencies and notes that certain effective insurgencies, such as the ones listed above, have changed the course of history and have had major historical impacts on the world.¹⁶ Moreover, the study shows that complex insurgencies, in which multiple players are involved, such as the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, usually last longer than average, tend to be more violent, and, even after a protracted end, may reemerge due to a party’s dissatisfaction.¹⁷ Contrary to the RAND study, a CIA analysis of 130 insurgencies since World War II shows that the average duration of the aforementioned insurgencies was more than 21 years, but it does not stipulate whether this estimation was true across the board, or covers a certain category of insurgencies, as the RAND study has underscored.¹⁸

¹³ Ben Connable, Martin Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), xii.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 14.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, xvi.

¹⁸ “Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency 2012,” *Homeland Security Digital Library*, accessed July 9, 2019, page 17, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=713599>.

The RAND study considers state sponsorship to be a critical factor in the survivability of insurgencies.¹⁹ It further emphasizes that the “withdrawal of state sponsorship cripples an insurgency and typically leads to its defeat.”²⁰ The study also highlights the importance of external sanctuary and suggests it increases chances of insurgents’ victory.²¹ A case study of insurgency in South Sudan appears to complement these findings. In 1991, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) controlled most of the oil-rich South Sudan territory except a few heavily guarded towns and was stretching into North Sudan.²² As soon as the insurgent group lost external support and sanctuary due to a political shift in Ethiopia, it began to significantly weaken and lost much of the territory it once controlled.²³

External sanctuaries, as the RAND study has underlined, seem to play a major role in keeping an insurgency alive and helping it drag on for many years. According to Thomas Hammes, a prominent counterinsurgency specialist, “[t]he greatest strength of the insurgent is the fact that he doesn’t have to win. He simply has to stay in the fight until (the coalition),” referring to the U.S. and its allied forces in Afghanistan, “gives up and goes home. By simply not losing, [insurgencies] compel their opponent to choose—either continue to fight, perhaps indefinitely, or quit and go home.”²⁴ The U.S. Department of the Army Counterinsurgency (COIN) Field Manual, has listed “diminishing support for insurgents and denying them sanctuaries” as the first and the

¹⁹ Ben Connable and Martin Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), xiii.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, xvii.

²² Christopher Paul, Colin Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2010), 98.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Thomas Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War In the 21st Century*, (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), 183.

most important element of a COIN campaign,²⁵ which largely supports Hammes' assertion. From this perspective, it can easily be argued that a critical factor keeping the Taliban insurgency alive in Afghanistan for more than 18 years is the availability of sanctuaries and state support they enjoy in neighboring Pakistan.

A CIA "Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency 2012" defines "[c]ounterinsurgency—frequently referred to by the acronym COIN—as the combination of measures undertaken by a government to defeat an insurgency. Effective counterinsurgency integrates and synchronizes political, security, legal, economic, development, and psychological activities to create a holistic approach aimed at weakening the insurgents while bolstering the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the population."²⁶

The government of Sri Lanka, fed up with a violent insurgency conducted by the Tamil Tigers, also known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), launched an extensive COIN campaign in 2008 to crush the insurgents, and successfully wiped them out with military assistance from India.²⁷ The Sri Lankan government's COIN campaign was successful largely because the Tamil Tigers did not have an external hideout, only two major parties (the government of Sri Lanka and LTTE) were involved in the conflict, and neighboring countries denied the Tigers sanctuary.²⁸ This case study demonstrates

²⁵ Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency - FM 3-24 U.S. Army Field Manuals*, (Washington, DC: Createspace Independent Pub, 2006) chapter 4, 7-8.

²⁶ "Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency 2012," *Homeland Security Digital Library*, accessed July 9, 2019, page 1, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=713599>.

²⁷ Azat Sajjad Khan, "Monograph: Sri Lankan Counterinsurgency Operation During Eelam War IV: comparative analysis of Galula and Rajapaksa model to determine future applicability," *School of Advance Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College*, accessed June 20, 2019, page 27-34, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4013coll3/id/3022/rec/124>.

²⁸ Ibid.

that insurgents without external hideouts are more prone to defeat, no matter how violent and well-organized they may be.

In his 2009 book, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars In the Midst of a Big One*, David Kilcullen, one of the most prominent authorities on countering insurgencies, who has also served in Iraq and Afghanistan, critiques the assessments of other scholars who posit that an insurgency's victory is largely based on its survival factor suggesting instead that the counterinsurgent force must be the one to hold out for the long-haul.²⁹ To further support his argument, Kilcullen quotes a U.S. Army officer in Afghanistan, who says "when you mix this sense of long-term commitment with a persistent-presence methodology, it becomes apparent to everyone that [we] are going to be in the town for a long, long time. The U.S. isn't going away tonight and leaving the elders to cope with the Taliban on their own."³⁰

Kilcullen suggests that by sending out this message to "everyone," including the Taliban and its supporters, the U.S. signals that it is not going to leave anytime soon and will stay in it for as long as it may take. This strong signal, Kilcullen suggests, breaks the insurgents' fighting morale, accelerating their fragmentation and defeat. This theory is similar to President Donald Trump's new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia which he unveiled in August 2017. According to President Trump, it is "counterproductive...to announce in advance the dates we intend to begin, or end, military options." He further emphasized that "[w]e will not talk about number of troops or our plans for further

²⁹ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars In the Midst of a Big One*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95-96.

³⁰ Ibid.

military activities.”³¹ President Trump was apparently referring to President Barak Obama’s troops withdrawal announcement from Afghanistan in 2011.

According to the RAND study, “[a]lthough a few 1960s-era insurgency theorists [have] underplayed the” critical role of sanctuary, “Mao...and most modern COIN theorists concur that insurgent sanctuary correlates with insurgent victory.”³² The study further asserts that “[t]he total absence of sanctuary leaves insurgents with only a one-in-seven chance of winning.”³³ The claim on importance of insurgent sanctuary is further illustrated in the following chart.

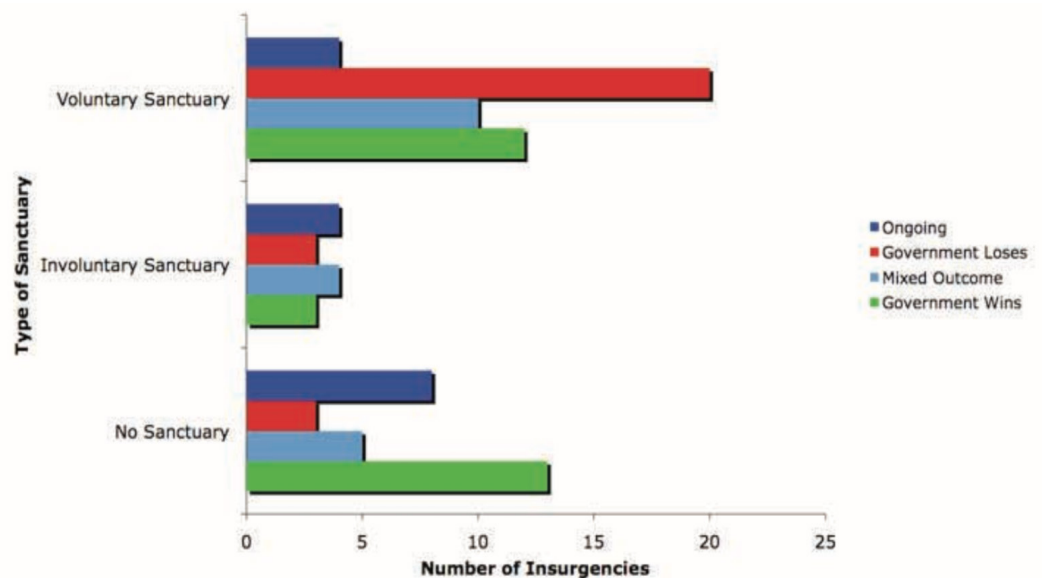


Figure 1. Value of Sanctuary.³⁴

The existing scholarship on insurgency is mostly focused on and considers, as noted in the literature review, state sponsorship and external sanctuary as two key elements of victory for insurgencies. Looking at the correlation between external hideout

³¹ “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia,” *The White House*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>.

³² Ben Connable, Martin Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), 34.

³³ *Ibid*, 35.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

and insurgency and state sponsorship and insurgency, it is evident that chances of victory for insurgencies enjoying these two elements are higher, no matter how strong a military they face—be it a superpower, since both elements allow an insurgency to drag on the fight for many years, causing the counterinsurgent forces to lose both enormous resources and strategic patience.

Following the end of the Second World War, a wave of horrific intrastate conflicts erupted. Between 1945 and 1999, compared to relatively few interstate wars, intrastate wars have been more common and have killed more people.³⁵ For instance, in the Afghan civil war alone (1979-1989) around 2 million Afghans perished and three million more became refugees. Although the current conflict in Afghanistan is not listed in her long list of new civil wars, in her most recent journal article “The New New Civil Wars,” Barbara Walter, a prominent authority on civil wars, discusses a new wave of civil wars, which has started with the fall of Saddam Hussein.³⁶ According to her, these post-2003, new civil wars are mostly fought in Muslim-majority countries “by groups that hold radical Islamist ideologies,” and, she warns, they “tend to last a long time” and may not end on the negotiation table.³⁷ In the same paper, she also argues that “these civil wars are likely to resist negotiated settlements” due to lack “of a third party” guarantor “willing to commit long-term peacekeepers to help implement the deal.”³⁸ Although she has excluded Afghanistan from this list, the on-going conflict in Afghanistan has a lot in common with what she has described as the new wave of civil wars.

³⁵ Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3118222>.

³⁶ Barbara Walter, “New New Civil Wars,” *Annual Reviews of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (2017): 471, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-060415-093921>.

³⁷ Ibid, 470.

³⁸ Ibid.

The Geneva Convention does not necessarily define the term civil war per se, but it does describe the criteria for civil war as follows:

That the insurgents must have an organization purporting to have the characteristics of a State; that the insurgent civil authority must exercise de facto authority over persons within a determinate territory; that the armed forces must act under the direction of the organized civil authority and be prepared to observe the ordinary laws of war; that the insurgent civil authority must agree to be bound by the provisions of the Convention.³⁹

While James Fearon of the Stanford University defines civil war as “a violent conflict between organized groups within a country that are fighting over control of the government, one side’s separatist goals, or some divisive government policy,”⁴⁰ a Department of Defense (DoD) field manual terms civil war as a “condition-based conflict beginning with an insurgency.”⁴¹ The DoD field manual further adds, “[o]nce the insurgency achieves certain characteristics of organization and resembles an alternate government, the conflict reaches the state of civil war.”⁴² In a separate research work “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” Walter reiterates her point and states that “civil wars rarely end in negotiated settlement.”⁴³ To support her claim, she reveals that between 1940 and 1990, 55 percent of interstate war ended on the negotiation table “whereas only 20 percent of civil wars reached similar solutions” during the same

³⁹ Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies - FM 3-24 U.S. Army Field Manuals*, (Washington, DC: Marine Corps Warfighting Publication Headquarters, 2014) chapter 4, page 2, <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>.

⁴⁰ James Fearon, “Civil war definition transcends politics,” *Center for International Security and Cooperation*, April 10, 2006, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/news/civil_war_definition_transcends_politics_20060410.

⁴¹ Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies - FM 3-24 U.S. Army Field Manuals*, (Washington, DC: Marine Corps Warfighting Publication Headquarters, 2014) chapter 4, page 2, <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Barbara Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (1997): 1-2. <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=9709171594&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

period.⁴⁴ She strongly “argues that civil war negotiations rarely end in successful peace settlements because credible guarantees on the terms of the settlement are almost impossible to arrange by the combatants themselves” and “no state or international organization has shown any interest in providing this service.”⁴⁵ Surprisingly, this argument flatly contradicts the on-going situation in Afghanistan, where the U.S. has largely played the role of a third-party guarantor and custodian of the peace process, but the peacemaking attempts have constantly fallen apart.

Walter lists military stalemate between warring factions, power-sharing and, most importantly, third-party peacekeeping commitment as three major conditions necessary for civil war negotiations to produce a lasting peace.⁴⁶ While she further argues that the peace keeping condition drops the likelihood “of going back to war somewhere between 75 percent to 85 percent,”⁴⁷ Stephan Stedman highlights the importance of spoiler problems in peace processes. The conflicts of the past three decades, particularly the civil wars of the 1990s, and the scholarship on ending civil wars suggest that “peacemaking is a risky business”⁴⁸ and “the greatest source of risk comes from spoilers—leaders, and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threaten their power, worldview, and interest.”⁴⁹ According to Stedman, “when spoilers succeed, as they did in Angola in 1992 and Rwanda in 1994, the results [were] catastrophic” and “the casualties of failed peace were infinitely higher than the casualties of war.” Immediately after Jonas

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁶ Barbara Walter, “Hoping that peace comes to Afghanistan? Dream on,” *The Washington Post*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/30/hoping-that-peace-comes-to-afghanistan-dream-on/>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Stephen Stedman, “Spoiler Problem in Peace Processes,” *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997):1, doi:10.2307/2539366.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Savimbi's refusal to accept the UN-monitored elections in 1992, around 300,000 people were killed in fresh conflicts in Angola, and after the "Hutu extremists in Rwanda rejected the Arusha Peace Accord in 1994 and launched a campaign of genocide, over 1 million Rwandans died in less than three months."

Stedman divides spoilers generally into two categories: inside spoilers and outside spoilers. Inside spoilers, for instance, will comply to a certain level to demonstrate to others their willingness and good faith, but not to the extent to "weaken their offensive military capability."⁵⁰ Outside spoilers, however, will use tactics such as assassinating "moderates who stand for a negotiated peace" in order to undermine the peace process.

A brief review of literature on civil war, particularly covering the period after the end of the Second World War, reveals that civil war peace negotiations are extremely challenging and require necessary conditions, as Walter has stated, to bring peace, but it specifically emphasizes that "third-party peacekeeping has a large, positive and statistically significant effect on the success of peace agreements in civil wars."⁵¹ The literature also underscores the significance of spoilers and their management to ensure the success of peace negotiations as well as the duration of postwar peace. Whether call it insurgency or civil war, despite all peacemaking efforts, the conflict in Afghanistan has continued for more than 18 years, which has caused significant pain and huge economic loss without a clear end in sight.

Hypotheses and Methods

Hypotheses

⁵⁰ Ibid, 3.

⁵¹ Barbara Walter, "Hoping that peace comes to Afghanistan? Dream on," *The Washington Post*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/30/hoping-that-peace-comes-to-afghanistan-dream-on/>.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): My initial hypothesis is that the Pakistani government is a major spoiler in the peace process in Afghanistan. My research into existing scholarship points to Pakistan's role as a key spoiler in the Afghan peace process, which has led to all the past failures.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): I additionally hypothesize that Pakistan is willing to fund and abet the Taliban in perpetuity, undermining the U.S. peace efforts in Afghanistan.

Both hypotheses are inspired initially by Barnett Rubin's assertion that the Afghan Taliban leaders are "hostages to Pakistan military."⁵² The initial hypothesis suggests that the Taliban leadership seemingly does not have the authority and autonomy to ink a peace deal with the U.S. unless Pakistan dictates it. The second hypothesis, which, I believe, is highly difficult to test and prove by empirical evidence largely due to the ISI's highly deceptive maneuvers and the difficulty of accessing classified data, is also initially derived from Barnett Rubin's assertion about the Taliban being hostages to Pakistan's security agencies.

Methods

As part of this research study, I have reviewed strategies of three different U.S. administrations that have dealt with the Afghan war, starting with President Bush's administration, which received authorization from the U.S. Congress to initiate military intervention in Afghanistan immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S.⁵³ I have also attempted to track different major developments in the Afghan peace negotiations from 2001 to 2018. This paper utilizes works of scholars and

⁵² Barnett Rubin, "An Open Letter to the Taliban: An American who helped open secret negotiations with the group calls for them to accept a ceasefire and peace talks with the Afghan government," *The New Yorker*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-open-letter-to-the-taliban>.

⁵³ "Authorization for Use of Military Force," CONGRESS.GOV, September 18, 2001, <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ40/PLAW-107publ40.pdf>.

experts who are well known authorities on Afghanistan. For instance, Barnett Rubin, a prominent source for this paper, was personally involved in peace negotiations and other dialogues with the Taliban even prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.⁵⁴

To better explain the relationship between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani government, I have consulted American, British, and Pakistani scholarly publications and assessments of leading experts and journalists on the Taliban insurgency and their connection with Pakistan's security agencies. I also have looked through U.S. government reports and the analysis of several D.C.-based think tanks, including the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), to observe different views and their assessments of the longest U.S. military engagement overseas. Lastly, I have carefully analyzed and tried to interpret an important letter from the Taliban addressed to the U.S. Congress and the American people, which was published in February 2018. The letter has highlighted some grim realities on the ground, which has listeners both in the U.S. and Afghanistan. Again, I have cautiously examined all the compiled material and have interpreted the content to test my hypotheses.

An important limitation affecting my research is the lack of scholarly articles on the topic produced by an original audience, in this case, Afghans within Afghanistan analyzing the insurgency and the peace process from a local perspective. While several decades of civil wars have devastated almost all major government and economic sectors in Afghanistan, the education sector has suffered the most. Forty years of wars, internal migrations, and economic hardship have produced generations of unschooled Afghans, who, despite often having deep local understanding of the factors at play in the ongoing

⁵⁴ Barnett Rubin, "An Open Letter to the Taliban: An American who helped open secret negotiations with the group calls for them to accept a ceasefire and peace talks with the Afghan government," *The New Yorker*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-open-letter-to-the-taliban>.

conflict and important insight into how it might best be resolved, often lack the literary capacity to share their knowledge with the international research community.

Consequently, excluding the Taliban letter, almost everything I have researched on this project has been written by foreign experts, some of whom, I doubt, have ever seen or been to Afghanistan. I found it extremely difficult to locate any scholarly publications to back local approaches to solving the conflict and empirically prove it or test them as local approaches or ideas have rarely ever been documented or published.

Data

In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, President George W. Bush boldly stated that “no nation can negotiate with terrorists.”⁵⁵ Despite the Afghan Taliban’s growing deadly insurgency, which by 2006 had gradually engulfed different corners of the country, the mantra of “no negotiation with terrorists” had dominated the U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan. During this period, less effort was focused on reintegrating the remaining elements of Afghan Taliban into the Afghan society. The few initiatives that were undertaken were often poorly coordinated and corrupt. For example, the UN-funded Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR) program in 2006 ended disastrously because the then deputy defense minister of Afghanistan in charge of the program belonged to a Taliban-opposed militia group (Northern Alliance) and had channeled most of the DDR funds to militiamen within his own circle.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Mona Sheikh, Maja Greenwood, “Taliban Talks: past, present and prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2013, page 14, <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/new-diis-report-time-to-reconcile-with-the-taliban>.

⁵⁶ Simonetta Rossi, Antonio Giustozzi, “Working Paper no. 2: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (DDR) in Afghanistan: Constraints and Limited Capabilities,” *Crisis*

During the preparation phase for military intervention in Afghanistan, the U.S. allied itself with several warlords in northern Afghanistan, many of whom had committed serious war crimes and grave human rights abuses against fellow Afghans, to help in toppling the Taliban regime in Kabul. Many of these warlords seized prominent government positions in the post-Taliban regime, where they continued their abuses, maintained private militias, and engaged in drug trafficking and other criminal activities. Most of these warlords were former Afghan Mujahidin commanders, who had torn apart the country in the civil wars following the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul in 1992. The U.S. partnership with such individuals and groups from the very beginning gave the Afghan people the impression that the U.S., possibly, tolerated corruption and promoted abusive warlords, which undermined the credibility of the new regime the U.S. had established in Kabul. The move was seen as a self-defeating act, which would cause lasting harm to peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Under President Bush, the U.S. focused on a military solution to end the conflict in Afghanistan. The Bush Administration thwarted early peace talks in Afghanistan and refrained from engaging in dialogue with the Taliban.⁵⁷ For instance, in December 2001, the Taliban approached the Afghan government with a signed letter from Mullah Omar to negotiate and peacefully lay down arms, but the U.S. refused to talk and hastily continued to advance on the Taliban's stronghold in Kandahar province.⁵⁸ In another instance, a year later, the Taliban representatives again approached the new U.S.-backed Afghan

States Research Center, June 2006, page 4, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csrrc-working-papers-phase-two/wp2.2-ddr-of-ex-combatants-in-afghanistan.pdf>.

⁵⁷ James Dobbins, Carter Malkasian, "Time to Negotiate in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 4 (July 2015): 53-57, <http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=103175010&site==ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 53-57.

government in Kabul to initiate peace talks, but the U.S. arrested the Taliban negotiators, including the Taliban's former minister of foreign affairs, and sent them to Guantanamo Bay.⁵⁹

Barnett Rubin, one of the United States' foremost authorities on modern Afghanistan, in his long letter to the Taliban, dated February 27, 2018, basically confirms all these missed opportunities for a political settlement in Afghanistan in late 2001 and 2002. According to him, on December 6, 2001, a Taliban representative presented Mullah Omar's signed letter to the then Afghan government leader, Hamid Karzai, and agreed to lay down arms in return for an amnesty, and did not even ask for a role in the new Afghan government. Despite this, president Bush's secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, "announced there would be neither a negotiated settlement nor an amnesty."⁶⁰

Later in 2002, according to Rubin, the Taliban delegates again reached out to the Afghan government to take part in the "peace process, [but] Vice-President Dick Cheney ordered them imprisoned at Guantanamo or Bagram."⁶¹ Rubin states that a year later the Taliban reached out to the U.S. Ambassador for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, to make peace with the government of Afghanistan, only for their request to be declined again by Washington.⁶² Rubin's accounts show that the Bush administration repeatedly refused to engage with the Taliban in peace talks, which eventually forced the group to continue the war and pushed them to become "hostages to the Pakistan military."⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Barnett Rubin, "An Open Letter to the Taliban: An American who helped open secret negotiations with the group calls for them to accept a ceasefire and peace talks with the Afghan government," *The New Yorker*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-open-letter-to-the-taliban>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

With the election of President Barak Obama in 2009, the U.S. strategy shifted, and it was proposed that the U.S. “reach out to moderate elements of the Afghan Taliban” for peace negotiations.⁶⁴ To accomplish this, the administration appointed a special envoy for the Afghan peace and reconciliation process and dialogue with Afghan Taliban.⁶⁵ The new strategy was met with mixed reactions. Some experts agreed that dialogue with Afghan Taliban should have been a part of the U.S. government’s counterinsurgency plan in Afghanistan since 2001, but it was hard to identify moderate Taliban elements, as the new strategy suggested. In any peace process, the issue of legitimate representation is of paramount importance. It can be almost impossible to achieve peace without individuals and groups considered as legitimate representatives of the warring factions. It is also equally important that participants at the peace negotiation table are genuine and have the authority and autonomy to agree and implement a peace deal.

Many U.S. NATO allies had tried to reach out to different regional Taliban commanders since 2006 , but their efforts were not successful because it was difficult to identify who could actually speak on behalf of the Taliban leadership.⁶⁶ While talks could possibly separate moderate Taliban from other extremists and global jihadists, there was difficulty determining who the moderate Taliban were because of the movement’s complicated structure and due to the fact that their political leaders were based in

⁶⁴ Mona Sheikh, Maja Greenwood, “Taliban Talks: past, present and prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2013, page 14, <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/new-diis-report-time-to-reconcile-with-the-taliban>.

⁶⁵ “Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *The White House*, March 27, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

⁶⁶ Jayshree Bajoria, “Six Experts on Negotiation with Taliban,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 20, 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/six-experts-negotiating-taliban>.

different Pakistani cities, and were out of reach.⁶⁷ To address this complicated issue and to make sure the Taliban had a single, internationally known address and legitimate representation, the U.S. and Afghan government leaders jointly agreed to open a political office for the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, in January 2012.⁶⁸

President Obama officially approved the first secret memo on September 17, 2010, authorizing U.S. government officials to open a direct negotiation channel with the Afghan Taliban.⁶⁹ This led to the first direct meeting between the U.S. and the Taliban in Munich, Germany, reportedly involving a Taliban aid close to Mullah Omar.⁷⁰ In late November 2010, the Taliban representative, Tayeb Agha, who had traveled from Qatar to Germany on a Pakistani passport to meet with American and German delegates, literally denied that the ISI knew anything about his travel or the meeting.⁷¹ Later on May 24, 2016, a U.S. drone strike inside Pakistan killed the newly-appointed Afghan Taliban leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, who had just replaced Mullah Omar after his death.⁷² He was on his way from Iran back to Pakistan. Reportedly, he, too, was travelling with a Pakistani passport, but what is even more important in this context is that he had used the same passport over a 10-year period of time and had conducted numerous international trips out of Pakistan.⁷³

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Mona Sheikh, Maja Greenwood, "Taliban Talks: past, present and prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2013, page 10, <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/new-diis-report-time-to-reconcile-with-the-taliban>.

⁶⁹ Steve Coll, Directorate S: *The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars In Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 498.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 479-506.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Rosa Brooks, "The Magical Thinking of Killing Mullah Mansour," *Foreign Policy*, May 24, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/24/the-magical-thinking-of-killing-mullah-mansour-taliban-al-qaeda-obama/>.

⁷³ Ibid.

Although the Munich meeting was an important step in the Afghan peace process, it did not produce any tangible outcomes. The Taliban representative did not seem to have a broader agenda for peace negotiations with the Americans, as he only kept pushing for the release of several high profile, senior and junior Taliban detainees from Guantanamo without offering any perceived meaningful concessions or a roadmap for subsequent talks.⁷⁴ This pointed to a lack of a clear commitment to peace and lack of a broader vision for future steps in the peace process.⁷⁵

To better facilitate the peace efforts in Afghanistan, the U.S. supported the Afghan government's initiative to establish a High Peace Council (HPC) in October 2010 to formally manage and facilitate the peace process and negotiations with the Afghan Taliban. Numerous scholars have underlined poor leadership and management of the process by the Afghan government. One scholar claims the HPC "failed to achieve any breakthrough in reconciliation with the insurgents."⁷⁶ He further claims that the HPC was incapable of managing the process and conducting productive talks with the Taliban because many in the HPC leadership were heads of current or former warring factions, who had fought with the Taliban in the past and had bitter war experience with each other.⁷⁷ In fact, he categorizes the HPC itself as a major impediment to the peace process and further argues that the Taliban may never talk to an incompetent government body like the HPC.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Steve Coll, Directorate S: *The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars In Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 506-507.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 506.

⁷⁶ Raja Muhammad Khan, Ajmal Abbasi, "The Afghan Peace Process: Strategic Policy Contradictions and Lacunas," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute* xvi, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 70-73, <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/art4w16.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

At the same time, a “peace brief” released by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) discusses similar concerns among Afghan citizens. Afghan analysts and representatives of different civil society networks have described the HPC members as war-waging experts rather than experts in furthering peacemaking efforts, and warn the appointment of those who have “committed war crimes and serious human rights violations” in the HPC leadership can only negatively impact the peace process.⁷⁹ At least 53 out of 70 HPC members are heads or influential associates of certain violent political groups or illegal Afghan militias “involved in the civil wars of the 1980s-90s.”⁸⁰ The U.S. government has thrown tens of millions of dollars in support of this failed initiative, which has only helped undermine U.S. peace efforts in Afghanistan.⁸¹ As discussed earlier, the existence of many warlords and tainted figures in powerful positions in the Afghan government, particularly within the HPC, has continued to seriously challenge the peace process in Afghanistan and the credibility of the Council itself.

Less than a year after the HPC was established, in September 2011, the Taliban assassinated the HPC chairman, who was the head of a warring faction during the Afghan civil wars and had also temporarily served as president of Afghanistan, following the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul in 1992.⁸² Following the assassination of

⁷⁹ Patricia Gossman, “Peace Brief 74: Afghan High Peace Council Fails to Reflect Afghan Civil Society,” *United States Institute of Peace*, January 10, 2011, page: 3-4, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/01/afghan-high-peace-council-fails-reflect-afghan-civil-society>.

⁸⁰ Patricia Gossman, “Peace Brief 74: Afghan High Peace Council Fails to Reflect Afghan Civil Society,” *United States Institute of Peace*, January 10, 2011, page: 3-4, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/01/afghan-high-peace-council-fails-reflect-afghan-civil-society>.

⁸¹ “Report to the United States Congress,” *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction*, July 30, 2018, page 117, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-07-30qr-section3-governance.pdf>.

⁸² Mona Sheikh, Maja Greenwood, “Taliban Talks: past, present and prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2013, page 16-17, <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/new-diis-report-time-to-reconcile-with-the-taliban>.

the chairman of HPC, the U.S. peace talks with the Taliban fell apart,⁸³ and the prospect for peace and stability in Afghanistan dimmed for several years as the war continued. The Taliban showed little sign of interest in peace talks and ending the violence, while the U.S. seemed incapable of pushing the insurgent group to the negotiation table. After President Obama announced in 2011 that the U.S. troops would start pulling out of Afghanistan, the Taliban morale improved. Believing that, if they resisted a little more, they could wait out the U.S. forces, the Taliban fought harder, and made significant gains in the following years, bringing large parts of rural Afghanistan under their control.⁸⁴ Political turmoil in Afghanistan following the contested Afghan presidential elections in 2014 and months of controversial political campaigns leading up to the 2016 presidential elections in the U.S. further hampered the U.S. war effort and reduced their negotiating position.

President Donald Trump inherited the Afghan war in January 2017, and after months of consultations, on August 21, 2017, he announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia. The President bluntly called on Pakistan to stop sheltering the Taliban and militant groups who pose a threat to the U.S. national security, while, at the same time, floating the possibility of a negotiated end to the war in Afghanistan at an unspecified time.⁸⁵ Not too long after President Trump announced the possibility of new negotiations, the Taliban published an open letter in February 2018, signaling a desire for

⁸³ Spencer Ackerman, "Inside the Secret Taliban Talks to End America's Longest War," *Daily Beast*, August 2, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-secret-taliban-talks-to-end-americas-longest-war?ref=scroll>.

⁸⁴ Ben Farmer, "Barak Obama US troop withdrawal deadline a "boost" to Taliban," *The Telegraph*, August 27, 2010, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/7967883/Barack-Obama-US-troop-withdrawal-deadline-a-boost-to-Taliban.html>.

⁸⁵ "Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia," *The White House*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>.

direct peace talks and negotiations with the U.S. government. The Taliban have long expressed an appeal for direct peace talks with the U.S. government and have continuously refused to engage in peace negotiations with the government of Afghanistan, which they consider a puppet regime. The February 2018 Taliban letter, addressed to the American people and the U.S. Congress, suggests that Pakistan is likely determined to continue supporting the Taliban insurgency for a foreseeable future, or as stated in the letter, for “a hundred... years.”⁸⁶ The Taliban letter likely suggests that under a potential Taliban regime in Kabul, the Afghan territory will not be used by terrorists against other countries and also hints at relieving the world of the Afghan poppy plague. According to the Taliban’s letter, the U.S. military pressure, even if indefinite, will not change the situation on the ground.⁸⁷ The Taliban’s letter further highlights serious issues to the American public such as the death of thousands of U.S. soldiers in the Afghan war, an 87 per cent increase in the production of heroin in 2017, and tens of billions of U.S. taxpayers’ dollars being wasted and given to “thieves and murderers.”⁸⁸

Following years of disappointments and missed opportunities, it looked as if the Afghan war was once again at a possible turning point. Calls for peace talks with the Taliban and an end to the war in Afghanistan through dialogue and diplomatic means once again gained some momentum. “It is time for this war in Afghanistan to end,” said General John Nicholson, the departing commander of the U.S. and NATO forces in

⁸⁶ “Taliban attempts to appeal to U.S. audience in new letter: Letter of the Islamic Emirate to the American People!,” *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2018, <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/world/taliban-attempts-to-appeal-to-us-audience-in-new-letter/2770/>.

⁸⁷ Taliban attempts to appeal to U.S. audience in new letter: Letter of the Islamic Emirate to the American People!,” *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2018, <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/world/taliban-attempts-to-appeal-to-us-audience-in-new-letter/2770/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Afghanistan.⁸⁹ On September 4, 2018, two days after General Nicholson's statement, the U.S. government officially announced the appointment of Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad as President Trump's Special Representative for Afghanistan.⁹⁰ Khalilzad, who is an Afghan-born American and previously served as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, and the United Nations under President George W. Bush, appears to be a great choice, particularly considering his background, the complex context of the war in Afghanistan, and the country's tribal factionalism.⁹¹

Pakistan immediately expressed negative reactions to Khalilzad's appointment, perhaps, because he has been a vocal critic of Pakistan in the past over its support of the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups based in Pakistan.⁹² Despite this, his selection may prove to be a wise decision. Khalilzad is a Pashtun by ethnicity, the largest and most powerful ethnic group in Afghanistan, which includes nearly the entire Afghan Taliban leadership and fighting force. His Afghan roots and knowledge of the country and all the big players in Afghanistan may increase the chances for a breakthrough in his mission. In the meantime, by coincidence, the newly elected prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, is also a Pashtun, which can increase Khalilzad's likelihood of getting along well with him. However, as observed in the country's 71 years of existence, regardless of what Pakistan's civilian government may say or promise, the Pakistani army can frequently supersede the will of the country's civilian leadership.

⁸⁹ Mujib Mashal, "Time for this War in Afghanistan to End Says, Departing U.S. Commander," *The New York Times*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/02/world/asia/afghan-commander-us-john-nicholson.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer>.

⁹⁰ Ashish Kumar Sen, "Trump Picks Zalmay Khalilzad, Atlantic Council Board Director, as Special Representative on Afghanistan," *Atlantic Council*, September 5, 2018, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/trump-picks-zalmay-khalilzad-atlantic-council-board-director-as-special-representative-on-afghanistan>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Vinay Kaura, "Khalilzad's many challenges," *Middle East Institute*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/khalilzads-many-challenges>.

Historically, Pakistan has consistently denied having any degree of influence on the Afghan Taliban leaders and other Pakistan-based extremist groups. Despite this, evidentiary documents indicate that Pakistan has been misleading the U.S. and the international community about its support and influence over the Afghan Taliban and other Pakistan-based militant groups. For instance, in November 2008, after ten Pakistani gunmen launched a horrific attack on the Indian port city of Mumbai,⁹³ Pakistan denied any involvement. Despite the fact that the gunmen belonged to the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Pakistan initially managed to convince the U.S. it had no connection to the attackers.⁹⁴ The CIA, however, would later confirm the attack was actually directly coordinated by Pakistan's intelligence agency, and the ten gunmen were effectively trained by the ISI inside Pakistan.⁹⁵

Multiple credible sources within the U.S. government, including the Directorate of National Intelligence (DNI), have repeatedly confirmed in their assessments that Pakistan supports the Taliban and has provided safe havens and sanctuaries not only to the Afghan Taliban, but also to many other militant groups based in Pakistan.⁹⁶ These sources further state that Pakistan uses proxy warfare as a tool to further its strategic objectives in the region.⁹⁷ Immediately after overthrow of the Taliban regime in Kabul in early 2002, Pakistan provided shelter to retreating Taliban leadership and fighters who were defeated and were on the run.⁹⁸ The Pakistani president and military dictator

⁹³ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 44-45.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 45-47.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

⁹⁶ Dennis C. Blair, "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community," *Directorate of National Intelligence*, February 3, 2010, page 19, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/20100203_testimony.pdf.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁸ James Dobbins, Carter Malkasian, "Time to Negotiate in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 4 (July 2015): 53-57,

at the time, Pervez Musharraf, later repeatedly stated that this was done “in order to secure his country’s interests in Afghanistan.”⁹⁹

The Afghan peace negotiations in the past have been preposterous. Apparently, they were humiliatingly sabotaged by ISI because the U.S. and the Afghan government leaders attempted to keep Pakistan out of the negotiations. In November 2010, the British intelligence agency (MI6), in coordination with U.S. and NATO, flew an imposter multiple times from Quetta, Pakistan, to Kabul for peace talks and paid him large sums of money in the process.¹⁰⁰ The person, who had posed as a senior Taliban leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, turned out to be a low-level shopkeeper in Quetta city, perhaps an ISI-spoiler, and shortly disappeared with all the money.¹⁰¹

In another instance in February 2010, in a staged operation, in which Pakistan deliberately asked for the CIA’s help on an alleged tip-off, the ISI arrested the second most senior Afghan Taliban leader and co-founder of the Taliban movement, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, sitting in a madrassa in Karachi, Pakistan.¹⁰² The ISI had wanted to arrest Mullah Baradar because he had angered them by opening secret negotiation channels with senior U.S. and Afghan government officials in Kabul. ISI knew his whereabouts, but staged his arrest in a manner to both gain U.S. trust and also lock up the defecting Taliban leader.¹⁰³ Although the arrest created some optimism in the media, as if Pakistan was earnestly going after the Afghan Taliban leaders residing in

<http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=103175010&site==ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ “Afghan “peace talks” imposter paid by MI6-report,” *Reuters*, November 26, 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/afghan-britain-negotiator/afghan-peace-talks-impostor-paid-by-mi6-report-idUSLDE6AP00F20101126>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Adrian Hanni, “Why Does Pakistan’s Release of a Key Taliban Leader Matter?,” *The Diplomat*, October 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/why-does-pakistans-release-of-a-key-taliban-leader-matter/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Pakistan, it was immediately clear that this was a deliberate act of sabotage by ISI.¹⁰⁴ The Mullah Mansour arrest shut down a very crucial covert negotiation channel with the Afghan Taliban.¹⁰⁵ In doing this, Pakistan was likely signaling that direct talks with Afghan Taliban leaders cannot occur without Pakistan's permission and without taking into account Pakistan's vested interests in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁶

Similar incidents have also been documented in which key Taliban leaders and senior members of the movement, who were inclined to make peace with Kabul or secretly attempted to talk to U.S. and Afghan government officials, were either incarcerated in Pakistan or forced underground for unknown periods of time. As Seth Jones has documented, another key Taliban leader, Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, the Taliban's former defense minister, was reportedly captured by Pakistani forces inside Pakistan in 2007.¹⁰⁷ His arrest made international headlines, but yet again, says Jones, Mullah Obaidullah was able to continue interacting with other Taliban leaders.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, an assessment conducted by the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) has drawn a grim conclusion regarding ISI's involvement in the Afghan war and its strong influence on the Taliban leaders. The study stresses that "[g]iven the wide-ranging nature of ISI involvement, [the ISI] would need to endorse any talks with the

¹⁰⁴ Max Fisher, "Pakistan Sabotaged Afghan Peace Talks by Arresting Taliban Leader," *The Atlantic*, August 24, 2010, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/08/pakistan-sabotaged-afghan-peace-talks-by-arresting-taliban-leader/344410/>.

¹⁰⁵ Adrian Hanni, "Why Does Pakistan's Release of a Key Taliban Leader Matter?," *The Diplomat*, October 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/why-does-pakistans-release-of-a-key-taliban-leader-matter/>.

¹⁰⁶ Max Fisher, "Pakistan Sabotaged Afghan Peace Talks by Arresting Taliban Leader," *The Atlantic*, August 24, 2010, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/08/pakistan-sabotaged-afghan-peace-talks-by-arresting-taliban-leader/344410/>.

¹⁰⁷ Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009), 268.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Taliban. Anyone negotiating without their sanction would have to do so covertly or face heavy consequences.”¹⁰⁹

By repeatedly sabotaging the peace talks, perhaps, Pakistan is potentially trying to communicate to the U.S. that “you are doomed without us, and if you don’t manage Afghanistan while accommodating our core interests, you will fail.”¹¹⁰ From this perspective, the February 2018 letter from the Taliban, in fact, could be considered a positive gesture and a green light from Pakistan, indirectly stating they want to help with the peace process in Afghanistan if they can secure Pakistan’s interests. Historically, since its inception in 1947 to date, Pakistan’s survival has depended, at various times, on generous U.S. aid (both military and economic). As much as the government of Pakistan may dislike the U.S. for not siding with them in their multiple wars with India, not resolving the Kashmir dispute in Pakistan’s favor,¹¹¹ and overthrowing their client regime in Afghanistan (Taliban’s Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) following the September 11th attacks, they highly appreciate the easy U.S. military and economic grants. In the last 18 years alone, the U.S. has given \$33.4 billion in aid to Pakistan, much of which came in the form of grants that will never have to be paid back.¹¹²

No other country has ever been so generous to Pakistan. And, no matter how close the current Pakistani relationship with regional U.S. adversaries, China and Russia in particular, may appear to be, the type of close relationship they have enjoyed and nurtured with the U.S. government, specifically with the Pentagon and the CIA, will not

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 266.

¹¹⁰ Steve Coll, *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America’s Secret Wars In Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 503.

¹¹¹ Hussain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2013), 90-98.

¹¹² Shahbaz Rana, “War on terror aid: Pakistan received \$33.4bn from US,” *The Express Tribune*, September 6, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1498815/war-terror-aid-pakistan-received-33-4bn-us/>.

be easily replicated. Pakistan has worked on some economic initiatives with China, but, as observed, Pakistanis are distrustful of Chinese loans because they consider them a trap, which could eventually turn Pakistan into a Chinese colony.¹¹³ Under the 2013 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) program alone, China invested over \$50 billion (in loans) in major infrastructure projects in Pakistan.¹¹⁴ Pakistan will have to reimburse China over \$90 billion in the next 30 years with accumulated interest.¹¹⁵ Pakistan is already late in making its estimated average \$3 billion annual payback installments to China and had been seeking loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other friendly nations to pay the Chinese debt.¹¹⁶

In the Taliban open letter, Pakistan may be indirectly suggesting that an Afghanistan under the Pakistan-backed Taliban regime can be poppy free, a major goal of both the U.S. and the international community in Afghanistan. There is credible evidence to back this claim. Based on a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report,¹¹⁷ and according to a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agent, who visited Afghanistan under the Taliban in 2001, a single Taliban crackdown eliminated the world's largest poppy industry in less than a year.¹¹⁸ Conversely, while the U.S. has spent

¹¹³ Abdul Khaliq, "Is Pakistan falling into China's debt trap?," *Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt*, April 16, 2018, <http://www.cadtm.org/Is-Pakistan-falling-into-China-s>.

¹¹⁴ Salman Siddiqui, "Pakistan will be paying China \$90b against CPEC-related projects," *The Express Tribune*, March 12, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1352995/pakistan-will-paying-china-90b-cpec-related-projects/>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Emily Sullivan, "U.S. Cuts \$300 Million In Aid To Pakistan; Says It's Failing to Fight Militants," *National Public Radio Inc.*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/02/644117490/u-s-cuts-300-million-in-aid-to-pakistan-says-its-failing-to-fight-militants>.

¹¹⁷ "Afghanistan Annul Poppy Survey 2001," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, accessed June 15, 2019, page ii, https://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report_2001-10-16_1.pdf.

¹¹⁸ Barbara Crossette, "Taliban's Ban On Poppy A Success, U.S. Aides Say," *The New York Times*, May 20, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/world/taliban-s-ban-on-poppy-a-success-us-aides-say.html>.

over \$8.88 billion in its counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan since 2002,¹¹⁹ the country's opium production has seen an unprecedented growth in the last 17 years. It rose to an all-time record high (9,000 tons) in 2017, which was estimated to generate between \$4.1 to \$6.6 billion locally and \$28 billion in international markets.¹²⁰

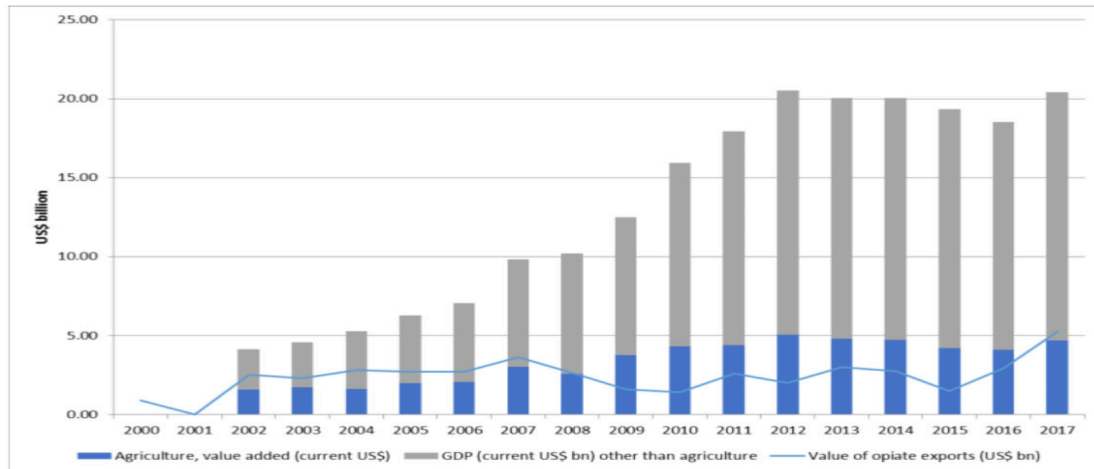


Figure 2. "GDP, by value added of the agriculture sector and other sectors, and estimated gross value of opiate export, Afghanistan, (US\$ billion) 2000-2017."¹²¹

Opium production 2017	Demand for unprocessed opium in the region	Potential production of heroin of export quality	Potential production of pure heroin base
9,000 tons (8,000 – 10,000)	1,100 – 1,400 tons	550 – 900 tons	390 – 450 tons

Figure 3. "Table 11 estimated share of opium production available for heroin production."¹²²

¹¹⁹ "October 30, 2018 Quarterly Report to Congress," *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction*, accessed June 10, 2019, page 3, <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/>.

¹²⁰ "Afghanistan opium survey 2017," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, accessed June 10, 2019, page 44, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Opium-survey-peace-security-web.pdf>.

¹²¹ "Afghanistan opium survey 2017," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, accessed June 10, 2019, page 14, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Opium-survey-peace-security-web.pdf>.

¹²² Ibid, 44.

The second claim in the letter is equally compelling. A large portion of the billions of U.S. aid and reconstruction funds to Afghanistan never made it out of Kabul to help change the lives of ordinary poor Afghans. Instead, funds were embezzled by the very warlords and criminals the U.S. government partnered with and propped up as part of the new government in post-Taliban Kabul.¹²³ These “thieves and murderers,” as stated in the letter, not only stole most of the reconstruction funds for Afghanistan, but their criminal activities helped significantly discredit the U.S.-backed Kabul regime and sabotaged many U.S. peace and development efforts in the country. These former warlords reportedly engaged in a litany of crimes from kidnapping, rape, intimidation, drug trafficking,¹²⁴ illegal mining, and selling the U.S.-donated Afghan National Army ammunitions, weapons, Humvees and other military equipment in the black market and to the Taliban.¹²⁵

The third and perhaps boldest statement in the letter likely implies that Pakistan is determined to continue supporting the Taliban insurgency for many, many years to come, and that U.S. and Afghan security forces will not be able to break it. The claim suggests the U.S. may choose to stay in Afghanistan and fight the Taliban for another two decades or more in the hope to force the Taliban to renounce violence, lay down arms, and reconcile with the Afghan government, but with sanctuaries in neighboring Pakistan and strong support of Pakistan’s military and intelligence agency, this outcome would merely remain a hope.

¹²³ John Tierney, “Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan,” *United States House of Representatives*, accessed June 15, 2019, page: 1-5, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/HNT_Report.pdf.

¹²⁴ John MacKenzie, “Life under the Taliban,” *Public Radio International*, August 7, 2009, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2009-08-07/life-under-taliban>.

¹²⁵ Austin Bodetti, “How the U.S. Is Indirectly Arming the Taliban,” *The Diplomat*, June 13, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/how-the-us-is-indirectly-arming-the-taliban/>.

“A review of insurgencies since World War II suggests that insurgent groups like the Taliban, which retain a sanctuary in neighboring states, either win insurgencies or successfully drag them out for years and decades,” says Seth Jones, adjunct lecturer of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins university.¹²⁶ He further adds, “despite tough talk from Washington, Taliban leaders continue to enjoy a sanctuary in Pakistan and support from Pakistan’s security agencies,” which is something Pakistan has consistently denied.

Discussion

This research study suggests that the U.S. government focused excessively on negotiating directly with the Afghan Taliban leaders to end the conflict, while, as underlined by several credible sources consulted in the study, the Taliban leaders appeared to lack the authority and autonomy to enter into a peace deal with the U.S. As one UN and EU reported noted, “the ISI would need to endorse any talks with the Taliban.”¹²⁷ The U.S.-Taliban talks were consistently sabotaged by the Pakistani security agencies, when Pakistan was left out of the negotiations. Pakistan also incarcerated and forced underground the Taliban leaders who were inclined to make peace or attempted to open backchannel talks with the U.S. and Afghan government officials. Multiple other sources, compiled in the data section, also disclosed that Pakistan’s security agencies have strong influence on the Taliban leadership and the insurgent group in general. This strong influence has taken away the Taliban’s autonomy and authority in the peace talks and prevented the group’s leaders from signing a peace deal with the U.S. These findings are largely consistent with my first hypothesis stating that the Pakistani government is the

¹²⁶ Seth Jones, “The Insurgent Sanctuary in Pakistan,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 11, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/insurgent-sanctuary-pakistan>.

¹²⁷ Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009), 266.

primary and major impediment to the peace process in Afghanistan. The U.S.-Taliban peace talks have failed in the past largely because Pakistan has sabotaged almost every attempt the U.S. made to negotiate directly with the Taliban leaders.

Additionally, a review of insurgencies also indicates that insurgent “groups like the Taliban, which retain a sanctuary in neighboring states, either win insurgencies or successfully drag them out for years and decades.”¹²⁸ Also, as underscored in the literature review, the existing scholarship on insurgency considers external sanctuary and state sponsorship as two key elements of success for an insurgency and the Taliban have been enjoying both these elements since the beginning of the U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. Essentially, it suggests that no matter how strong the counterinsurgent force, with external sanctuary and strong state support an insurgent movement can survive and drag out the conflict for many, many years.

According to the Taliban’s letter of February 2018, the U.S. military pressure, even if indefinite, will not change the situation on the ground.¹²⁹ The Taliban letter suggests that Pakistan is likely determined to continue supporting the Taliban insurgency for a foreseeable future, or as stated in the Taliban’s letter, for “a hundred... years.” These findings are in tune with my second hypothesis, which states that Pakistan is willing to fund and abet the Taliban in perpetuity. Pakistan has funded and supported the Taliban insurgency for almost two decades and may continue to do so for another two

¹²⁸ Seth Jones, “The Insurgent Sanctuary in Pakistan,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 11, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/insurgent-sanctuary-pakistan>.

¹²⁹ Taliban attempts to appeal to U.S. audience in new letter: Letter of the Islamic Emirate to the American People!, *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2018, <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/world/taliban-attempts-to-appeal-to-us-audience-in-new-letter/2770/>.

decades or for as long as it would take the U.S. to eventually run out of patience and resources, give up and withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

Based on the overall findings of this study, mainly emphasizing that the Taliban cannot be overwhelmed militarily, largely due to Pakistan's strong support and the sanctuary it has provided to the insurgent group, it is recommended that the U.S. should reach a political settlement directly with Pakistan's military and the ISI to end the conflict. Without Pakistan's consent, there will likely be no peace in Afghanistan no matter how many more years or decades the conflict goes on. The U.S. must find common grounds with Pakistan and must seek direct talks with the Pakistani security agencies, who provide critical backing to the Taliban and literally run the insurgency. The Taliban movement, as noted in the study, is fundamentally dependent on support from Pakistan. Why should the U.S. hold direct talks with the Taliban leaders and not with the state directly sponsoring them? As Barnett Rubin put it, the Taliban leaders are "hostages to Pakistan military."¹³⁰ They basically do not have the authority to make peace or war. They will do what is dictated to them. Theoretically, in a hostage situation, negotiators talk to the hostage taker to end the crisis, not to the hostages.

The U.S. and Pakistan militaries and lead intelligence agencies (CIA and ISI) have enjoyed very close partnerships in the past. As noted in the brief description of Afghanistan's history in the beginning of the study, the CIA and ISI's Cold War partnership (the U.S. support for Afghan Mujahidin through ISI to bleed the Soviet Union in Afghanistan), for instance, resulted in the defeat of the Red Army in Afghanistan and significantly contributed to the later collapse of the Soviet Union. This indicates that

¹³⁰ Barnett Rubin, "An Open Letter to the Taliban: An American who helped open secret negotiations with the group calls for them to accept a ceasefire and peace talks with the Afghan government," *The New Yorker*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-open-letter-to-the-taliban>.

there is precedent for U.S.-Pakistani cooperation in the region and, that with sufficient political will, the U.S. could theoretically partner with Pakistan again to end the Taliban insurgency.

After almost two decades of war (for Americans) and almost half a century of conflicts and miseries (for Afghans), peace is apparently the most important objective for both nations. If Pakistan can deliver it in the form of a moderate Taliban regime, it can most likely be acceptable to an overwhelming majority of Afghans and Americans. The U.S. must obtain written commitments from Pakistan on major issues including preserving the key gains of the last 18 years and preventing the potential use of Afghan soil by terrorists. Further protracting the Afghan war will only lead to more deaths, exacerbate economic hardship, and further de-stabilize the region. Given that the U.S. already works with and, in some cases, is already allied to extremely conservative Islamic nation states like Saudi Arabia over matters of national security, it should absolutely be possible to maintain friendly ties with a moderate Taliban regime in Kabul in order to secure U.S. national security interests in the region.

Conclusion

This research study explored and examined the discourse surrounding the U.S. peace negotiations with the Taliban insurgent group from 2001 to 2018, contributing to the overall literature on the Afghan peace process. Analysis of the U.S.-Taliban peace negotiations confirmed that Pakistan is the primary impediment to the peace process in Afghanistan. Pakistan has vested interests in Afghanistan and has used manipulative tactics to undermine the U.S. peace efforts in the country. The research also confirmed that Pakistan is likely determined to continue providing sanctuary and support to the

Taliban insurgency for a foreseeable future, which increases the insurgent group's chances of victory in the battlefield. These findings are consistent with and create support for the existing literature on the Afghan peace process, which broadly describes Pakistan's support to the Taliban insurgency and its disruptive role in the peace process.

Appendix A – Key excerpts from the Taliban letter

Excerpt from page 1:

“Letter of the Islamic Emirate to the American people! The American people, officials of independent non-governmental organizations and the peace loving Congressmen!

With the hope that you will read this letter prudently and will evaluate the future of American forces and your profit and loss inside Afghanistan in light of the prevailing realities alluded to in the following lines!”

Excerpt from page 3:

“Production and expansion of narcotics:

The third justification of George W. Bush to invade Afghanistan was the prevention and eradication of narcotics. Let us examine the amount and levels of production and expansion of the narcotic trade in Afghanistan after seventeen year war effort? According to the data provided by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes) – prior to the American invasion – poppy was cultivated only on 185 hectors land of Afghanistan and only in areas controlled by anti-Taliban forces whereas the level of heroin addiction among Afghans was next to nil. But following the American invasion of Afghanistan, poppy cultivation skyrocketed from 185 hectors to 328,000 hectors while under the shadow of seventeen year occupation, the number of drug addicts has reached 3 million people. On 21st December 2017, the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes) reported that drug production increased by 87% and poppy cultivation increased by 63% during the year 2017, thus mounting the total production of narcotics to 9000 metric tons.”

Excerpt from page 4:

“The American people!

You proclaim to be a developed and civilized nation of the world. Since the imposed government in Afghanistan is established by you therefore we leave it to your judgment to decide – according to your logic and conscience – whether the present system and its pertinent changes, insecurity, chaos and 87% increase in narcotics are reforms or crimes against humanity?

Your authorities proclaim that tens of billions of dollars have been spent on various reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. Of course this is the same money which is

collected from you as taxes and revenues, but here it has been distributed among thieves and murderers. Do you agree that the hard earned money of your labor should be wasted on such a corrupt system where in only one criminal case, \$900 million were stolen from Kabul Bank by corrupt officials?

Do you consider it the rule of law in American culture and lexicon where the first deputy of a government is a person involved in the felonious act of sexual assault on a 70-year-old man besides hundreds of other crimes against humanity? Is this the civilization, modernity and rule of law proclaimed by you in the world? Were your 3546 forces killed in Afghanistan to establish and empower such a system? Can your scholars, intellectuals and unbiased analysts produce an answer to our questions?

You must understand that our people are living, watching and closely analyzing all these calamities and that is why the regime working under the shadow of your military support and the corrupt elements assembled therein are not looked upon as a legitimate government rather they are considered a band of usurpers, looters, mafia warlords and drug-dealers while at the same time, the resistance against them is considered their legal, moral and national obligation. The people working alongside you to impose this system are committing treason against our nation and national interests.”

Excerpt from page 8:

“The Islamic Emirate had asked America from the very beginning to solve her issues with the Islamic Emirate through talk and dialogue. The use of force has adverse consequences, and you might have now discerned the bitter consequences of American aggression against Afghanistan. If the policy of using force is exercised for a hundred more years and a hundred new strategies are adopted, the outcome of all of these will be the same as you have observed over the last six months following the initiation of Trump’s new strategy.

According we still believe that it is not too late for the American people to understand that the Islamic Emirate – as representative of its people – can solve its problems with every side through healthy politics and dialogue. Needless use of force only complicates the issues by creating new dimensions which gradually move out of the realm of control. The Islamic Emirate is a regional power with deep roots which cannot be subdued by sheer force. The chances of dialogue however are not exhausted. The American people must understand that the Islamic Emirate understands its responsibility and can play a constructive role in finding a peaceful solution for issues but this can never mean that we are exhausted or our will has been sapped. It is our policy that logic should be given a chance before the use of force. Whatever can be achieved by logic, should not be relinquished due to the use of force. It is the moral obligation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to inform you, the American masses, about these realities.”

Excerpt from page 9:

“It is worth mentioning that we have no agenda of playing any destructive role in any other country and we have practically proven over the past seventeen years that we have not interfered in any other country. Likewise we will not allow anyone else to use Afghan territory against any other country. War is imposed on us, it is not our choice. Our preference is to solve the Afghan issue through peaceful dialogues.

After gaining independence, we would like to have positive and constructive relations with all countries of the world including our neighboring countries. We welcome their assistance and support in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of our country.”

Excerpt from page 10:

“In brief, insisting on prolonging the war in Afghanistan and maintaining American troop presence is neither beneficial for America nor for anyone else, rather it endangers the stability of the entire world. This is irrefutable reality which is only rejected by your arrogant authorities. If you want peaceful dialogue with the Afghans specifically and with the world generally, then make your president and the war-mongering congressmen and Pentagon officials understand this reality and compel them to adopt a rational policy towards Afghanistan!

This will be the most constructive step for the stability of your people, the Afghans as well as the whole world.

Our only obligation is to convey (the message) to you!

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

February 14, 2018”

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Curriculum Vitae

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