



Negotiated Settlement in Afghanistan: Elements of a Grand Bargain

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is not yet clear whether reconciliation in Afghanistan is possible. But what has become increasingly clear is that certain critical elements must be addressed and overcome before any semblance of long-term stability in Afghanistan can emerge. This report is structured into three main sections: 1) contextualizing the current pressure toward reconciliation in terms of what Afghans want, 2) breaking down a potential negotiated settlement into its essential component parts, and 3) looking at some of the spoilers that make this process particularly difficult in Afghanistan.

This report does not seek to establish the ground truth from an objective perspective—such an effort is not possible in the context of competing interests of stakeholders both inside and out of Afghanistan. Instead, it seeks insights from leading experts from a variety of viewpoints that hopefully lead to a more nuanced understanding of the critical paths and roadblocks to a grand bargain in Afghanistan.

Part One: Contextualizing the Potential for Grand Bargain in Afghanistan

In Chapter 1, Dr. Barnett Rubin, Senior Fellow and Associate Director of New York University's Center on International Cooperation, outlines the historical dimensions of great power competition in Afghanistan starting with the Great Game and ending with a pessimistic view of a potential grand bargain. He argues that the *perceived* US intent to establish permanent hegemony over Afghanistan since 2005 has revolutionized the strategic balance in Eurasia, putting regional stakeholders further at odds with the United States. As an “offshore power in [relative] decline” and without a single cooperative relationship with regional powers (China, Iran, Russia, or Pakistan), stabilization is unlikely. The result is a balancing act in which the states of the region, in accord with their differing interests and capacities, try to assure that the US neither consolidates its position nor leaves abruptly.

In Chapter 2, Dr. Thomas Barfield, Professor of Anthropology at Boston University and President of the American Institute for Afghanistan Studies, notes that the biggest obstacle to a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan is the highly centralized, monopolistic government that has characterized all national Afghan governments since the late 19th century. Now at a hurting stalemate, Taliban fighters, the Kabul government, and the population are increasingly tired of war. A “grand bargain” in Afghanistan would entail changing the constitution so that power between the center and periphery is shared as was the case when kings ruled from Kabul over regions that held a considerable degree of autonomy—not unlike the United States. Regardless, any effort that does not account for the will of the Afghan people will not succeed.

In Chapter 3, Dr. Homayun Sidky, Professor of Anthropology at Miami University, questions whether a resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan is even possible given US missteps in the region. These include no coherent US strategy, support for what many see as an illegitimate central government, pushing democratic governance, and not doing enough to support multi-ethnic representation in governance. Complicating these issues are Afghanistan's dependence on foreign aid, a failing economy, and unrestricted opium cultivation. In a society that is tired of war—and of both the central government and the Taliban—perhaps the only way forward is through a federated system of governance.

Part II Elements Critical to a Negotiated Settlement

In Chapter 4, Mr. Raffaello Pantucci, Director of International Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute, discusses China's potential role in a negotiated settlement. With the view that Afghanistan is the graveyard of Empires, China's main priority is to establish workable relationships with as many regional stakeholders as possible to ensure that their own economic and security interests are covered. China lacks the power many ascribe to it to bring Pakistan and the Taliban to the negotiating table. While China is not adverse to a negotiated settlement, it will only invest in the effort once it is clear it is going to work and that all the other actors are on board.

In Chapter 5, Mr. Sher Jan Ahmadzai, the Director of the Center for Afghan Studies at the University Nebraska at Omaha, addresses demands to rewrite the Afghan constitution. He notes two groups that are calling for reform: those that want a more decentralized form of government and the Taliban, which claims that the constitution lacks Islamic values and norms. Mr. Ahmadzai fears that rewriting the constitution will exacerbate political instability and instead advocates for revising the constitution gradually through existing mechanisms. With regard to elections, Mr. Ahmadzai emphasizes the importance of holding elections, even if they are imperfect. However, he suggests that electoral reforms should better take into account traditional Afghan ways of choosing their representatives and leaders.

In Chapter 6, the US Training and Doctrine Command G27 Models and Simulations team describes how its Athena course of action analysis tool assesses the political and social effects of a potential power sharing agreements in Afghanistan. The team found that both of the power sharing structures studied—power shared at the ministerial level versus a decentralized regional government structure—resulted in increased Afghan governmental control geographically as well as increased popular support for the government. While the latter structure was a superior outcome in both control and population support, it comes with a potential downside. Recent Afghan history has shown that regional leaders often chafe under centralized control and will not hesitate to ignore the national government at best or plunge the country into civil war at worst.

In Chapter 7, Mr. Vern Liebl, analyst at the US Marine Corps University Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), paints a somber prospect for settlements that involve sharing power with the Taliban. The primary obstacle is that the Taliban is not willing to compromise on its prime objectives of expelling all foreigners and the reversion of governance completely into its own hands. Furthermore, he warns that ceasefires should not be read as a symbol of hope but as a tactic used by the Taliban to further alienate the National Unity Government. Finally, while Afghans largely want an ethnically representative and pluralistic state, they lack a unifying and charismatic leader that could lead such a movement. The preponderance of the evidence in Afghanistan suggests that a grand bargain is an unrealistic expectation at this time.

In Chapter 8, Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler, Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University, describes Afghanistan and Pakistan as locked in a complex security dilemma, which leaves Pakistan with little interest or motivation to support a negotiated settlement. Amongst Pakistan's concerns is rising Pashtun nationalism, encirclement by India, and persistent US presence in the region. In fact, Pakistan has many reasons for intransigence in regard to any effort that moves Afghanistan in the direction of reconciliation. In particular, Pakistan fears that even a reconciled Afghan government would not be strong enough to control anti-Pakistan groups in the country. Pakistan's best strategy remains strategic patience as it waits for the US to eventually withdraw.

Part III Spoilers

In Chapter 9, Dr. Gina Ligon and Mr. Michael Logan, University of Nebraska at Omaha, conducted a study of fragmentation and consolidation within violent extremist organizations (VEOs) within Afghanistan. By looking at periods of instability—defined by high of violence—in Afghanistan, Dr. Ligon and Mr. Logan found that three factors likely drive this behavior: organizational uncertainty, fractionalization, and consolidation. This has implications for successful counterterrorism strategies. With regard to organizational uncertainty, counterterrorism efforts like decapitation increases friction between group members as organizational influence and control is delegated from senior leaders to foot soldiers. Fractionalization occurs when new VEOs emerge from inter-group rivalry after the death of a senior leader. Consolidation occurs when new VEOs emerge (e.g., ISKP) and threaten the preexisting extremist organizations. A follow on study will evaluate how changes in leadership impact regional stability.

In Chapter 10, Dr. Craig Whiteside, professor at the Naval War College at the Naval Postgraduate School, discusses whether Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) could act as a spoiler in any potential reconciliation effort. While ISKP could make gains that destabilize the region—by making gains in northern provinces, which could motivate Tajikistan or even Russia to intervene by aiding the Taliban OR by becoming popular among the youth in Kabul, driving urban terror—the greatest threat ISKP poses is in its potential to draw in disaffected Taliban. This could be particularly relevant if the Taliban enters into talks with GIRoA. While ISKP remains a low risk threat in the region, a worst-case scenario would be a large swing from the Taliban to ISKP.

In Chapter 11, LTG (ret.) Daniel Bolger, professor at North Carolina State University, concludes the white paper with an essay opining that while the US may prefer a grand bargain, the ugly reality is a choice between open-ended stalemate and outright withdrawal. He notes that Afghanistan has a warfighting culture that will never accept foreign interventions. This encourages strategic patience on the Taliban's part to continue the insurgency and reject any form of negotiated settlement. Prospects for stability may be outside the capacity of the USG to facilitate.

PART I SETTING THE STAGE

Chapter 1. Grand Bargain vs. Great Game in Afghanistan, Dr. Barnett Rubin

Senior Fellow and Associate Director of New York University's Center on International Cooperation

Afghanistan in its current boundaries is the product of a grand bargain between Britain and Russia that intended to put an end to the conflicts of the great game. Within those boundaries the impoverished Afghan economy could not finance a state; it was designed to be landlocked and dependent so as to play the role of a buffer state subsidized by the British; with no British, Russian, or other foreign presence; and agreed spheres of control and influence around it. The arrangement began to crack with the independence of Afghanistan after the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, and it was shattered for good by the Soviet invasion of December 1979.

Thereafter, the Afghan state was sustained by Soviet troops until 1989 and Soviet aid until 1992. In the context of the Cold War, this generated an international reaction (from US, China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran) that prevented Soviet-sponsored stabilization. From 1992 to 1996, absent any major strategic value, Afghanistan had no effective external hegemon—the state collapsed, giving way to a regionally fuelled civil war. From 1996 to 2001, Pakistan temporarily succeeded in extending Taliban control over most of the country. That effort collapsed when Pakistan-Taliban control made Afghanistan into a base for international terrorists who attacked the US. Absent other strategic stakes, a global consensus formed around counterterrorism, leading to initial international support, including material assistance from Russia and Iran, for establishing a state sustained by US and NATO troops and financed almost entirely by the US.

This consensus lasted until approximately 2005, when the US-Afghanistan Declaration of Strategic Partnership put the region on notice that the US might intend to establish permanent hegemony over Afghanistan, revolutionizing the strategic balance in Eurasia and posing a threat to all those states in the region at odds with the US. The Bilateral Security Agreement of 2014 hardened that perception. The exacerbation of US bilateral relations with China, Pakistan, Iran, and Russia under the current administration, plus statements by some officials that the US would maintain a long-term presence in Afghanistan comparable to that in Japan, South Korea, or Germany, has intensified that conviction. That concern has been balanced by the realization that an immediate US withdrawal would lead once again to the collapse of the Afghan state, generating yet more terrorism (including ISIS), narcotics, and other security threats. The result is a balancing act in which the states of the region, in accord with their differing interests and capacities, try to assure that the US neither consolidates its position nor leaves abruptly. The Afghanistan policies of Russia, China, Iran, and Pakistan have converged around creating conditions for what Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif recently called a “responsible withdrawal” of the US presence.

US policy hardly addresses regional interests other than counterterrorism, and the consensus on counterterrorism has frayed badly. The US still defines its core interests in the region as preventing: (1) Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for anti-American terrorists and (2) Pakistan's nuclear weapons or materials from falling into the hands of terrorists. The primary means the US proposes is stabilizing an Afghan state dependent on the US for both financing and security; the specter that it might do so in partnership with India magnifies Pakistan's reaction.

The countries of the region see their main strategic stakes in the development of mega-schemes of regional infrastructure and integration (Belt and Road, Eurasian North-South Corridor, Chabahar)

that the US opposes, and the main terrorist threat as ISIS. Russia and Iran claim that the US is using ISIS in Afghanistan to maintain a capacity to destabilize them. They, along with other neighbors, now attribute the US presence in Afghanistan not mainly to counterterrorism, but to the goal of undermining great-power rivals, as prioritized in the US National Security Strategy of December 2017.

Geography and time are not on the side of the US. The US can have access to landlocked Afghanistan

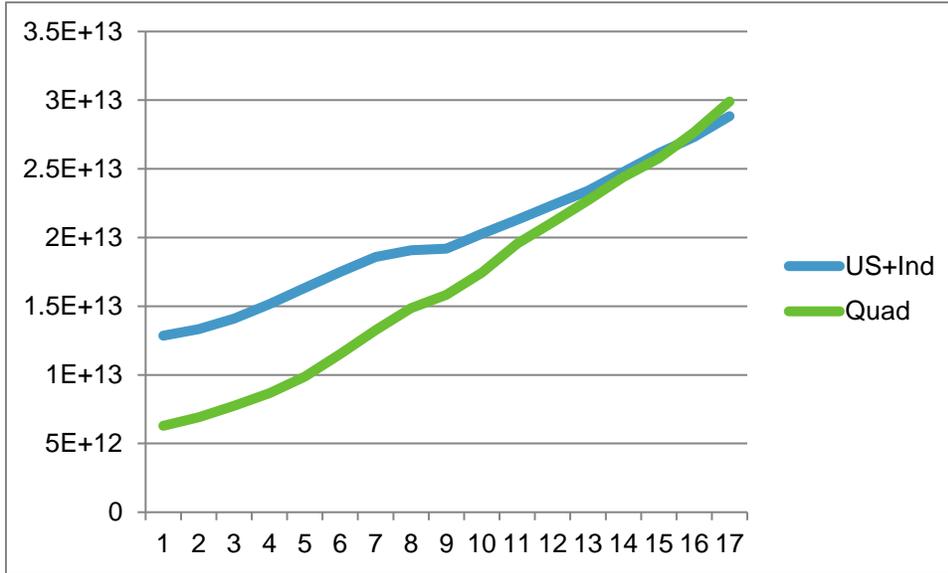


Figure 1. GDP PPP in Current \$, 2001-2017, US plus India versus Quad (China, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia)

only through Pakistan, Iran, or Russia. A long-term presence requires long-term cooperation with at least one of those three. The power of the US is declining relative to the combined resources of China, Iran, Russia, and Pakistan. Figure 1 shows GDP PPP in current dollars for 2001-2017 for the US and those four countries, called the "Quad." In 2001, when the US

intervened in Afghanistan, the US economy was nearly 70 percent larger than the combined economies of the Quad. In 2017, the US economy was less than two-thirds (65 percent) the size of the

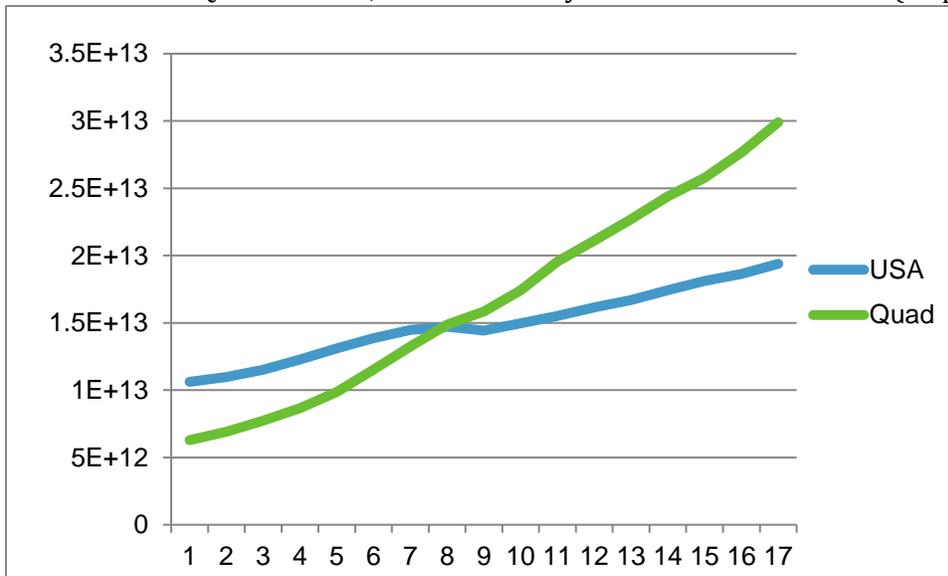


Figure 2 GDP PPP in current \$, 2001-2017, US versus quad (China, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia)

combined economies of the Quad. Adding India to the US, as proposed in the administration's South Asia strategy, does not change the trend (Figure 2). An offshore power in decline relative to the countries whose cooperation it needs for access to Afghanistan cannot outwait or overpower them, whatever rhetoric

of commitment it deploys.

Current US bilateral policies toward China, Iran, Russia, and Pakistan practically preclude the stabilization of Afghanistan. The latter three, at least, are motivated and well placed to disrupt any effort that they believe will strengthen the US position. The alternative would be a multilateral diplomatic effort seeking to build regional consensus over Afghanistan's final status security issues as part of a political settlement: what if any international military advisory or counterterrorist presence will Afghanistan host; what will be the size and mission of the security and defense forces; who will pay for those forces; and how will landlocked Afghanistan be integrated into the economy of a rapidly growing region, given that the required routes of connectivity all involve cooperation with rivals or enemies of the United States? Ambassador Khalilzad is capable of leading such an effort, but the mandate required would seem to conflict with existing policies.

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Chapter 2. What do Afghans Want? Dr. Thomas Barfield

Professor, Boston University

Afghans have a reputation as skilled and hard bargainers who can come to compromises where others cannot. The successful formation of a new government in 2001 that involved many rival factions and their agreement on a constitution in 2004 stood in stark contrast to the situation in Iraq where such cooperation proved almost impossible. Even the defeated Taliban was interested in participating at that time, a fact now realized as a lost opportunity. Seventeen years on, there is again talk of a comprehensive settlement to bring peace to Afghanistan and so the question again arises about “what Afghans want.”

There is a general consensus that the Afghan population and fighters on both the GIROA and the Taliban side are tired of war. Neither side has the capacity to dislodge the other from its areas of core strength, and history has shown that as long as an Afghan government in Kabul has strong international backers to finance and arm it, insurgents cannot overthrow it. The Taliban and their Pakistani patrons can succeed only if that aid is withdrawn, so their strategy is to play the long game in the hopes that this will happen. To the extent that ordinary Taliban commanders and fighters see the struggle as one without ultimate victory, the more they may be open to other arrangements. Similarly, with the reduced number of international troops and with the fighting burden falling on its domestic forces, the Kabul government now has more incentive to seek a settlement than it did when international troops did the bulk of the fighting.

However, while both sides may see it as advantageous to think about making peace, too much attention has been focused on the issues that divide them rather than how the current governmental structure of both the Taliban and GIROA incentivize them to seek short term zero-sum outcomes rather than make stable long-term compromises because that best suits the interests of their respective leaders. This precludes a stable political bargain in which both sides have a stake in making it work. It instead encourages agreements that are little more than truces in which the weaker side makes concessions that it will later repudiate when it has recovered enough power to do so. On the GIROA side, this means that debates about making peace in the 2019 Presidential election may well hinge not so much over who is in favor of peace but what type of political structural changes the winner is willing to endorse that would make a long-term settlement more viable. Similarly, among the Taliban, the structural question will arise as to whose interests should take precedence: those of the small Pakistan based leadership group that seeks the restoration of its absolutist Islamic emirate or its regional factions within Afghanistan for whom local issues are more important than who runs the national government. The recent Eid cease fire that led to unexpected fraternization when Taliban insurgents crossed the lines for the celebrations led people to express the opinion that they all had more in common together as Afghans than their respective leaders were willing to recognize.

All national Afghan governments since the late 19th century have been highly centralized with monopoly powers so great that whoever controls the state structure can to use it to impose its own ideology on the population without compromise and with little regard for broader public opinion. If the will of the Afghan people were vital in such decision making then Afghanistan would have never have experienced either a radical socialist regime like the one imposed by the Peoples’ Democratic Party of Afghanistan in the 1980s or the radical Islamist regime imposed by the Taliban that followed it in the 1990s. On those occasions, it was rebellions that that brought down governments that went too far, but those that replaced them always sought to preserve their centralized structures and use them for their own ends. This includes the current Afghan government that maintained the highly centralized structure of its predecessors in the 2004 Constitution that gives the president

monarchical executive powers, including the appointment of all provincial and district officials unilaterally. This structure is the greatest impediment to making peace because it makes people fearful that any compromise from the center might lead to handing their opponents absolute power to oppress them. The 20th century Afghan experience is of one autocratic leader succeeding another; it has never had a “grand bargain” in which power has been shared. However, there is a much longer history in Afghanistan where kings ruled from Kabul over regions that still maintained considerable autonomy and handled local governance themselves. This allowed for differences within the country to persist without being a threat to government stability. If this sounds familiar, it should: the US Constitution recognizes semi-sovereign subordinate states with a larger federal structure. Current Afghan leaders claim the county would fall apart if it had such a system, but the reverse is true. Afghanistan is falling apart because its all or nothing center is unstable.

If the prospects of negotiations hinge on which side will surrender, they will fail. Both sides have enough capacity to persist under current conditions. However, popular opinion in Afghanistan seeks peace and stability after decades of war in the 1980s and 90s. This is particularly true among the young who now constitute the majority of Afghanistan’s population and who wish to preserve and expand the existing 17 years of relative stability. If the existing political structure were more decentralized it would be possible to bring regional Taliban element into the government democratically. They could undoubtedly win elections for governors in many conservative Pashtun areas if such elective positions existed, giving them an incentive to break from the Pakistani leadership. On the GIRoA side, it would create a larger number of stakeholders who would be less fearful of compromise and more responsive to the local population. As long as the national government protects basic rights countrywide, people in Herat could accept an ex-Taliban governor administering conservative Helmand as long as Heratis also got to choose who was in charge of their province. In thinking about peace, what the Afghan current political leadership wants may be at odds with what its people consider more desirable. The seeds of peace cannot grow on stony ground.

The question of structure addresses a number of long standing divisions in Afghanistan. The first is ethnicity. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country in which no group constitutes a majority nationally but each major group constitutes a majority in at least one part of the country. The Pashtun presumption that only they have an intrinsic right to hold the country’s top leadership position is resented by other groups. In peace negotiations, they fear that a leader such as Ashraf Ghani who had been seeking to bolster co-ethnic Pashtun support would be willing to sacrifice their interests to gain the cooperation of the predominantly Pashtun Taliban. They remember that when the communist government fell in 1992, the most radical communist faction joined with the most radical Islamist faction because they were both Pashtun. This would have less impact if Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks had stronger control their own regions. The second longstanding division is cultural and pits a more progressive urban population against the conservative rural population. Both sides fear the other gaining control of a central government and oppressing them as happened in the past. Again, if each were more secure in the knowledge that it could protect its own values, they would be more willing to compromise. Given that Afghanistan has much larger and growing urban population that ever before, it would be a mistake to assume that “the tribes” are key players. Only in areas along the Pakistan border is that even partially true, but in the eyes of the world this is too often accepted as a given. Conversely the opinions of the small cadre of expatriate Afghans who lived in the West during the war and now hold a disproportionate number of high government positions (including the presidency) is over represented in policy discussions. Since 2001 they have attempted to make themselves the exclusive Afghan interlocutors to the international community although their beliefs and interests do not necessarily reflect the views of the broader population. Any peace agreement needs to have the support of the broader population that will be hard to gain if their representatives and points of view are not part of the process.

Chapter 3. Afghanistan: Is an Exit Strategy Possible? Dr. Hodayun Sidky

Professor, Department of Anthropology, Miami University

The war in Afghanistan constitutes one of the longest in the history of the United States. Involvement in that country by the US began many decades before the 2001 invasion, starting during the Cold War with the massive military and monetary aid provided to underwrite a so-called jihad by rebel forces known as the mujahideen. Using religion and casting that conflict in the form of a religious war or jihad was disastrous. Yet, none of the lessons of that venture have been learned, and today the United States continues to make the same political and strategic mistakes that contributed to religious radicalization and gave us the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. After over 17 years of active military involvement and billions of dollars spent, mostly for military purposes, the Afghan military remains unable to meet the challenges and threats posed by regime enemies. The most persuasive evidence that the current strategies are not working is the length of the conflict with no resolution in sight and the ongoing efforts by our politicians and military planners to find some sort of workable alternative and possibly an exit strategy. I shall discuss whether an exit is even an option.

Experts on Afghanistan continue to think within the parameters of failed political and social science paradigms. The perspective offered in this short essay departs from the views of these “area experts” by outlining some of the key mistakes made by our politicians and military strategists in how they think about Afghanistan in terms of the idea of “nation-building” and misconstrual of the religious, cultural, and ethnic dynamics within that country. This information is based upon my own anthropological analysis and discussions with leading Afghan intellectuals and observers in the US, Canada, France, and Germany.

The problems are numerous. First, there has not been and there is not now, a coherent US strategy in that country. Hence, many US efforts have been at cross-purposes. Is the American military in Afghanistan to contain US enemies in the region? Is it to fight the “war on terror”? Is it to protect future oil/gas pipelines? Is it to secure the country for US exploitation of newly found and difficult to overlook rare earth minerals estimated at one trillion dollars? Is it to ensure cheap sources of high-quality opium for US pharmaceutical firms? Or all of the above? Or something else? Who does the American military fight for? For the US? For the people of Afghanistan? Both the US and the local people?

Second, the US has established what in reality is an illegitimate government that was put in place through a forced “regime change.” Afghans from a wide spectrum of socioeconomic, ethnic, and sectarian backgrounds with whom I have conferred are unanimous in their view of the total illegitimacy of the Kabul regime. This has been exacerbated by the ill-advised option of setting up an “Islamic Republic” and the explicit recognition of “Islam” as the determinant ideology. These are all part of the old thinking that failed horribly in the past and more of the same will not remedy the situation in the present.

Third, the US continues to be hampered by operating according to inappropriate models of governance and political science paradigms for that particular cultural and geopolitical context. Setting up expensive and disruptive phony elections to “legitimize” an illegitimate regime has not worked because it is impossible to create a Western-type “democracy” in a nation that is not “individual” based. This has not worked in Afghanistan or anywhere else in the Islamic world. What all of this has amounted to is the emplacement of a US dependent puppet regime with no legitimacy in the provinces.

The fourth issue is using the problematic term “Afghan” to describe everyone, regardless of their non-Pashtun identity. The country is now firmly divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, with many minorities, especially the Hazara people, being victimized more than ever before. This issue is aggravated because the current president Mr. Ashraf Ghani has chosen to employ ethnicity as his favorite instrument of control and authoritarianism. The central authority is overtly engaged in ethnic politics through the domination of the Pashtuns in all areas of government. Non-Pashtuns see the US as culpable for the abuses and repression because of its support for a corrupt regime. The result has been the magnification of ethnic tensions in what is a multi-ethnic society where non-Pashtuns have been victims of Pashtun controlled central government for over two centuries. This has also contributed to the failure to create a functional, reliable, and effective national military because the central government has no legitimacy and is Pashtun dominated.

Fifth, economically, the US sponsored regime is entirely dependent on foreign aid. Access to such funds has contributed to massive levels of government corruption and abuse of power. None of this helps to rectify the legitimacy issues of the central authority or the outside forces that are seen as supporting its officials. Some of these conditions were also the case during the pre-Soviet invasion period, but many of these problems have now been exacerbated.

Sixth, a working or sustainable economy does not exist after 30 years or more of war and internal conflict. The solution for many of the problems in Afghanistan hinges upon the establishment of such an economy. US efforts in this area have been abysmal at best because of implementing political and military policies that have been at cross-purposes.

Seventh, some other quandaries that require brief mention include unrestricted opium cultivation that is feeding the needs of regime enemies and enhancing government corruption. Again, many Afghans see the United States as complicit in the illicit drug trade. There is also the contamination of the land through depleted uranium wastes, landmines, and the installation of US military bases.

In sum, the major quandary confronting the United States is that realistically it cannot stay and perhaps cannot leave. In the meantime, China is moving into that part of South Asia with massive inputs of capital and infrastructure building in search of resources and greater political leverage. The new government in Pakistan is said to be a front for the heavily Islamized military so it is unlikely that it will reel in the Taliban. In fact, the Pakistani government, one of the main US allies in the region, has never been a genuine collaborator with the United States and has never made any substantial efforts to control the radical religious militants operating over its borders. Yet, the US continues to tout Pakistan as its friend and significant partner in the region. Moreover, US actions in Afghanistan are pushing the Pakistanis closer toward China. There is a possibility that China may become a critical factor in ending the conflict. But China has its own geostrategic agenda that does not coincide with that of the United States.

PART II ELEMENTS OF A GRAND BARGAIN

Chapter 4. What Role Might China Play in a Grand Bargain in Afghanistan? Mr. Raffaello Pantucci

Director, International Security Studies, RUSI

Chinese analysts have historically seen Afghanistan as the graveyard of empires. This basis has meant their willingness to engage in grand bargains based on negotiating with actors whom they realize may only have a fleeting grasp on power means that their preferred willingness has been to focus on making sure that they have good, or workable, relationships with as wide a range of actors as possible. At the same time, they have increasingly put in place a growing volume of tools to ensure that their own specific security equities are covered. From Beijing's perspective, the idea of a grand bargain in Afghanistan is an interesting one, but will only be one they will invest effort into once it is demonstrated that it is going to work, and once everyone else is on board.

Beijing's equities in Afghanistan are relatively narrow. Their principal concern used to be direct security threats from Uighur militants using the country as a base to launch attacks within China. Over time, they have strengthened their relations with the relevant parts of the Afghan security apparatus and hardened their specific border with Afghanistan. Nowadays, the assessment in Beijing is that the Uighur threat is one that is more relevant in a Syrian context than in Afghanistan. Their current preoccupations with Afghanistan are more regional in nature. Of greater concern than what is going on within Afghanistan is what impact Afghan instability might have in Central Asia and Pakistan.

Chinese investments in Afghanistan have continued to remain relatively small. There are two prominent large mining projects, while numerous Chinese infrastructure firms have delivered projects on behalf of international financial institutions in the country. Additionally, there is a relatively limited degree of lower level engagement, including gemstone trade, some import and export of white goods and agriculture products, as well as other household products and construction materials. None of this amounts to what Beijing perceives as a major stake.

This is reflected in Beijing's approach towards the country, where it has visibly invested in hardening its own border as well as Afghanistan's nearby border regions (in Pakistan and Tajikistan), while only providing relatively limited broader support to Afghanistan's security forces.

This context is all important to understand to be able to properly evaluate Beijing's willingness to be involved or support a grand bargain within the country. Beijing is interested and concerned about what happens in Afghanistan, but it sees this through a narrow regional lens, rather than a grander national security context. This is reflected in the fact it has yet to demonstrate a willingness to take a strong leadership role within the country.

This is not to say that Beijing has been entirely delinquent in its action within the country. Aside from the above mentioned efforts, and a growing willingness to seek to bring Afghanistan within the broader context of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has shown a strong appetite to engage with other regional powers in the country. China has sought to get institutions like the SCO and CiCA more involved, it has a greater plurality of regional configurations around the country—China-India, China-Afghanistan-Pakistan, as well as extra-regional partnerships like India, US, UK or Germany—and played a role in others regional efforts, for example Russia, Iran, or the Istanbul Process.

Yet none of these are decisive, and there is a sense that Beijing might be seeking to dilute its responsibility through this large range of engagements. In some cases, it is even possible that Beijing sees Afghanistan as a useful security policy case study to engage with a partner it cannot find other formats to positively engage with. This might help explain the highly positive, but ultimately indecisive, Chinese engagements with India and the US in the country. Beijing has deeply contentious and conflictual relationships with both Delhi and Washington, yet is able to use Afghanistan as a context in which it can attempt to develop a collaborative relationship. This is positive (but not decisive) for Afghanistan, and it is not yet clear that this is evidence of a strong commitment by Beijing.

Within the context of a grand bargain, the likely envisaged role for China would be to support bringing the harder partners to the table. For example, Beijing's strong relationship with Pakistan could help ensure Islamabad played a positive role in any deal in the country, and that it ensured its proxies within Afghanistan played along. At the same time, Beijing could use its long-standing links to the Taliban to play a more direct role in this regard.

But what is important to note is that these connections and relationships that Beijing has are both long-standing and not as total as is sometimes painted. Beijing struggles to get Pakistan to provide adequate security to its interests within Pakistan, while at the same time being frustrated by some of the Pakistani state's decisions and planning around CPEC. It is no more likely able to guarantee Islamabad's acquiescence to control its proxies in Afghanistan than anyone else. At the same time, were Beijing able to exert such influence over the Taliban directly, why has it not used these relationships more forcefully before now? It has maintained a steady relationship to ensure its interests are protected, but as has been seen, Uighur militants have still historically been able to operate from Afghanistan.

The key point here is that Beijing is only willing to play a role insofar as it advances its interests. And Beijing's interests in Afghanistan at the moment are seen from Beijing as being manageable. They have a security situation that is problematic, but largely contained within Afghanistan, and they have hardened their borders around it. They continue to play a role, and are pushing some investment and economic activity in the country, but they have chosen not to showcase the country as a place in which they are going to take a leadership role. The commitment involved in taking that sort of a position is something that is beyond their interest.

This all highlights the role that China would play in any grand bargain. It would support a deal, as long as all the parties involved were agreed and in commitment to deliver it. It would likely be willing to play a role in supporting building this, but it will continue to maintain other relationships while it is doing this—in other words, Beijing is unlikely to cut off any links in favour of one deal over another (it has in past severed relationships with groups, but learned over time that this approach unless bound to a specific and achievable goal, is not sensible in the medium or longer-term). This helps explain Beijing's willingness to play a role both in efforts in Afghanistan with both the US and Russia or India and Pakistan at the same time. China does not want to choose and to therefore set itself up for potential failure. It is better to continue to engage with everyone.

At the same time, this does not mean China is not willing to take a role, but it will avoid choosing sides or taking any leadership role. This reality is likely to persist until there is a blunt and clear western forces withdrawal from the country—something that might change Beijing's calculus. Until that moment, China would continue to hedge and would play a similar role in any current grand bargain thinking.

Chapter 5. New Constitution and Elections, Mr. Sher Jan Ahmadzai

Director, Center for Afghanistan Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha

Constitution

Afghanistan's current constitution was approved by a traditional Afghan Loya Jirga on January 04, 2004. This constitution is very similar to the Afghan constitution of 1964 under King Zahir Shah but with a major difference in the way the current constitution describes the system of governance as a presidential system.

In the last few years, the constitution of Afghanistan has been a topic of discussion among many political circles inside and outside Afghanistan, including Taliban among others. These elements have made calls against the constitution, expressing distaste for the document. They claim that the current constitution is not reflecting the needs of the Afghans and at times it is not in accordance with the principals of Islam. For example, some political parties see it not responding to the aspirations of the Afghans for a certain system of governance. Other groups such as the Taliban call it a constitution that lacks Islamic values and norms. Ironically, those who disapprove of the current system of governance described in the constitution were the same people who approved it in 2004. Both groups have been asking to either completely rewrite the Constitution or amend its major articles.

For any effort that requires total revision of Afghan constitution or discussing a new constitution, all efforts will need to be started from scratch. The current constitution will certainly be used as a guide, but it will require opening the ground for discussions on new topics and priorities that will probably not meet the current realities in Afghanistan and may just be a political wish list presented by different political groups. If opened for discussion without examining its implications, it will be like opening a Pandora's box that can possibly result in more schisms than it could heal. In fact, the current Afghan constitution has not even been implemented in its totality. It would wrong to assume that the current constitution is not applicable to the Afghan context when we have not totally implemented it to see its result. In the most recent joint research report of the Afghan Lawyers' Association and Pajhwak News Agency, on 8 January 2018, it is stated that in the past 14 years, 94 Articles of the Afghan constitution were violated. Based on this research, more than half of the provisions of the constitution (58%) have been breached. Of the 38 articles of the Second Chapter about the Afghan citizens, 32 were violated. According to this research, the President and the Vice Presidents were also among the people who had violated the constitution. For instance, Article 71 of the constitution states: "the government is formed of the ministers and is headed by the President," while the National Unity Government (NUG) is formed in violation of the constitution. The most important factors behind the constitutional violations are: widespread corruption, lack of security, and lack of political willingness demonstrated by insufficient monitoring and lack of powerful oversight committee. This data shows that there is problem in implementation of the constitution not the constitution itself.

To address the arguments, some might reason for opening the floor for new discussions on several topics the Afghan citizens would like to include or exclude from the current constitution. This might be a good idea, and, in some cases, it might be the best idea. However, Afghanistan already went through this process 14 years ago. Repeating it would be a waste of time and resources. Nevertheless, the Afghan constitution is open for amendments and there are procedures described in the current constitution on how to approach adding them. By proposing amendments, instead of rewriting the constitution, the practices of normal procedures to amend constitution could begin. People should be given the right to amend their constitution as it should address their needs but introducing a new

constitution every 10 or 20 years should not become a new norm and should not set a wrong precedent for future leaders. It will not result in political stability. On the contrary, it will exacerbate the current political instability in the country among different ethnic groups. All changes, definitely, need to be made through a gradual democratic process rather than a complete overhaul to the existing system of governance. By gradually addressing the caveats and gaps that are in the current constitution, Afghanistan will not only practice the normal procedures of amendments and implement the constitutional provisions but also allow Afghans to experience changes through their agreed upon democratic means such as jirgas and elections. While some may argue about the deficiencies of the constitution or its relevant laws, there is a need to strengthen the implementation and oversight management bodies responsible for these laws.

Elections

After 9/11, Afghans had the opportunity to elect their leader and representatives to the parliament and other councils and lower levels. The process has seen many challenges and restricted Afghans from holding elections at district level and forced their government to delay presidential, parliamentary, and provincial council elections. Electoral fraud and other security issues have had negative impacts on recent elections that have dissuaded people from participating and resulting in lower turn out at some instances. However, this should not be a reason not to hold elections or underestimate its importance.

The election process in Afghanistan does require major amendments in its format and proper implementation of election law. The current election law needs to be fully implemented and, if necessary, appropriate changes that are accepted by all, should be made to the mechanism of holding elections. This might include a better voter registration system, identifying voting districts explicitly rather than having the whole province as one district for parliamentary and provincial council elections, proper and fair election observation, and of course provision of security for holding elections in remote areas.

Elections must happen even if they are not 100% perfect. As a democratic practice, holding elections adds to the process of making democracy work and democratic practices mature in countries such as Afghanistan. Elections should become part of the public understanding as a tool of bringing changes and not resorting to violence.

For Afghanistan, elections should not be just defined as a western practice of democracy. Afghans should own the election process as supplementary to their traditional ways of choosing their representative and leaders. They need to own the process as part of their social practice of choosing leaders rather than opposing it as a western ideology or practice.

Chapter 6. Modeling Power Sharing,¹ US Army Training and Doctrine Command

Athena Study Team, Models & Simulation Branch

This paper provides the TRADOC G27 Models and Simulations Branch input for assessing the political and social effects of a hypothetical power-sharing government in Afghanistan. A key assumption is that this government would emerge following a negotiated settlement between the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST) and GIROA. While Subject Matter Experts do not have a comprehensive consensus for how a power-sharing government would be organized, two overarching permutations emerged from subject matter expert (SME) elicitations. The first would be power sharing at the ministerial level, and the second would be the adoption of a decentralized regional governance in Afghanistan. The Athena team modeled both and compared them to a baseline of the current National Unity Government. Both power-sharing futures modeled resulted in increased Afghan governmental control geographically and increased support for the Afghan government from the population.

TRADOC G27 used the Athena Simulation to model the two potential power-sharing Afghan futures in order to assess the political and social outcomes of each by assessing control, influence, support, security, and the relationship of the population with GIROA.² This analysis was descriptive rather than prescriptive. Follow on efforts will provide contextual background on the viability of Afghanistan reaching these futures. Future analytical efforts will also leverage the pathway analysis work that other participants in the SMA enterprise are developing currently in support of CENTCOM.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper continues the work that TRADOC G27 completed during Phase I of the SMA/CENTCOM Afghanistan effort, and combines open source elicitations and simulation. The elicitations consisted of interviews with subject matter experts that took place during August/September 2018 under the aegis of the SMA/CENTCOM Afghanistan effort. These elicitations focused on how a negotiated settlement would potentially unfold in Afghanistan and how this settlement could influence the structure of a power-sharing Afghan government. While SMEs were unable to reach consensus on the specifics of a post-negotiated settlement Afghan government, they did identify three critical steps along the path: truce, governance, and reintegration. TRADOC G27 modeled potential permutations of each step and will assess all three steps in our Phase II deliverable (31 OCT 18). This white paper assesses governance by modeling potential future Afghan power-sharing governments using the Athena Simulation to gather information of how these futures influenced Afghanistan socially and politically. To model the ministerial power sharing the study team softened the anti-Taliban beliefs of GIROA and demobilized the QST fighters. For the decentralized government, the study team allowed four notional ethnic figures (Tajik, Uzbek/Turkmen, Pashtun Southeast, and Pashtun South) a large degree of autonomy to administer their respective areas, including controlling a large portion of the security forces.

¹ This white paper does not represent official USG policy or position.

² The Athena Simulation is a decision support tool designed to increase decision-makers' understanding of the effects of PMESII-PT variables on operations in a given area over time. It was developed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in conjunction with the US Army TRADOC G-27 Models and Simulations Branch.



Figure 3: GIROA baseline control

Control: The first parameter that the study team assessed was control. The study team established a baseline by running the current GIROA construct one year. In order to remove the deleterious effects of ongoing combat on the baseline the study team modeled a truce, which halted current fighting but did not disband any QST fighters.

At the end of a one year baseline run GIROA³ controlled six of the 13 neighborhoods consisting of 36% of the Afghan population (Figure 1, left). While these numbers seem low compared to the SIGAR numbers (56% districts GIROA controlled or influenced), the study team assesses is that is

due to our modeling larger geographic areas—aggregates of several provinces—than the SIGAR assessment which uses districts and that the SIGAR report combines control and influence together while this study assesses control only.⁴

The study team then modeled the impact of a potential power-sharing GIROA. SME elicitations agreed that this government would most likely be one of two permutations: power sharing at the ministerial level or decentralized control. The study team modeled both permutations and both resulted in a vast increase in area under Afghan government control. At the conclusion of a one year run the ministerial government controlled the entire country with the exception of portions of the east and southeast (Figure 2, below, left); while in the decentralized government run; the Afghan government, through its regional-centric construct, controlled the entire country (Figure 2, below, right).

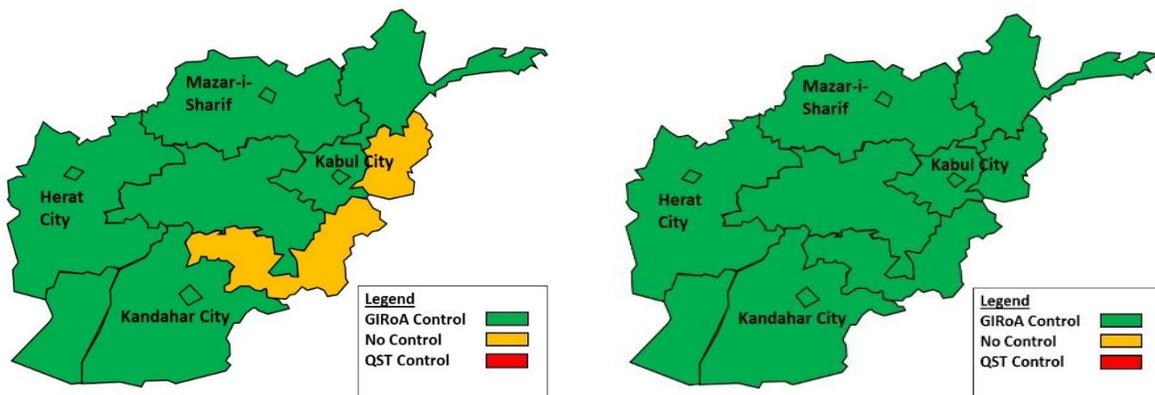


Figure 2: GIROA control from post negotiated settlement constructs: ministerial sharing (left) and decentralized governance (right).

Compared to the limited amount of Afghan territory that GIROA controlled in the baseline the power-sharing government was able to control much more territory in both permutations: ministerial sharing and decentralized. While the decentralized Afghan government was able to control the entire

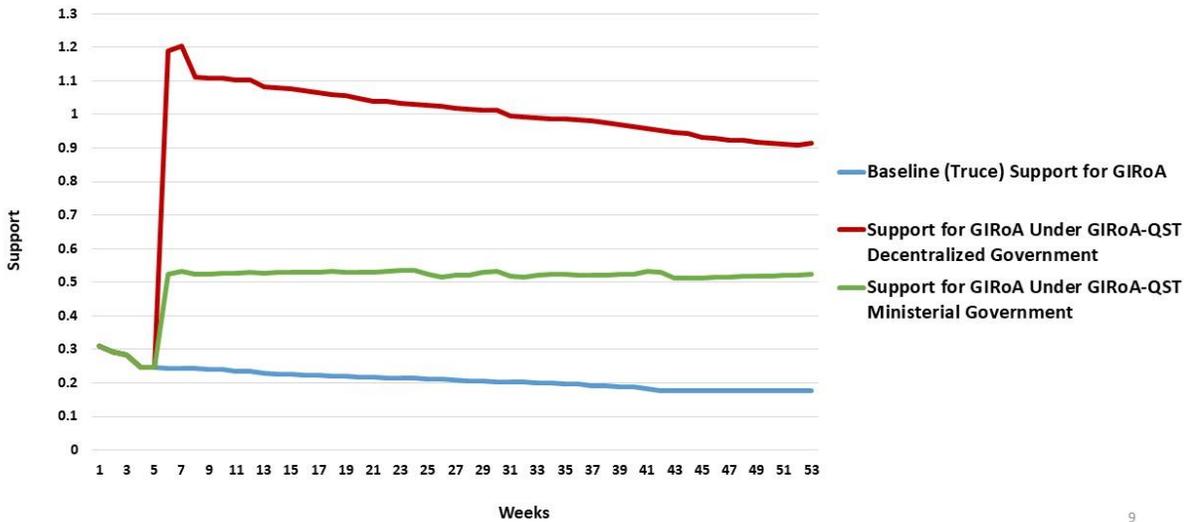
³ For consistency the study team uses GIROA to refer to the Afghan government. Whether a post negotiated settlement Afghan government would keep this name is open to conjecture.

⁴ When assessing GIROA control only (not GIROA influenced) the SIGAR numbers show 73 of 407 districts or 17.9%.

country, analysis from Phase I of this effort showed that if the regional leaders decided to fend for themselves, as recent Afghan history has shown is a potential, the country could fragment into chaos.

Support: The second parameter that the study team analyzed was the population’s support for the Afghan government. Both power-sharing governments were able to corral substantially higher amounts of support from the population though a decentralized government garners the most support from the population *writ large*.

Afghan Population Support for Governance



9

Conclusion

Modeling the two SME suggested potential GIRST post negotiated-settlement governmental constructs—ministerial or decentralized (regional)—showed, regardless of organizational structure, that a power-sharing government would be much more effective at both controlling Afghanistan geographically as well as securing the support of the Afghan population. Preliminary analysis shows that this may be due to the demobilization of QST forces, which TRADOC G27 will fully analyze in our Phase II report that will cover reintegration. While the decentralized regional government established superior outcomes in both control and population support it comes with a potential downside. Recent Afghan history has shown that regional leaders often chafe under centralized control and will not hesitate to ignore the national government at best or plunge the country into civil war and chaos at worst.

Chapter 7. Power Sharing with the Taliban, Mr. Vern Liebl

US Marine Corps University, Center for Advanced Operational and Culture Learning

First, what is the goal of the Taliban (Quetta Shura, which includes the affiliated Peshawar and Miram Shah Shuras)? As the perceived legitimate government of Afghanistan (it controlled 90% of Afghanistan in 2001, governing out of Kabul and recognized officially by Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Pakistan) and overthrown by military invasion, it would like to re-establish a Pushtun-dominated religious (Deobandi-specific) state, much on the lines of Abdur Rahman's emirate of 1890. Currently focused primarily on military operations against what it sees as invaders, occupiers, and apostate collaborators, it has not created extensive governance structures within territory it controls or influences, although it does maintain "shadow" governance structures that will presumably be activated and expanded upon victory. [For an excellent examination of this, see: "Life under the Taliban shadow government", Ashley Jackson, Overseas Development Institute, London, UK, June 2018.]

So, it can be said Taliban wants the removal of all foreigners and the reversion of all government control to itself, which necessarily means the abolishment of the current GIROA government (many of the existing ministerial bureaucrats would likely be retained, as they were under the first Taliban regime which inherited governance from the failed Peshawar Accord government, which inherited them from the overthrown Najibullah government). Are there any potential power-sharing arrangements that would see the mitigation of Taliban control with the survival of current GIROA governing individuals or policies? The most likely answer is, simply, no. This does not mean a complete devolution of governance, see the previously mentioned bureaucratic governance structure survival, but a probably brutal "sifting" would occur to re-instate the Taliban "vision" of governance.

This brings up the question of if the Taliban is capable of negotiation, and if so, will they honor the agreement(s). Clearly, Taliban has stated it is willing to negotiate directly with the US but not with the current GIROA (New Unity Government, or NUG) government. Taken by the US as a willingness to negotiate, it is actually a means to emphasize the illegitimacy of the current GIROA government, which makes it a tactic. Acceptance to negotiate directly will undermine that GIROA legitimacy (understanding that this has already occurred at least once in Doha, Qatar). Despite the GIROA efforts to unilaterally offer negotiations with no conditions, Taliban cannot engage in any without losing its own legitimacy in the eyes of its members, unless it is from a victorious position of power.

Prior to the advent of the Taliban in 1994, the various warring parties in the wake of the overthrow of the Najibullah government, agreed to govern together, this compromise called the Peshawar Accord. The Accord failed almost immediately thanks to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (who now leads an anti-Ghani political party in Kabul), leading to the devastating Afghan Civil War, which resulted in the rise of Taliban. However, more recently, the Taliban, in order to obviate the potential danger of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program to Taliban community influence and power, negotiated with ALP members (focused on Kandahar Province) to not attack them and to not take reprisals if the ALP members sought an offered Taliban amnesty. This action removed the ALP as a significant danger to Taliban. [See "Enemy Number One: How the Taliban deal with the ALP and Uprising Groups", Borhan Osman, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 19 July 2018.] The Taliban can negotiate successfully, if it benefits them.

In regard to Afghans at large, a majority of Afghans, both Pushtun and non-Pushtun, have shown an inclination to accept an ethnically and politically pluralistic state, which would ensure fair access to justice, resources, and political participation. Note, there is no majority desire for a religiously

dominated state or for a single ethnic-dominated state. However, the current and past governments, to include the Taliban, are epitomized by the following:

- Ethnic politics (denial of pluralism and fair justice)
- Foreign presence
- Criminality/corruption (resource diversion/injustice)
- Grievances

Yet, it is possible to create a pluralistic Afghan society, but it takes a significant individual or presence to do so. Since the 1920s it has been the Durrani Mohammadzai Royal family (ended in 1973). The last best chance Afghanistan had to date since then was Ahmed Shah Masud, with a second distant possibility of Burhanuddin Rabbani. Both were assassinated by Al Qaeda, in support of Taliban. Today, the leading political/ethnic figures in GIRoA (or Taliban) have no such presence or capability to unite Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai, Ashraf Ghani, Abdullah Abdullah, Abdul Rashid Dostum (Hibatullah Akhundzada, Sirajuddin Haqqani), all are either too ethnically focused, hugely corrupt, or unknown outside of select parts of Afghanistan.

So, it comes down to examination of what factors can either encourage power-sharing or militate against it.

Factors for:

- ISKP as a common enemy
- Food imports to feed populace
- Remove foreigners

Factors against:

- Taliban desires control and removal of GIRoA
- Opium trafficking, which the population views as revenue-producing, Taliban views as revenue producing, but which the GIRoA views as inhibitor to international assistance and aid
- Taliban acceptance by international community (Doha, Qatar compound, negotiations with US)
- Al Qaeda advocates against negotiations or compromise
- Pakistan “covertly” supports Taliban as proxy force to ultimately control country

What would a Taliban government bring that the people of Afghanistan approve? Based on past precedent, enforcement of market regulations (“just and fair” standards), fuel quality and quantity inspections, vetting of professional qualifications of doctors, etc., rapid judicial adjudications, punishment of corrupt practices, encouragement of local governance, and more. The current GIRoA

government cannot provide these, and it is unable to prevent the corrupt practices of governmental officials to prevent these.

What would be objectionable about a Taliban government? Based on past precedent and current “shadow government” practices, an Islamic-based justice system would not be welcomed, although punishment of corrupt officials and a physical local presence to discourage criminality was and is a welcome aspect of safety. Educational restrictions for females (even though current Taliban policy is more “lenient” than in the past), restrictions on movies, mobile phones and the Internet, enforcement of daily prayers, movement control of civilians, and more. For most Afghans, Pushtuns included, the Taliban is too absolutist. However, Taliban retains its current initiative and popularity precisely because it looks to be a protector of traditional values (specifically protection of marriage issues such as bride price, etc.) against intrusive non-Islamic values and as a proponent of Pushtun exceptionalism.

Would a negotiation between the Taliban (and its sub-components, in defiance of Al Qaeda and Pakistan) and the GIRoA bring a long-term ability to create peaceful integration and resolution of outstanding issues such as corruption and a lack of access to fairness and justice (absent ethnic patronage)? A mere desire for stopping the violence is not a desire for long-term peace. It is just a time-out for a breather. Do the Taliban supporters desire peace? Absolutely, however, with a Taliban-controlled and governed Afghanistan. Does Taliban desire to move beyond its borders to encourage global jihad? As they have articulated and shown when in power (1996-2001), no they do not. Are there Afghans who desire to continue the current dysfunctional situation in order to extract as much profit and power as they can? Absolutely.

Until these issues can be addressed, there is no chance for actual negotiations other than as a tactical ploy akin to the well-known Treaty of Hudaibiyyah which ultimately enabled Muhammad to peacefully conquer Mecca (or in an Afghan context, the trick Emir Abdur Rahman played to get English support to engage in genocide against the Hazara and the Uzbeks in the 1890s in order to consolidate Pushtun dominance).

Chapter 8. Pakistan and the Potential for a Grand Bargain in Afghanistan, Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler

Professor, University of Akron & Case Western Reserve University

Afghanistan and Pakistan are locked into a complex security dilemma. There is very little trust between the two countries that goes back to the time of the creation of Pakistan. Both countries view the other as a crucial security threat because they have tried to undermine the other's stability in order to make themselves secure and to achieve domestic political goals. More recent attempts to improve relations by both sides have failed. These attempts fail because of the multiple, deeply-rooted reasons why the countries distrust each other.

The Sources of Pakistani Security Concerns in Afghanistan

One of the principle sources of distrust and conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan centers on the Pashtun population that is divided between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan does not recognize the Durand Line as the official border with Pakistan and has traditionally seen itself as the home of the Pashtuns, who are split between the two countries.

Pakistan deeply fears Pashtun nationalism within its borders and in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has fostered Pashtun nationalism in Pakistan from time to time because of its concept of itself as home of the Pashtuns but also to weaken Pakistan, which it considers a security threat. Because of the very traumatic experience of East Pakistan separating from Pakistan and becoming independent Bangladesh, Pakistan is extremely sensitive about any potential secessionist forces within the country. Thus, to keep Pakistan together, Pakistani security elites believe, Islamic identity must be encouraged and Pashtun nationalism emanating out of Afghanistan must be squashed.

Also, Afghanistan has traditionally been friendly with India, a way to protect itself from Pakistan and aid the governance of the very poor country. India, in the view of most Pakistani security elites, is an existential threat to Pakistan. An Indian presence in Afghanistan not only strengthens an unfriendly Afghan state, it puts Pakistan's principal security threat on both sides of the country. The present Afghan regime allows India to essentially encircle Pakistan. This is unacceptable to Pakistan.

Afghanistan now has several anti-Pakistan groups operating from its side of the border, largely because the Afghan state is not strong enough to control much its territory. These groups include the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban), Baloch nationalist militant organizations, ISIS in Afghanistan (Islamic State-Khorasan), and Al Qaeda. While a great deal of the weakness of the Afghan state is due to Pakistani support for the Taliban, it is not clear to Pakistan that the present constellation of political forces who govern the country would be able to really control it even without the Taliban.

Another persisting threat to Pakistan emanating from Afghanistan, from the perspective of Pakistani security elites, is the large US military and intelligence presence in the country. Pakistan deeply distrusts US intentions in Afghanistan and toward itself. The US is viewed by Pakistan as more of a foe than an ally. The US is seen as unreliable, not considerate of Pakistan's interests, pro-India, and a force for instability in the region and not a stabilizer in line with Pakistan's interests.

What the Taliban Represents to Pakistan

With all of the aforementioned considerations in mind, Pakistan has an active mixed modality campaign to weaken the present Afghan government and have it replaced by the Taliban or a Taliban-dominated government. The Taliban are viewed by Pakistan's security elites as the best, if imperfect, bet Pakistan has of securing its interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan actively supports the Quetta Shura Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and allied Pakistani jihadi groups that operate in Afghanistan to fight the Afghan regime and international coalition forces.

Supporting the Taliban and these other jihadi groups serves several purposes for Pakistan. The predominately Pashtun Taliban undermines Pashtun nationalism by offering militant Islamism in its place. The Taliban and its allies also keep the Afghan state weak and on its heels. The Taliban insurgency will hopefully result in a new Taliban government that will keep out Indian, US, Iranian, and Russian influence. Avoiding Indian encirclement is the most important goal. A pro-Pakistan Taliban-ruled Afghanistan also provides strategic depth for Pakistan on its western flank that can help in case of war with India. Furthermore, Pakistan does not want chaos in Afghanistan as such disorder will bleed into Pakistan (drugs, other crime, militancy) and the Taliban are counted on to restore order if brought to power.

Pakistan will not abandon its efforts in Afghanistan in order to achieve a "grand bargain." The two major variables the Pakistani security elites focus on now are the regional constellation of interests aligned against the Afghan regime and time. Russia, Iran, China, and Pakistan view the Afghan government as a base for US power in the region. All of these countries would like the US to leave Afghanistan at some time as the US presence is seen as detrimental to their interests. Thus, there is a powerful set of destabilizers arrayed against Afghanistan and a primary stabilizer with an expiration date on it, the US. This is the time element behind Pakistani thinking. It makes sense to simply wait out the US presence in the country, and then watch as the current Afghan regime crumbles. This is when the Taliban comes to fill the governance vacuum. Thus, the Taliban and its allies are assets that Pakistan will not abandon given their security concerns and expectations for the future.

Incentivizing Pakistan into a Grand Bargain?

Pakistan views the situation in Afghanistan as one of existential importance. It will not abandon its support for the Afghan Taliban. It does not matter how much pressure the US and others exert on it. As presently-configured, Afghanistan represents an existential threat to Pakistan. Pakistani military-intelligence leaders would rather "eat grass" than allow India to take a permanent, unmolested foothold in Afghanistan or allow the potential for Pashtun nationalism to threaten Pakistan.

Confidence-building measures from the Afghan side will do little. The present Afghan government is perceived as too weak to be credible guarantor of its pledges. The Afghan government could recognize the Durand Line or promise not to promote Pashtun nationalism, but these would look like acts of desperation and there is no guarantee the present government in Kabul will be around much longer. What if some new leader emerges who seeks to stoke Pashtun nationalism? Pakistan cannot risk such a potential development.

Security guarantees from the US will not be trusted by Pakistan. The US is seen as a duplicitous partner by Pakistan and also one where the domestic politics of the country play a very large role in its foreign policy-making. Pakistan has seen several turns in US policy toward the region just within the last decade. Who is to say that the US will not abandon the region as it is perceived to have done before?

US threats and pressure on Pakistan will also not result in a change of Pakistani policy toward Afghanistan. Because of the very deep strategic significance of Afghanistan to Pakistani security, such pressure will not work. Pakistan also has major cards to play with the US in terms of Pakistani supply routes into Afghanistan and what a completely alienated, nuclear-armed Pakistan would mean to US security concerns in the region.

A seemingly logical way to encourage the Pakistanis to accept a grand bargain in Afghanistan would be to bring about diplomatic rapprochement between India and Pakistan. If Pakistan is not concerned about the existential threat from India, would that not allay a great deal of the concern that Pakistan has about Afghanistan? A large-scale diplomatic settlement with India would seem to be a major step forward in de-escalating the threat Pakistan perceives from Afghanistan.

It is highly unlikely that India and Pakistan will achieve such a diplomatic accommodation any time soon. Deep-seated suspicions of one another in their respective security and political spheres will be very difficult to overcome. Furthermore, domestic politics in both countries would make major compromise very unlikely. Kashmir is a case in point. While it is a very fraught issue and could potentially lead to major armed conflict again, neither side can back down on it because of the domestic political corners they have painted themselves into on the issue.

The bottom line on Pakistan coming to the table to agree to a grand bargain in Afghanistan that is inclusive and does not result in an outright win for pro-Pakistan forces is extremely unlikely to happen. Pakistan will go through the motions of trying to help achieve stability in Afghanistan but its incentives to wait the US out and rely on the Taliban are greater than they were just a few years ago. Why negotiate a grand bargain when that is simply a way for the US leave? Patience is Pakistan's best strategy at this point.

PART III SPOILERS

Chapter 9. Organizational and Leadership Consolidation and Fragmentation in AFPAK Region, Dr. Gina Ligon & Mr. Michael Logan

University of Nebraska Omaha

From 2007 through 2017, we identified 105 violent extremist organizations (VEOs) operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁵ Of those 105, 15 VEOs committed at least 10 acts of violence during this ten-year timeframe and were identified as direct threats to Coalition interests in the region.⁶ Table 1 includes the name and number of attacks committed for each of the 15 VEOs. The most noticeable—yet expected—trend on Table 1 is the disproportionate amount of violence attributed to the Taliban and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Together, these two VEOs accounted for 89% of all violence in the AFPAK region since 2007. Much of the remaining violence was committed by VEOs who were, at some point, associated with either the Taliban or the TTP. For example, Halqa-e-Mehsud (HeM), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, the Jundalluh Group, Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI), Ansarul Majahideen, and Tehrik-e-Khilafat (TeK) were all connected to the TTP. HeM and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar broke away for brief periods before later rejoining the TTP, while the Jundalluh Group and TeK eventually pledged their support for the Islamic State. The Haqqani Network is closely linked to the Taliban, as is Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) given the overall relationship between Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Table 1. AFPAK Violent Extremist Organizations (2007-2017)

ID	VEO Name	# of Attacks
1	Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)	21
2	Halqa-e-Mehsud (HeM)	30
3	Haqqani Network	97
4	Hizb-I-Islami	44
5	Jaish-e-Islam (Jaish-ul-Islam)	25
6	Jamaat-ul-Ahrar	19
7	Jundalluh Group (Pakistan)	32
8	Khorasan Chapter of the Islamic State (IS-K)	387
9	Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI)	132
10	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)	164
11	Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)	16
12	Mujahideen Ansar/Ansarul Majahideen	19
13	Taliban	7099
14	Tehrik-e-Khilafat (TeK)	16
15	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	1397

Periods of Instability

It is advantageous to look at past performance for at least three reasons. First, historical analysis anchors seminal points in VEOs' development and capability in the context. For example, we see the confluence of several events in 2011 (e.g., death of UBL, prison break of Taliban prisoners at Kandahar) and we see a sharp increase in the range of targets the Taliban specifically attacked. Second, we have longitudinal data using datasets such as the Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results (LEADIR) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) to understand how VEO capabilities unfold over time and under different leaders. Finally, we can triangulate changes in VEO performance with external events such as actions taken by the Coalition to understand the short and long-range effects of counterterrorism (CT) strategies in this region.

⁵ 2017 was selected as the last year since it is the last year of data available in the Global Terrorism Database.

⁶ After SMEs with domain and direct expertise with the region reviewed the list for inclusion, the following groups were removed: The Balochistan Liberation Army, Balochistan Liberation Front, Balochistan Republican Army, Balochistan United Liberation Front, Lashkar e-Balochistan, Sindhu Desh Liberation Army, and United Baloch Army also committed at least 10 attacks between 2007 and 2017.

Using data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), we pooled attack data for each of the 15 VEOs at the month level. From there, we identified two periods of instability (POI) in the AFPAK region between 2007 and 2017. POI were defined as three or more consecutive months in which one of the following indicators were rated in the top five including: the number of successful attacks, the number of attacks over multiple incidents, the number of suicide attacks, the number of attacks on high-value targets, and the average number of individuals killed.⁷ In other words, POI's are periods in which violence spikes. For example, March 2014 had the fourth highest attacks on high-value targets; April 2014 had the fifth highest attacks over multiple incidents; May 2014 had the second highest number of successful attacks; and June 2014 had the fifth highest number of suicide attacks. As such, the first POI identified (POI #1) was the months of March 2014 through June 2014. The second POI identified (POI #2) was the months of April 2015 through June 2015. More specifically, April 2015 experienced the second highest number of attacks over multiple incidents and second highest number of attacks on high-value targets; May 2015 experienced the highest number of successful attacks, highest number of attacks over multiple incidents, highest number of attacks on high-value targets, and second highest number of suicide attacks; and June 2015 had the third highest attacks on high-value targets and the third highest number of success attacks.

Table 2. Periods of Instability

Period of Instability	Number of Attacks	Most Active VEOs (# of attacks)	Most Active Provinces (# of attacks)	Number of Attacks on NATO Forces
POI #1 (March 2014 - June 2014)	471	Taliban (382) TTP (64) LeI (7)	Ghazni (45) Helmand (43) FATA (30)	20
POI #2 (April 2015 - June 2015)	518	Taliban (451) TTP (38) IS-K (14)	Helmand (45) Uruzgan (35) Kandahar/Kunduz (27)	10

Drivers of Instability (Organizational)

To address potential organizational drivers of this instability manifests, we analyzed our collected organizational and leadership data for each of the 15 VEOs in the AFPAK region from 2007 to 2018. We then examined this data for the months preceding and during each POI to determine potential drivers of instability (see Figure 1).

Beginning with POI #1, we identified the main within-organization drivers of instability to be organizational uncertainty and fractionalization. Both of these consequences may have been related to three specific events that precipitated POI #1: the death of Mullah Omar (Taliban), the death of Hakimullah Mehsud (TTP), and the appointment of Maulana Fazlullah (TTP). Organizational uncertainty, especially at the leadership-level, is problematic because it creates a principal agent problem for group members. From this perspective, violence is fueled by disconnect between groups members and when organizational influence and control is delegated from senior leaders to foot soldiers (Abrahms and Potter 2015; Abrahms and Mierau 2017). Both the Taliban and the TTP experienced organizational uncertainty, possibly due to their leadership decapitation.

⁷ High-value targets refer to police, military, and government targets.

Next, within-organization fractionalization also fostered instability. In POI #1, fractionalization was a symptom of leadership disputes and the organizational uncertainty described above. The TTP, in particular, experienced in-group fractionalization as sub-commanders jockey for position after the death of Hakimullah Mehsud. Later, when Fazlullah was appointed emir, Khalid Mehsud temporarily split from the TTP and took the majority of the Mehsud tribesmen fighting under the TTP banner with him. As fractionalization occurs, new VEOs emerge and attempt to carve out territory in the extremist landscape—likely causing competition between organizations.

In POI #2, we identified the main within-organization drivers of instability to be organizational uncertainty and consolidation. In this period, organizational uncertainty was

a consequence of lack of a strategic leader within the Taliban as well as the emergence of the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Up until this point, the Islamic State (in Iraq and Syria) was successful; thus, their emergence in the ACPAK region threatened many of the preexisting VEOs. In POI #2, consolidation occurred when the larger VEOs (i.e., Taliban, TTP) reconciled with the smaller groups that had broken during POI #1, or those same groups were absorbed into the newly formed ISKP. Consolidation was experienced when Jamaat-ul-Ahrar reunited under the TTP banner. Consolidation was also experienced when the Jundallun Group and TeK pledged their allegiance to the ISKP.

Next Steps

Four recent changes have occurred to the organizational and leadership structures of ACPAK VEOs. First, the Afghan Taliban appointed Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada to emir in May 2016 following the death of Mullah Mansour. Second, during the appointment of Akhundzada, the Afghan Taliban further solidified their relationship with the Haqqani Network by promoting Sirajuddin Haqqani to deputy emir. Third, Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud was appointed as the emir of the TTP following the death of their former leader, Maulana Fazlullah, in June 2018. Fourth, ISKP’s leadership has experienced several leadership decapitation events. Since 2015, five high-ranking ISKP leaders have been killed—only one of which (Hafiz Khan Saeed) governed for more than one-year. As of April 2018, Mawlawi Habibul Rahman is leading the organization. The remaining question is: What implications will these leadership changes have on stability in the ACPAK region?

In the next iteration of this research project, we plan to integrate research on social identity theory and leadership influence to understand how changes in leadership impacts regional stability. Recent examples have shown that leadership decision-making in the ACPAK region strengthen (e.g., Afghan Taliban) or degrade (e.g., Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) performance capabilities for ACPAK extremist organizations.

Figure 1. Precipitatory and Concurrent Organizational Events

Period of Instability	Precipitatory Events	Concurrent Events
POI #1 (March 2014 – June 2014)	Death of Mullah Omar, Emir of the Afghan Taliban	Halqa-e-Mehsud breaks from TTP
	Death of Hakimullah Mehsud, Emir of the TTP	Taliban leadership remains unknown
	Maulana Fazlullah is elected Emir of TTP	
	Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Jundallun Group, Tehrik-e-Khilafat break from TTP	
	AQIS is formed	Taliban leadership remains unknown
POI #2 (April 2015 – June 2015)	Tehrik-e-Khilafat pledges to the Islamic State	
	Jundallun Group pledges to the Islamic State	
	The Islamic State – Khorasan Province is formed	
	Jamaat-ul-Ahrar reconciles with the TTP	

Chapter 10. Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) Plays the Spoiler, Dr. Craig Whiteside

Associate Professor, Naval War College at the Naval Postgraduate School

This short essay outlines some ways that the Islamic State- Khorasan Province (ISKP) affiliate could play the role of a spoiler in US endorsed diplomatic efforts to end the war in Afghanistan. ISKP has been a factor in Afghanistan since early 2015, and its growth has been steady despite a successful leader targeting campaign, many ground campaigns, and corresponding Taliban offensives. Furthermore, the group's ties to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), including the provision of financial resources and organizational expertise, as well as attempts to conduct external terror operations, has influenced the United State to extensively target ISKP. This increase in prioritization of ISKP, and efforts to remove it from territorial control, often benefit the Taliban—and reduces pressure on them to negotiate a settlement.

There are several ways that ISKP could frustrate the process of successfully concluding a negotiated settlement. First, ISKP gains in northwestern and northern provinces (such as Jowzjan) could inspire Tajikistan (and even the Russians) to intervene by aiding the Taliban or even intervening indirectly. A Salafi jihadist presence close to their territory, with its global jihadist ties (compared to the parochial Taliban), might leave these countries no choice but to address this threat. Second, ISKP gains among youth in Kabul could fuel an increased urban terror campaign that undermines perceptions of GIRoA legitimacy. The development or expansion of clandestine terror networks would be less a threat to government sovereignty and more a threat to public safety and confidence. This could lead to GIRoA pulling out of or sabotaging talks with the Taliban, against the wishes of the United States. A similar dynamic happened between the Thieu government of South Vietnam and the Nixon Administration during the Paris Peace Accords.

The greatest threat that ISKP poses, however, is their ideological consistency and the political effects of this on Taliban irreconcilables. Disaffected Taliban fighters and commanders that disagree with the policy of reconciliation, particularly in a more fragmented movement that exists in the post-Mullah Omar era, could find their way to ISKP. Certainly although ISKP started as a mix of foreigners and locals, the Afghan components of the group have grown to dominate the movement and much of this is due to its ability to strip off ideological sympathetic Taliban members.

In many ways, the Islamic State in Iraq was able to grow in this same way after the Surge/Awakening period in Iraq. Resistance groups like the 1920 Revolution Brigade, Islamic Army, and Mujahidin Army were pulled apart as large numbers swung to reconciling with the government (and working with the United States) against the newly formed Islamic State of Iraq (formerly Al Qaeda in Iraq). Irreconcilables from each of these groups, as well as elements of Ansar al Sunnah, eventually found themselves with nowhere to go but exile or joining the Islamic State.

This could be the real spoiler in any government reconciliation or power sharing agreement with the Taliban. ISKP serves as an ideological rival, threatening to pounce if the Taliban were to agree to peace with a democratic government, and to take part in elections, which are frowned upon in the Salafi-jihadi doctrine ISKP follows. Efforts by the Taliban to justify this diplomatic move might be difficult and could cause them to lose up to a third of their supporters to a hardline position—one shared by ISKP.

Policy Relevance

Exacerbating the Taliban-ISKP rivalry can be a great benefit to the coalition and GIRoA. The best countermessaging program against Daesh in the world right now is the Taliban's. The coalition could cynically even amplify Taliban propaganda (directed at ISKP), or even mimic it in order to create more tension between the rival movements, and even possibly use it to make common ground with those in the Taliban leaning toward a settlement. In some ways this is what coalition forces did in Iraq when they accepted resistance and tribal grievances about a brutal Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)/ISI in 2006/7, and adopted these group narratives about the group's brutality and attempts to intermarry, etc., in its own propaganda. In the case of ISKP, the group is not as powerful as AQI was in 2006, but a similar attempt to play the Taliban against ISKP could be fruitful in at least frustrating Taliban efforts to woo ISKP folks back into the fold. They have had success doing this recently, and used ISKP defectors to great effect in their counter-ISKP propaganda.

The other recommendation would be to watch carefully for these would be Taliban defectors from an intelligence and even targeting perspective. A large swing from the Taliban to ISKP would be a worse case scenario for the stability of Afghanistan and the region. At this time and place, ISKP is a low risk threat, largely due to its prolific terror campaign in Kabul and against the Hazara around the country. Its ties to Islamic State central are problematic, as are its intentions to possibly strike at the American homeland in accordance with Islamic State external operations guidance. But its ability to hold territory is still limited and its growth hampered by a plethora of rival groups competing for a post-conflict measure of power. Peace, however unlikely, will bring an end to this rivalry much like it did in Iraq after 2008, and this in some counterintuitive ways will make ISKP even more of a threat at that point. In order to mitigate this risk, a close eye on Taliban (and other groups) defection to ISKP is a must if we are to learn from the failures of conflict termination in Iraq prior to the rise of the caliphate.

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Chapter 11: No Deal, LTG (ret.) Daniel Bolger

The Rolling Stones reminded us “you can’t always get what you want.” And as the song goes: “But if you try sometimes you just might find you’ll get what you need.” With apologies to Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, Afghanistan is a place where foreign invaders like us don’t get what we want and don’t get what we need. Instead we get what we get—an ugly choice between an open-ended stalemate or outright withdrawal.

We’d prefer a grand bargain, a diplomatic settlement that brings most of the Taliban inside the domestic political arena and ends most of the armed insurrection against the Kabul government. You’ll note that isn’t one of the options mentioned above. A grand bargain cannot be imposed by America and its allies. All we can do is continue the stand-off, year after year. Alternatively, we can pull out.

A grand bargain in Afghanistan is not impossible. But it is highly unlikely. We should have known this before 2001. We can save the recriminations for later. For now, we must acknowledge the monumental odds against a political settlement. A grand bargain flies in the face of Afghan tradition, the known history of foreign interventions, and the current facts on the ground.

Afghans like to fight. Disputes are settled by arms. Families feud. Clans clash. Ethnicities engage. The country is less a traditional nation-state than a hole on the map where the surrounding powers gave up on trying to impose order. The Pashtun plurality that sustains the Taliban will never consent to rule by Tadzhiks, Uzbeks, Hazara, Turkmen, Nuristanis, or any other less numerous groups, nor to some jack-leg coalition of the same. And for their part, those less numerous entities refuse to submit to a strong Pashtun-dominated state. What little “peace” Afghanistan has known amounted to a weak Pashtun regime in Kabul that exerted minimal influence out in the countryside. That dynamic has been in place for millennia. Nothing we’ve done since 2001 has nudged it a bit.

No foreign invader has ever subjugated Afghanistan. It is indeed the graveyard of empires. The Macedonians, the Mongols, the Russian Empire, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union all found Afghanistan hard to enter, difficult to pacify, and impossible to hold. Apart from a few transitory air and ground operations, we have never come close to inflicting the violence administered by those powerful invaders. We are neither feared nor respected. Not that it matters. The Mongols and Soviets ruled by terror and it didn’t work either. The people of Afghanistan simply will not be occupied. They will never stop fighting the foreigners. It may be the only thing that they are willing to do together.

Finally, the facts on the ground right now encourage the Taliban to keep up the insurgency. They control or influence almost all of the Pashtun areas, and the Kabul government has neither the means nor the public support to roll back those gains. With our help, they hold the line. That’s as good as it gets. Ashraf Ghani may be more pleasant than Hamid Karzai, but he is still ineffective. In the countryside he and his fractious team are seen as US/NATO puppets.

With full understanding of Afghan tradition, a clear-eyed memory of the sorry history of foreign forces in the country, and a firm recognition that they’re locked in a long-term war of attrition with an enemy that is always one US electoral cycle away from full pull-out, why should the Taliban negotiate? They are willing to discuss our timetable for departure. But beyond that, forget it.

So back to the Rolling Stones. We can’t get what we want—the grand bargain. We can’t get what we need—a way out of the quagmire. So we get what we get—more of the same. Stalemate.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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Sher Jan Ahmadzai, is the Director Center for Afghanistan Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He has worked with Afghan government before coming to the United States and served as the Scheduling Manager for President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Mr. Ahmadzai' work experience of more than 15 years in the United States and Afghanistan as a government employee at the office of the President, has provided him with opportunities to understand the dynamics of the system of government and regional and global politics concerning Afghanistan and the United States. Mr. Ahmadzai is a regular contributor and commenter for many national and international media outlets such as VOA and BBC Radio and TV on various issues related to the US Pakistan, Taliban, security and terrorism in South-Central Asia. He has also written for CNN, BBC and Omaha World Herald on Afghan peace process. He has also participated in various Track II talks on Afghanistan and provided feedback to policy makers. Mr. Ahmadzai has also written papers and co-authored a book on Transboundary Waters of Afghanistan focusing on hydro politics that is in play in the region and has written about Water Security in the region. His chapters are about the relationship of between Afghanistan and her neighbors concerning sharing water recourse and how it can become a source of cooperation or conflict in the region.

Dr. Thomas Barfield

THOMAS BARFIELD is an anthropologist who received his PhD from Harvard University. He conducted ethnographic fieldwork with nomads in northern Afghanistan in the mid 1970s and is author of *The Central Asian Arabs of Afghanistan* (1981), *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (1989) and co-author of *Afghanistan: An Atlas of Indigenous Domestic Architecture* (1991). Professor of Anthropology at Boston University, Barfield is also President of the American Institute for Afghanistan Studies. In 2007 Barfield received a Guggenheim Fellowship that led to the publication, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, 2010). His most recent 2018 project was co-director of two art exhibitions in Afghanistan: *Splendors of Medieval Timurid Art in Afghanistan* held in Herât Castle, Herât and *King Babur's Kabul: Cradle of the Mughal Empire* held in Babur's Garden, Kabul.



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Sarah Canna applies her open source analytic skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly the Middle East and South Asia. To help military planners understand the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in evolving conflict situations, she developed a Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa™) tool, which is designed to rapidly respond to emergent crises by pulsing NSI's extensive subject matter expert (SME) network to provide deep, customized, multidisciplinary analysis for defense and industry clients. Prior to joining NSI, she completed her Master's degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. She holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University and has been learning Dari for three years.



Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler



Karl Kaltenthaler is Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University. His research and teaching focuses on security policy, political violence, political psychology, public opinion and political behavior, violent Islamist extremism, terrorism, and counterterrorism. He has worked on multiple research studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, and the United States. He is currently researching the radicalization and recruitment process into Islamist violent extremism in different environments as well as ways to counter this process (Countering Violent Extremism). His work has resulted in academic publications and presentations as well as analytic reports and briefings for the US government. He has consulted for the FBI, the US State Department, the US Intelligence Community and the US military. His research has been published in three books, multiple book chapters, as well as articles in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, as well as other several other journals.

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Vernie Liebl is an analyst currently sitting as the Middle East Desk Officer in the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). Mr. Liebl retired from the Marine Corps and has a background in intelligence, specifically focused on the Middle East and South Asia.

Prior to joining CAOCL, Mr. Liebl worked with the Joint Improvised Explosives Device Defeat Organization as a Cultural SME, and before that with Booz Allen Hamilton as a Strategic Islamic Narrative Analyst. He has also published extensively on topics ranging from the Caliphate to Vichy French campaigns in WW2.

Mr. Liebl has a Bachelors degree in political science from University of Oregon, a Masters degree in Islamic History from the University of Utah, and a second Masters degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College (where he graduated with “Highest Distinction” and focused on Islamic Economics).



Dr. Gina Ligon



Gina Ligon received her Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Minor in Quantitative Psychology from the University of Oklahoma. Prior to joining University of Nebraska Omaha, she was a full time faculty member at Villanova University in the Graduate Programs in Human Resource Development. She also worked as a Director of Performance Consulting at St. Louis-based Psychological Associates. Her research program focuses on the identification and development of high level talent; she has specific expertise in innovation and leadership, and has published over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on these subjects. Organizational structures and leadership in non-normative organizations (e.g., violent ideological) are also of interest to her.

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Michael Logan is a doctoral candidate in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a research associate at the Center for Collaboration Science. He holds a master's degree in criminal justice from Radford University and a bachelor's degree in criminology from Lynchburg College. His research interests focus on violence, violent extremism, criminal decision-making and expertise, malevolent creative and innovation, and leadership in violent ideological organizations.



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Raffaello Pantucci is Director of International Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). His research focuses on counterterrorism as well as China's relations with its Western neighbours. Prior to coming to RUSI, Raffaello lived for over three years in Shanghai, where he was a visiting scholar at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS).

Before that he worked in London at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. He has also held positions at the European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR) and is an associate fellow at the International Center for the Study of

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He is the author of *We Love Death As You Love Life: Britain's Suburban Terrorists* (London: Hurst, April 2015/US: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), described by *The Financial Times* as 'the most articulate and carefully researched account of Britain's 'suburban terrorists' to date.'

He is currently completing a writing project looking at Chinese interests in Central Asia. His journal articles have appeared in *Survival*, *The National Interest*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and *RUSI Journal* amongst others, and his journalistic writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Sunday Times*, *CNN*, *Guardian*, *Foreign Policy*, *South China Morning Post*, and more.

Dr. Barnett R. Rubin

Barnett R. Rubin (above with Helmand peace marchers in Kabul) is a senior fellow and associate director of New York University's Center on International Cooperation. From April 2009 until October 2013, Dr. Rubin was the senior adviser to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the US Department of State. He previously served as special advisor to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan during the negotiations that produced the Bonn Agreement, the constitution of Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Compact, and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. From 1994 to 2000, Rubin was director of the Center for Preventive Action and director of Peace and Conflict Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. He has also taught at Columbia and Yale Universities. Rubin is the author of *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror* (2013), *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (2nd edition 2002), *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan* (1995), *Blood on the Doorstep: The Politics of Preventing Deadly Conflict* (2002), and other books and articles.



Dr. Homayun Sidky



Dr. Homayun Sidky is Professor of Anthropology. He is an ecological anthropologist, with strong interests in the history and theory of anthropology, and the anthropology of religion. Dr. Sidky has done fieldwork in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. His current research focuses on religious fundamentalism in the US and around the globe. He has also worked in the Middle East, Australia, and Easter Island, and is now researching shamanism in Nepal. Dr. Sidky received his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University.

TRADOC G-27 Athena Study Team

The Athena Study Team is a part of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G-27. Athena is a decision support tool designed to increase a commander's understanding of the effect of PMESII-PT variables (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, Information, Physical Environment, and Time) on a given area over time.

Athena models DIME-FIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement, all elements of national power) interventions within a PMESII-PT context to enable a user to anticipate second- and third-order effects upon noncombatant groups, force groups, government and non-government actors. The primary outputs of Athena are trend lines that indicate changes in non-combatant populations' mood, the level of volatility and stability within a discrete area, control over an area, and the relationships between civilian groups, force groups, government and non-government actors.



Dr. Craig Whiteside

Craig Whiteside is an associate professor at the Naval War College at the Naval Postgraduate School, where he teaches national security affairs to military officers. He has a PhD in political science and has published extensively on the Islamic State in *War on the Rocks*, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, and for the ICCT-The Hague where he is an associate fellow. His latest publication is “Nine Bullets for the Traitors, One for the Enemy: Slogans and Strategies of the Islamic State’s campaign to defeat the Sahwa (2006-2017),” ICCT (September 2018).

