A Triangle of Uncertainty

Why Afghanistan and Pakistan are not able to reach a deal with Taliban?

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Introduction

The Thesis is based on the important role of three main players of peace talks with Taliban, The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Taliban themselves. The thesis will focus on peace talks and the reason why these three parties; two governments and an insurgent group are not able to find a common ground and a political solution for the on-going insurgency in both sides of Durand-line.

The issue of Taliban insurgency is growing and becoming an international concern. The growth of religious militancy will not only affect the countries where they found a safe haven, but it will also be a major threat to other neighboring countries too. The clear examples of their ability of destabilizing the peace and security in other countries are the attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States of America. The Al-Qaeda, Taliban and their supporters are misleading the naïve and poorly educated and in some cases totally uneducated youth using the name of Islam. The aim of Al-Qaeda, which is establishing a Worldwide Islamic Caliphate, is not only unrealistic, but also impossible considering the current relations between Islamic countries and different Islamic sects.

The thesis investigates the rise of Taliban starting from their mobilization in Pakistani madrasas until the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The role of Pakistan, United States of America and region’s intelligence agencies in bringing Taliban into power will be studied, but the main objectives of the paper will be to introduce and explain the nature of different insurgent groups related to Taliban and on-going peace talks.

The peace talks with Taliban and dealing with their militant insurgency is one of the most challenging issues of the Central and South Asia. The concerned regional countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan are two of the most vulnerable countries facing the challenge of extremism and religious fundamentalism by the various parties and militant terrorist groups active in their territory.

Studying the nature of these groups and their organizational structure will help us understand the current conflicts of the region. The diversity of these militant groups makes it complicated and challenging to investigate, but in this thesis, the main and most prominent militant group called “Taliban” will be investigated. Currently, there
are some efforts taking place through bilateral and trilateral peace talks with Taliban, who have no specific address and credible leadership. Reaching a deal with Taliban will help in establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan, a country experiencing almost half a century of political instability and insurgency. The deal will also help Pakistan. Pakistan is currently on the edge of collapse and faces serious internal political crises.

The establishment of Taliban and the beginnings of their militancy is an interesting journey. The rise of Taliban after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 will be introduced considering different aspects and points of views. A brief historical background of the Taliban will be presented in a specified chapter. The study of the reasons which lead to the establishment of Taliban, the reactions of the population to this newborn movement of religious students and their taking arms are exclusively of importance regarding the subject of the thesis.

The religious and political motives behind the rise of Taliban will be presented with a brief look into the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, a government established by the Taliban after the collapse of socialist regime in Kabul. The authorities in charge in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan were supposed to govern the country based on the instructions and guidance of Islam, but when they took the power and authority of almost 90 percent of the country’s territory, they started enforcing their own version and interpretation of Islam, which was one of the main reasons behind the strong resistance they faced from the north and some eastern parts of the country.

The role of Pakistan and its Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) in helping Taliban to gain power is remarkable. Their experience of helping and supporting mujahedeen during the cold war against the Soviet Union made it easy to influence the key figures in Taliban and Pashtun tribal leaders in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The Afghan Northern Alliance commonly known and the “Northern Alliance” and their resistance against Taliban is an important factor to be considered in the history of Taliban and resistant movements against them inside the country. Northern Alliance considered Taliban the enemy of both, Islam and Afghanistan. The important figures in Northern Alliance and their political and militaristic efforts to bring down the regime of Taliban will be introduced.
The Intervention of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, the Issue of handing over Osama bin Laden to the United States and the reaction of Taliban to the demands of the US administration will be mentioned and studied based on the memoir of one of the key figures in Taliban administration.

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), their establishment and relations with Afghan Taliban which needs a broader research will be briefly explained in a separate chapter of the thesis. The core of the thesis will be the process of peace talks with Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Qatar. The peace agreements with Taliban and the efforts made by both countries will be explained.

Literatures used in the thesis are consisting of books written on Taliban, Pakistan and Afghanistan in English, Urdu, Pashto and Farsi. The secondary sources are some of studies published in reliable and prestigious Journals, credible internet portals and personal experiences.
1. Establishment of Taliban and Afghanistan before 9/11

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, which began on 15 May 1988 and ended on 15 February 1989, the Mujahideen who were fighting against the Soviet Union, still did not put their arms down and continued to fight against the regime of Dr. Najibullah\(^1\), which caused the civil war. During the civil war, most of the people fled to Pakistan, Iran and other neighboring countries. Among these refugees, a number of well-known politicians also settled in camps in Peshawar, a major city of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa state of Pakistan, near the border of Afghanistan. These politicians and tribal leaders later established and founded political groups and parties aiming to attract and receive financial and political support of Arabs and western countries, especially United States of America, for combating with the red army of the Soviet Union.

The political parties involved in civil war were mainly founded and established in Peshawar, Pakistan. These political parties are also called Peshawar seven or Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahideen which was formed in May 1985 by the seven Afghan mujahideen parties fighting against the Soviet Union and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

The tensions were rising day by day in tribal and rural areas. The central socialist government in Kabul was facing chaos and a power vacuum started appearing. Political insurgency and ethnic based conflicts between parties where alarmingly getting dangerous and out of control. People were hoping for a change in the political leadership of the country and Taliban offered them this change. While the political parties were struggling to gain power and control over the capital, Taliban started a relatively small uprising in the south of the country.

The west and the rest of the world did not consider Taliban a serious threat to the stability and security of the region. As Steve Coll describes; “The birth and rise of Taliban during 1994 and the emergence of the movement’s supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, were often described in the United States and Europe as a triumph

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\(^1\) The late socialist president of Afghanistan (1947–1996)
of a naïve, pious, determined band of religious students swept into power on a wave of
poplar revulsion over Kandahar’s criminal warlords”\(^2\).

The word “\textit{Talib}” is driven from the Arabic word which means “\textit{student}”. The
plural form of the word is “\textit{Talib-an}” the suffix “\textit{-an}” of which is from Pashto language.
As its name makes it enough clear, Taliban were a group of students who were engaged
in religious studies in Afghan and Pakistani madrasas’.

Madrasas’ are a kind of religious schools where the young Afghan and Pakistani
sons of religious extremists and fundamentalists were/are receiving lessons on
theological concepts of religion and specialized training in religious studies. They were
taught the extreme interpretation of Quran by the religious scholars, who later became
the spiritual father of Taliban. Taliban were later trained and educated under the
supervision of Pakistani military and \textbf{ISI}\(^3\) (\textit{Inter-Services Intelligence}) in these
madrasas’.

There are several sources about the establishment of Taliban, but their march on
Kandahar in 1994 marks their rise. Taliban still claim that they started the movement as
an action taken against the vandalism, robberies, atrocities and injustice in the society.
The founding meeting of what became known as ‘the Taliban’ was held in autumn of
1994. \textit{Mawlawi Abdul Samad}, one of the most respected religious scholars of the area
was chosen as the \textit{Amir}\(^4\) of Taliban and \textit{Mullah Mohammad Omar}\(^5\) was designated as
the commander of the group. On November 5, 1994, the Taliban took over Kandahar,
with the help of the ISI, who had successfully bribed the most powerful warlord, \textit{Mullah
Najibullah}, to surrender along with his 2500 man force. The capture of Kandahar netted
a stockpile of weapons, armored vehicles, artillery pieces and most importantly, six
MIG 21 fighter aircraft and several helicopters.\(^6\)

Taking over Kandahar gained Taliban fame and popularity among ultra
conservative and religious people who wanted a change and who were experiencing the

\(^2\)Steve Coll. [2004], \textit{GhostWars- The secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden,
from the soviet invasion to September 10, 2001}. PenguinBooks (page 283)
\(^3\) Premier intelligence agency of Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence
\(^4\) A title usually used to refer to a leader or commander
\(^5\) Mullah Mohammed Omar, often simply called Mullah Omar, is the spiritual leader of the Taliban. He
was Afghanistan’s de facto 11\(^{th}\) head of state from 1996 to late 2001
\(^6\) Bakhtiyorjon U. Hammidov “The Fall of the Taliban Regime and Its Recovery as an Insurgent
Movement in Afghanistan” A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General
Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 2004 (28)
terrible period of ongoing civil war caused by mostly ethnic based political parties. Taliban were a sign of hope for them at the time. Beside ISI, the average population of the country also started supporting them. They expanded very fast throughout the country and were welcomed as saviors and heroes everywhere.

1.1. Religious and political motives of Taliban

Afghans and specially Pashtuns have a very complex tribal structure with their own rules and unwritten ethical codes. The ethical codes and laws were used as the law of governance throughout the history, even if there was a governmental structure at the time. Pashtuns living in Afghanistan and FATA- Federally Administerated Tribal Areas, a semi-autonomous tribal region in Pakistan respect tribal values and code of life equally. The decisions made by the tribal leaders are accepted over the constitution and in some cases, over sharia law. Tribal leadership is one of the most important factors in shaping the traditional Pashtun way of life.

One of the reasons why Taliban came to existence was the leadership gap among Pashtuns. This gap started appearing in the beginning and during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The well-known and respected tribal leaders migrated to other countries during the so called period of jihad against the Soviet Union. The young and extremist Taliban started taking matters in their hands by searching for solutions in their interpretation of religious scripts by the help of mullahs.

From the beginning of the movement, the religious and political motives of Taliban were enough clear, for instance, implementation of sharia, replacing the government structure with an Islamic Emirate, preserving conservative values of Islam and traditional tribal way of life etc. As Mawlawi Abdul Salam Zaeef claims in his book- My life with Taliban- “No written articles of association, no logo and no name for the movement was agreed on or established during the meeting. The sharia would be our guiding law and would be implemented by us. We would prosecute vice and foster virtue, and would stop those who were bleeding the land. Soon after the meeting, we

7Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef was the Afghan ambassador to Pakistan before the US invasion of Afghanistan. He was detained in Pakistan in the fall of 2001 and held until 2005 in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp
established our own checkpoint at Hawz-e Mudat along the Herat-Kandahar highway, and we immediately began to implement the sharia in the surrounding area.”

One of the political motives was to call for a “Loya Jirga” after their gaining power and authority, but Taliban were not able to keep their promise. Considering the value and respect to the decision of Loya Jirga, most of the Pashtun tribal leaders and warlords refused to fight against Taliban, because they believed that there will be a Jirga deciding the future leadership of the country. The reason why Taliban were not able to call for the above mentioned Jirga was their engagement in continuous war.

Even if there were certain periods when movements inspired by liberal ideas and modernism were cherished in Afghanistan’s history, but the society always appreciated conservative way of life for historical and cultural reasons. People started believing in Taliban because of the same reasons, until certain changes appeared in their behavior, such as forcing people to pray five times a day, forcing them to grow beard, shutting down the girls’ school and refusing the participation of female in social activities, denial of basic Human Rights etc.

Despite the mentioned facts, Taliban started spreading very fast in the country. By 1995 they captured the western city of Herat and soon after in 1996, they occupied the capital Kabul. This rapid progress was possible by the help and assistance of ISI and the Arab financial aids channeled to Taliban through ISI.

In the beginning it looked like an independent movement, but later Osama bin Laden and his philosophy of “Global Jihad” started influencing Mullah Omar and other high ranking commanders of Taliban. Soon young jihadists started coming from Arab countries, among which, like Osama himself, there were some sons of rich Arab sheikhs too. These wealthy Arab jihadists were also a major financial source for Taliban. By capturing Kabul, the whole picture of Taliban started changing. Anarchy started ruling the country, atrocities such as public executions, detentions, closing female educational centers, abuse of fundamental human rights, especially women

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8 Abdul Salam Zaeef “My life with Taliban” page 65, Columbia University Press, 2010
9 The assembly of elders where decisions are made by consensus.
10 Osama bin Laden (10 March 1957 – 2 May 2011) was the founder of al-Qaeda, the Sunni militant Islamist organization that claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks on the United States, along with numerous other mass-casualty attacks against civilian and military targets.
rights, burning down the television and radio stations and forced prayers were a part of everyday life.

1.2. A look into the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ran by Taliban under the absolute authority of Amir al-Mu'minin Mullah Mohammad Omar. Mullah Mohammad Rabbani the President of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and foreign minister Mullah Mohammad Ghaus were also influential figures in decision making, but later, there were disagreements between Mullah Omar and Mullah Rabbani over the protection of Osama bin Laden by Taliban. Mullah Rabbani was considered a moderate and willing to negotiate with other factions.

Taliban controlled about a 90 percent territory, but were never able to bring all the country under a single authority. They did not have any constitution and cases were handled in local sharia courts. They were mainly focused on imposing sharia law and conservative way of life, so it neglected the basic state functioning institutions. There was a clear lack of will to establish a functioning government. Every decision made by the leadership was followed without questioning. An absolute authoritarianism was ruling the country. New ministries were established, such as Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which was responsible to control the people and force them to follow the sharia. They had religious police, which had the authority to prosecute on spot.

Ad hoc primary judicial systems were established based on Taliban’s interpretation of Islamic law. Murderers were subjected to public executions and thieves had their hands chopped off. Adulterers were stoned to death. The mullah of a village or an influential tribal leader, who claimed to have received some Islamic knowledge, would not hesitate to subject a suspect to death. Despite the cruel forms of sharia law implementation in judicial issues, they still enjoy the support of almost one third of the rural population, especially in tribal areas.

11 Leader of the faithful
The government established by Taliban was recognized only by three nations worldwide, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. However, there were some meetings between Taliban and delegations of some countries, but those never recognized the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as a government. Taliban were lacking clear foreign policy, with only one embassy and two consulates in Pakistan; one in Peshawar and another one in Quetta. The government was struggling to establish foreign relations with some of the neighboring countries, but their being engaged in war did not give them enough time to do so. On the other hand, the absence of diplomats and foreign policy makers in the ministry of foreign affairs was another reason, because the majority of the staff left the country during the civil wars.

The educational system was totally changed. Teachers were forced to grow beard and wear turbans. Subjects of modern sciences, like biology, chemistry etc., were degraded or replaced by religious scripts. Female students were totally deprived from their right to education and girls’ schools were closed. They referred to misinterpreted religious scripts to justify their denial of female education.

Cultural heritages were destroyed and demolished. Taliban continued to destroying all statues in the country, including two massive and ancient Budhas in Bamyan province, dating from the third and fifth centuries A.D., which tower 53 meters and 36 meters and were carved into sandstone cliffs. The Budhas which were the largest standing Budha statues in the world were demolished in March 2001 by the government of Taliban. These cultural and historic relics and monuments of Afghanistan were a part of the common heritage of mankind. The Taliban were erasing the historical and cultural heritage of Afghanistan despite the national and international massive outcry. Burning books and looting the National Gallery of Afghanistan were other tragic incidents caused by religiously and politically motivated actions against cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

In short, the country was lacking all the basic infrastructures. Religious scholars were appointed as ministers in key ministries such as interior, foreign affairs, finance and defense. The solution for each and every problem was searched in religious scripts. Some of the infrastructures were destroyed in civil wars and some of them by Taliban during their rule.

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12 A province in central Afghanistan
1.3. Pakistan’s role in Afghan insurgency

Pakistan and Afghanistan have a long hostile political history. There are several reasons why Pakistan wants to have an important role in political changes in the region. The major reasons are; the Durand line\textsuperscript{13}, Afghanistan’s good relations with India, Pakistan’s economic interests and the desire of Pakistan to have an influential role in regional, political and economic policies. The fact that Pakistan can play a crucial and important role in solving the problem of insurgency in the region is undeniable.

Pakistan started attracting the attention of the United States during the cold war. The financial and facilitating support of United States and other Arab countries were channeled to the Mujahideen through the ISI of Pakistan. Peshawar, a major city during the afghan insurgency is located in Pakistan, where most of the afghan political parties were found.

Afghanistan shares a 2430 km border with Pakistan, which is signed by the disputed and porous Durand line. The Durand line plays a crucial role from the geopolitical point of view, especially in tackling the Taliban insurgency. Afghanistan suffered from the Durand line tensions over the past three decades. Time to time, the border areas in eastern Afghanistan are shelled by Pakistani army, which raises diplomatic tension between two countries. The Pakistani army claims that they were shelling on terrorists in Pakistani territory.

Most of the suicide and other terrorist attacks of Taliban are planned and executed from Pakistan. Hamid Gul, The former director general of ISI openly supports Taliban by stating; “we must continue to have good linkages with Taliban, it is in Pakistan’s national interest”\textsuperscript{14}. Pakistan openly supported well-known terrorist organizations like the Haqqani network\textsuperscript{15} and a number of other domestic and transnational organizations, which have safe havens in Pakistani soil. Pakistan is often connected with state sponsored terrorism.

\textsuperscript{13}A border line between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was established after an agreement in 1893 between Mortimer Durand of British India and Afghan Amir AbdurRahman khan.
\textsuperscript{14} Secret Pakistan: “BACKLASH” a BBC Documentary
\textsuperscript{15} The Haqqani network is an Islamist insurgent group using asymmetric warfare to fight against US-led NATO forces and the government of Afghanistan.
The Afghan government has repeatedly accused Pakistan of not only providing safe havens to the Taliban but also helping them in order to make its presence felt. President Hamed Karzai and the afghan intelligence agency officials often insisted that cutting the roots of insurgency and their sources of funding in Pakistan would help in fight against terrorism, but the Pakistani government always denied the allegations by saying that destabilized Afghanistan will negatively affect Pakistan which is not in their political and economic interest.

According to an article publish by Robert Kaplan in New York Times “The Taliban has two leadership cells operating inside Pakistan, presumably with the guidance and logistical support of local authorities. Senior lieutenants to Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban’s supreme leader, are ensconced in Quetta, the capital of the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. From there they direct military operations in the south-central Afghan provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul. Meanwhile, one of the Taliban’s savviest military commanders, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and his sons operate out of Miramshah, the capital of the North Waziristan Province. From there, they run operations in Kabul and the eastern Afghan regions of Khost, Logar, Paktia and Paktika”16.

The Taliban leadership cells in Pakistan are known to everyone, even the Pakistani officials does not deny these facts. The question is; why they are not able to find them out and try them in court? Why Pakistan is ready to accept the blames of international community and does not take a serious action against Taliban? Supporting and protecting insurgents in border area with Afghanistan is in their interest. Pakistan would not like to have a stable, developed and secure Afghanistan as a neighbor state.

The other reason out of several is that Pakistan enjoys the flow of millions of dollars from the United States and its allies for the fight against terrorism, which will stop if the real problem – insurgency– will not be there anymore. Pakistan needs to feed the insurgency in border areas with Afghanistan, to use it whenever they want for forcing Afghanistan to accept certain deals, such as the issue of Durand Line and giving up on good relations with India.

1.4. The Afghan Northern Alliance and Taliban

The Afghan Northern Alliance, officially known as The United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan was formed after Taliban took over Kabul in 1996. The Northern Alliance led by late Ahmad Shah Massoud17 was formed in late 1990s. While studying at Kabul University, Massoud became involved with the Sazman-iJawanan-iMuslum (Organization of Muslim Youth), the student branch of the Jamiat-e IslamiAfghanistan18, which was founded by BurhanuddinRabbani19 and had close ties with Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan. In early 1970s Ahmad Shah Massoud left his studies and joined the Jamiat-e IslamiAfghanistan.

Massoud fought against the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989 and in the following years of civil war. He had the experience of guerilla fights since his first attack on the forces of the President Sardar Mohammad Daud khan20 in 1975 in Panjshir21 valley. The young and charismatic personality of Massoud with his ability of using modern military facilities and tactics attracted the attention of the world to the cause of Mujahideen. The period of Jihad against Russians made him one of the most innovative and skillful among the Mujahideen commanders. He was able to use media as a powerful tool to communicate with the west and the rest of the world.

Northern Alliance was mainly composed of ethnic minorities like Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras, mostly living in northern region of the country. The main reason why different ethnicities came together -which is rare in Afghanistan- was the common threat they were facing from the side of Taliban and other Muslim fundamentalist movements rising alongside Taliban in the country, like the Salafis and Wahhabis. The main ally to Massoud was General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who is a former army general, founder and chairman of Junbish-e Milli-e Islami-e Afghanistan (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) and the leader of the Afghanistan’s Uzbek Community. Some Pashtun influential tribal leaders living in eastern region of

17 Afghan political and military leader, who was a central figure in resistance against Taliban. He was assassinated on September 9, 2001.
18 Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan (جمعیت اسلامی افغانستان), is a Muslim political party in Afghanistan. Jamiat-e Islami means "Islamic society" in the Persian.
19 BurhanuddinRabbani- President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996 and served as a temporary President from November to December 20, 2001
20 Prime Minister of Afghanistan from 1953 to 1963 and later became the President of Afghanistan.
21 The Panjshir Valley (دره پنجشیر) is a valley in north-central Afghanistan, 150 km north of Kabul, near the Hindu Kush mountain range.
Afghanistan, such as Abdul Haq, a mujahideen commander, who fought against the Soviets and Afghan communists during the Soviet-Afghan War and Abdul Qadeer, a powerful Pashtun leader who was the head of Eastern Afghanistan Shura and later Vice President of Hamid Karzai from late 2001 until his assassination in 2002, also joined the Northern alliance in order to stop the atrocities committed by Taliban and to form a coalition government. This alliance was the main and most powerful force stopping Taliban from progressing toward north.

Besides enjoying support of some European countries like France, Massoud was also supported by Russia and Tajikistan. “In July 1998, the Taliban launched major new offensives against the north, taking Taluqan from Massoud in the east and Mazar-i-Sharif from Dostum. In the latter city they revenged their earlier disaster by slaughtering every Hazara they could get their hands on, up to six thousand. They also killed nine Iranian diplomats in a consulate, prompting Iran to mass seventy thousand troops on the Afghan border. Late in the year, Massoud retook Taluqan, whose airfield was important for arms he was now receiving from Tajikistan and Russia, but he had to relinquish it again when another Taliban thrust came from Kunduz.”

Surprisingly, Pakistan was also one of the major supporters of Massoud during the period of Jihad against the Soviet occupation. Like money other Mujahideen leaders living in Pakistan, he also was living and being trained in Pakistan, alongside Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and others. After when Sardaar Daoud started cracking down the Islamists who were campaigning and organizing rally’s against Daoud, most of the members of the Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan fled to Pakistan, among whom Ahmad Shah Massoud, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and professor Rabbani were the key figures.

After arriving to Pakistan, these key members of Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan had a particular attention of the Pakistani army and ISI. The sources reveals that; “Hekmatyar created his own organization, Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan (The Islamic Party of Afghanistan), composed primarily of ethnic Pashtuns and he forged close

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22 Stephen Tanner[2003], Afghanistan-A military history from Alexander the Great to the war against the Taliban-Updated version. Da Capopress, (page 285)
23 Ethnically Pashtun, the founder and active leader of the Hezb-e Islami political party, and a designated “global terrorist” by the United States
relations with ISI. Massoud stuck back by Rabbani in Jamiat-e Islami (Islamic Society) which was made up mostly of ethnic Tajiks”

Later, time to time, there were clashes between the armed forces of Massoud and Hekmatyar’s forces. They became sworn enemies of each other during the civil war. Hekmatyar recognized Massoud as his most formidable rival and began to attack each other in Kabul. After the fall of Kabul to the hands of Taliban, both of them, Hekmatyar and Massoud found themselves facing the same enemy. Taliban did not have good relations with Hekmatyar neither, but apparently they considered the northern alliance and Massoud their real enemy in Afghanistan. Massoud was enjoying the military support from outside and he also had the supports of his people, mainly Tajiks, inside the country.

“Massoud was at war with Taliban. The United States declared a policy of strict neutrality in that war. The White House also wanted to ensure that the CIA’s counterterrorism mission to the Panjshir Valley did not become some kind of a Trojan horse strategy for a rouge CIA effort to boost Massoud’s strength and capability in his battles against the Taliban. Clinton said he was prepared to work with Massoud on intelligence operations, despite his record of brutality, but he was not ready to arm the Northern Alliance.”

Massoud was trying to build good relations with CIA, which he was able to do so to an extent, but he was frustrated by the policies of CIA. USA did not like that Massoud’s men were engaged in smuggling large quantities of opium to Europe and other countries, that was one the reasons why CIA was hesitating to support Massoud openly. He strongly believed that the real danger is the Taliban, their Arab volunteers and the Pakistani intelligence, but United States did not take him serious enough to support him openly against Taliban and ISI.

By Massoud himself and some moderate Taliban leaders, some efforts had been made to reach a deal. They held meetings twice and exchanged talks on walky-talkies several times, but it did not result in finding a common ground for resolving the ongoing conflict between Taliban and Northern Alliance.

Massoud was assassinated in September 9, 2001 by two Arab suicide attackers who introduced themselves as journalists at KhwajaBahauddin, in Takhar Province in northeastern Afghanistan. Some analysts believe that Osama bin Laden himself ordered the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud to help his Taliban protectors and ensure that he would have their co-operation in Afghanistan. It was believed to be a favor that Osama Bin Laden did to the Taliban leadership. “The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Abdul RasulSayyaf, an Afghan Wahhabi Islamist, have also been mentioned as possible organizers or collaborators of the Massoud assassins.”

Sayyaf was also one of the candidates of the presidential elections in Afghanistan, which were held in April of 2014.

25 Anderson, Jon Lee (Jun 10, 2002), The assassins, The New Yorker. (page 72)
2. USA and NATO intervention in Afghanistan

Not handing over *Osama* to United States was one of the biggest mistakes which Taliban did. However, Taliban also had some legitimate suggestions and proposals to the United States which were all rejected. The intervention would not happen if Taliban leadership and United States would find a common ground in discussions over *Osama*. There were some disagreements among senior Taliban about *Osama’s* handing over. Some of them wanted to persuade *Mullah Omar*, but it didn’t work.

As mentioned earlier, Osama was one of the important financial sources for Taliban and they did not want to lose him in a crucial time of tightened sanctions from the rest of the countries. The issue of Osama was under discussion with Taliban from a long time. America always insisted that *Osama bin Laden* should be handed over or driven out from the territory of Afghanistan.

United States was blaming *Osama* for Attacks on their embassies in *Nairobi* and *Tanzania*, but the Taliban leadership wanted proofs and evidence which was not provided. As *MawaliZaeef* also mentioned in his book, three main solutions were provided by Taliban; firstly, America should provide evidence of Nairobi and Tanzania bombings against Osama and then he will be tried in Supreme Court of Afghanistan. Secondly, Emirate suggests that a new court be formed, chaired by the Attorney Generals of three Islamic countries, proceedings of which would be held in a fourth Islamic country. America would be able to present its evidence in this court and make its case against *Osama bin Laden*. Afghanistan will be a partner of the court and will ensure that Osama is present at the trial and stands to answer any questions and defend himself against any allegations. And thirdly, Taliban offered that they will curb all activities of Osama, strip him out of his all communication equipment so that his outreach will be limited to his immediate refugee life here in Afghanistan, and the Emirate will ensure that he does not use its territory for any activity directed against another country.26

The joint court of United States of America and some Islamic countries or seeking a trial at the international court of Hague were some other possible solutions

26 Abdul Salam Zaeef “*My life with Taliban*”, Columbia University Press, 2010 (page 136)
which were not discussed seriously, because America was not wishing to cooperate and was relying on forcing their demands unconditionally.

After the September 11 attacks, the United States recognized *Osama Bin Laden* as their instigator. According to some sources, at the time, *Osama* was residing in Afghanistan. The Taliban government refused to give *Bin Laden*. Afghans had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks. It was planned and executed by Arab fundamentalists. In fact, none of the hijackers was an Afghan citizen. The people of Afghanistan and even the Taliban leadership heard the news of attacks through the media. It clearly shows that the Emirate of Afghanistan was not involved in the agenda of *Osama* to attack the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

As *Geroge W. Bush* stated in his Address to the Nation speech; “More than 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world. More than two weeks ago, I gave Taliban leaders a series of clear and specific demands: Close terrorist training camps; hand over leaders of the al Qaeda network; and return all foreign nationals, including American citizens, unjustly detained in your country. None of these demands were met. And now the Taliban will pay a price.”

Pakistan was one of those 40 countries mentioned by G. W. Bush and United States concentrated on talks with Pakistan instead of Afghanistan. After the intervention started, Pakistan played a major role in capturing and handing over some of the key figures of Taliban regime. As the supporters of Taliban, they knew where they are and had the exact information of their movements. In return, United States paid millions of dollars to Pakistani authorities, especially to ISI for the help they provided in capturing Al-Qaida members and Taliban.

There were difference of ideas regarding who will lead the operations in Afghanistan, but CIA took the leading role, because of the experience the agency had dealing with Afghans during the Afghan-Soviet war. The United States started the preparing for the longest war in the history of the United States which began under the

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27George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001

It consisted primarily of U.S. air-strikes on Taliban and Al Qaeda forces, facilitated by the cooperation between small numbers (about 1,000) of U.S. special operations forces. The purpose of these operations was to weaken the Taliban and permit the Northern Alliance and Pashtun anti-Taliban forces to overtake Taliban and allied forces. Some U.S. ground units (about 1,300 Marines) moved into Afghanistan to pressure the Taliban around Kandahar at the height of the fighting (October-December 2001), but there were few pitched battles between U.S. and Taliban soldiers. Some critics believe that U.S. dependence on local Afghan militia forces in the war strengthened them and set back post-war democracy building efforts.”^28

Soon after the intervention by the United States and NATO forces, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan falls apart and Taliban lose the control of the strategic provinces like Balkh and Kunduz in north of Afghanistan. United States forces and NATO was supporting Northern Alliance by air attacks and providing intelligence. The remaining Taliban fled to the border area near to Pakistan and entered the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas of Pakistan.

“What had been the Taliban government quickly disintegrated. Slowly three groups reconstituted themselves – one led by the veteran anti-Soviet fighter and brilliant tactician, former Minister of Border Affairs in the Taliban government, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and the other a loose grouping based in Quetta, Pakistan what later would be called the Quetta Shura with Mullah Omar as leader. A third group slowly realigned itself with the Taliban, that of the particularly oppressive fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (the Hizb-i-Islami or the HIA). These three groups remain independent today, belying the silly notion of a unified resistance.”^29

Beside the above mentioned groups, mostly combined of Afghans, another militant group started shaping. This Militant group is called “Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan”, which is now one of the major and significant threats to the security and political stability of Pakistan.

3. TTP (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan)

*Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan* officially announced their existence in 2007. TTP was formed by the young holy warriors who fled Afghanistan together with *Osama bin Laden* after the US and NATO intervention of Afghanistan. “Thousands of Al-Qaeda and Taliban were allowed to settle in Waziristan, create bases, and restart military operations. Jalaluddin Haqqani, the former Taliban minister, became the key organizer by hiring *Federally Administered Tribal Areas* (FATA) tribesmen to provide sanctuary or safe passage out of the region. Young Mahsud and Wazir tribesmen who had guided Al Qaeda out of *Tora Bora* became rich as they provided logistical services for a price. Within a few years these guides become commanders of the armed groups that emerged as the Pakistani Taliban.”

These young tribesmen who were familiar with the language -*Pashtu*- and also had a good knowledge of the geography of the area, proved to be useful for Al-Qaida and other Islamic militant groups who were searching for a safe haven. Despite the language and the religion, there is another factor which links the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban together; the common culture and values such as Pashtunwali. The Pashtuns on both side of the Durand-line adhere and respect this unwritten code of ethics equally. Throughout the history, there were no major clashes between the government of Pakistan and the tribal areas. The insurgency started after the incursion of the Pakistani army into the tribal areas to hunt down the militants of Al-Qaida.

There was a change in the policy toward Taliban after Pakistan joined the “War on terror”. Taliban paid a big price for believing in Pakistan, because after the US intervention, the ISI totally abandoned the Taliban leaders and handed them over to US army for interrogations. This fact also angered some sympathizers of Taliban living in the tribal areas. A kind of solidarity started shaping for the Taliban who escaped the drone attacks and for those Al-Qaida members who were seeking for refuge.

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30 Ahmed Rashid [2008], *Descent into chaos- The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. Viking, Published by the Penguin group (page 268)
3.1. Establishment of TTP

The strategic location where the formation of TTP began has a significant importance in geo-political point of view. FATA is located between the Afghanistan and Pakistan. The area is consisted of seven main political agencies; Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan. As mentioned above, these agencies are exclusively inhabitant by Pashtuns.

The tribal groups started taking control of the areas by suppressing and killing some rival elders of the tribes, who were against their cause or believes. These actions were taken only to have more control on the region and tribesmen. When they started having control of some of the territory, they used the same methods of Afghan Taliban.

TTP forced people to obey the Islamic principles which they preached. The US missile attacks on the tribal areas was an excuse enough good for Taliban to use it for encouraging other to standby them. The significant and turning point was a US missile attack on a madrasa which killed about eighty people in Bajaur agency in October of 2006. This attack raised a kind of fear and a need for self-protection which was felt among several militant groups in the area.

There were talks between the government of Pakistan and tribal leaders prior to the formation of TTP for instance “between 2004 and 2006, the Pakistani central government entered into a series of peace agreements with various local Taliban factions belonging to Wazir tribes: the Shakai peace agreement with AhmadzaiWazir (April 2004), the Sararogha peace agreement with BaitullahMehsud (February 2005), and the North Waziristan agreement with UthmanzaiWazir (September 2006). The terms of these agreements were generally that the tribes would not provide sanctuary to foreign militants; they would cease all cross-border armed activity in Afghanistan and militancy in settled districts of NWFP (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), and would accept the writ of the government. None of these peace deals lasted long and were, in fact, quite often breached. This resulted in the gradual spread of the Taliban and their ideology through the tribal areas and NWFP.”

Meanwhile the government in Afghanistan was not happy with the on-going situation. President Karzai was accusing General Musharraf\(^{32}\) for signing deals with terrorists. “Musharraf’s most vocal critic was Karzai, in the United States for the UN General Assembly, both men fought a bruising battle, each heaping abuse on the other in media interviews when Bush attempted to heal the rift between the two men by hosting a dinner for both of them at the White House, they refused to shake each other’s hand. The dinner failed as Karzai again insisted that Musharraf arrest Taliban leaders living in Pakistan and stop striking deals with terrorists, while Bush refused to take sides.”\(^{33}\)

On 14 December 2007, an infamous Pashtun tribal leader called Baitullah Mehsud\(^{34}\), from the South Waziristan Agency who also signed the above mentioned Sararogha agreement with the government of Pakistan, announced the formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It was an alliance of about five militant groups active in tribal areas of Pakistan. The main goal of the group was to target the American and NATO forces in Afghanistan and attack Pakistani army in Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Mehsud was involved in activities of Taliban in Afghanistan from his early age. He had good relations with some key senior members of Afghan Taliban.

The structure of TTP is very complicated and unorganized. There is a clear difference between Afghan Taliban and TTP. It is true that some of the TTP members were fighting alongside the Afghan Taliban, but still, they consider themselves independent. Their structure is more tribal, than organizational. “Every tribe has its own Taliban factions that operate independent of the other. Also, Taliban militants of one tribe do not operate on the territory of the other tribe, which is the exclusive domain of that tribe only. Nevertheless, the Taliban of each tribe has adopted similar policies and methods of collecting revenues, and some Taliban tribal factions are allowed to cross the tribal territories of other factions to reach areas of combat.”\(^{35}\)

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\(^{32}\)Pervez Musharraf is a retired four-star general and a Pakistani politician who seized power through a military coup d’état in 1999. He served as the tenth President of Pakistan from 2001 until 2008.

\(^{33}\)Ahmed Rashid [2008], *Descent into chaos* - The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Viking, Published by the Penguin group (page 278)

\(^{34}\)He was as a leading militant in Waziristan, killed in a US missile strike on 5 August 2009.


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Sometimes, they cross the Duran-line, enter the territory of Afghanistan and execute Afghan citizens accusing them of being a spy to Americans or working for the Afghan government. They have some affiliates in bordering provinces of Afghanistan who provide them with havens if needed.

“The emergence and consolidation of the Pakistani Taliban in FATA occurred when the Pakistani military were fighting “foreign” (i.e., non-Pakistani) Taliban elements and, in the process, ignored the transition of the indigenous elements from being only Taliban sympathizers to becoming their active supporters during 2001–07. The Taliban creatively made space for themselves to establish their authority in these areas of Pakistan by periodically engaging in military attacks while, at other times, cutting deals with the Pakistani government to forestall doing so.”\(^{36}\)

“The TTP is a decentralized network-like structural organization that has a limited hierarchical nature in the form of a central body (shura) and a president (emir); however, most decisions appear to be made at the local level. Each agency has a commander, a sub-commander, and leaders at the village and town levels. Lastly, recruitment and participation can be explained through a variety of factors: offering young men access to social networks and economic and financial incentives in return for volunteering; abducting male teenagers from villages or coercing people into enlisting; and joining the Pakistani Taliban to avenge the deaths of family members or as a reaction to the Pakistani Army’s abusive and heavy-handed behavior.”\(^{37}\)

The current leader or so called Amir of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan is named Maulana Fazlullah, meanwhile, he is also the leader of Tehreek-e Naqaz-e Shariat-e Mohammadi (TNSM; English: Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law), a banned Pakistani Islamic fundamentalist militant group allied to the Pakistani Taliban. He belongs to the Valley of Swat. He succeeded Hakimullah Mehsud, the brother of Baitullah Mehsud who was killed in a U.S. drone strike a week prior. At the time, Fazlullah was enjoying a wide local support.

“Maulana Fazlullah, a cleric who has the support of more than 4,500 armed volunteers, set up a parallel government in 59 villages in the region by establishing Islamic

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\(^{37}\) Shehzad H. Qazi, ISPU Research Associate, *An extended profile of the Pakistani Taliban*, institute for social policy and understanding.
courts.”  

Fazlullah was behind the shootings which targeted Malala Yosufzai in October of 2012. The shooting of Malala Yousafzai sparked outrage in Pakistan and across the globe. The teenager had spoken out against the Taliban’s restrictions on girls’ education.

The fact that more than a dozen of militant groups are active in the region makes it more difficult to define the true nature of their agenda. The time to time changes in their leadership shows that they lack a single and stable leadership. However, they always express their strong enmity against the Pakistani army and NATO forces.

Another major Taliban group called Tehrik-e Taliban Punjab is also raising. The Tehrik is consisted of the militant groups which are banned in Pakistan. The banned militant groups supported the cause of Kashmir, a disputed territory administered by India that is claimed by Pakistan. Tehrik-e Taliban Punjab also developed strong connections with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups with whom they share the same cause; insurgency in the name of Islam.

3.2. Relations of TTP with Afghan Talibans

The Afghan Talibans and TTP have very less in common. The political and religious motives of both groups differ widely from each other’s. The fact that the both groups are Pashtun, it does not affect their goals. It is difficult to refer to them as similar groups, but meanwhile they are. Historical background of their establishment is an ostensible difference between two groups. The Afghan Talibans never accepted having any important and remarkable connections with TTP, but they show their sympathy time to time.

The Pakistani Talibans mainly is consisted of Salafis, which again is another reason why the Afghan Talibans and Pakistani Talibans cannot be defined as similar groups. The majority in both groups are Pashtuns, that’s why they attract tribesmen from the same regions bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pakistani Talibans is more welcoming in recruitments of foreign insurgents than the Afghan Talibans. The

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40Salafis a sect of Sunni Islam which stands close to Wahhabis. They believe in their own interpretations of Islamic scripts with a strict approach to Islam itself.
Afghan Taliban mostly prefers to stay indigenous. TTP claims to be a part of the larger Taliban movement on both sides of the border, but maintain to have a separate structure.

A brief chronicle approach will help to understand the complicated relations between the two militant insurgent groups. The relations after the establishment of TTP are more significant than earlier connections between the Afghan Taliban and TTP. In 2007, one of the prominent leaders and defense minister of Afghan Taliban was captured by Pakistani army, but later he was released in exchange for Pakistani soldiers who were in custody of Baitullah Mehsud. In March of the same year, Ustad Yasser (teacher Yasser), a famous Afghan Taliban senior - who was fluent in Arabic - , was also captured by the Pakistani army, but this time, they released him in exchange for an Italian journalist who was kidnapped by Taliban in Afghanistan. Later in 2009, Yasser was arrested again by Pakistani army and killed in a mysterious way.41

Following the increasing number of attacks against civilians, mosques and markets in Pakistan in 2007-2009, the Afghan Taliban asked their Pakistani counterparts not to carry out attacks in Pakistan and instead focus on “jihad” in Afghanistan. When the attacks continued, the Afghan Taliban reportedly announced the expulsion of Baitullah Mehsud from their fold, although they later denied this.42

2008 was the year when TTP conducted strong attacks on Pakistani security forces and Mullah Mohammad Omar, the leader of Afghan Taliban asked them not to target the Pakistani forces, but instead, focus on attacks on NATO and American forces in Afghanistan. This call of Mullah Omar on PTT was accepted to an extent, which shows their collaboration and the respect that TTP seniors have for Mullah Omar.

In 2009, the attacks of the Pakistan army forced Maulana Fazlullah to flee from Swat Valley, crossed the border and sought refuge with the Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan. According to some sources, after he was appointed the head of TTP, he returned to Pakistan tribal areas in December of 2013, following the death of Hakimullah Mehsud in November of the same year. According to an article published in Express Tribune News Network, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) – a banned conglomerate of dozens of militant outfits – has admitted for the first time that they are

41 Article published by Hamid Mir, last published in alarabiya.net on 12 September 313 Source: http://urdu.alarabiya.net/ur/pakistan/2013/09/12/.html
42 Personal interview, Rahimullah Yusufzai, January 2012
using the Afghan soil as a springboard for launching attacks on Pakistani security forces. However, the claims were always rejected by the Afghan intelligence officials.

Some recent incidents show the decentralized structure of Taliban on both sides of the Durand-line. Clash occurred between TTP and Afghan Taliban in Kunar province of Afghanistan adjacent to the Pakistan border. According to the BBC News report, an eye witness claimed that heavily armed Afghan Taliban had attacked Pakistani militant bases two days ago. They said that three Pakistani militant commanders were killed while others were injured. Sources have said that Mullah Fazlullah aka ‘Mullah Radio’ was killed in the clash but the Taliban are denying this claim.

Taliban sources confirmed that the clash had occurred and said that no Swat Taliban leader or militant had been killed; stressing that Fazlullah had not been harmed in the clash. Clashes between the factions of Taliban are more common in recent years. Most of the clashes have roots in religious sectarianism. TTP is an umbrella organization for other militant groups, so such incidents are often expected. Besides religious sectarianism, the financial revenues and territorial claims of the militant groups are the other reasons of dispute among the factions of TTP.

The most recent incident took place in Afghanistan this year. It was Friday, 4th of April 2014, coinciding the day of elections. Afghan people were preparing to go to voting polls and cast their votes for electing their new president. TTP planned to attack some of the polling centers near the Durand-line in territory of Afghanistan, but surprisingly, they faced the resistance of Afghan Taliban of the area. Afghan officials said the incident took place in Wana district of Paktika province. The Pakistani Taliban militants were looking to storm the election sites in Paktika; however Afghan Taliban militants opposed with them which erupted heavy gun battle between the two sides. In the meantime, defense ministry spokesman Gen. ZahirAzimi said at least three Pakistani Taliban militants were killed along with an Afghan Taliban militant during the clashes. Several Pakistani Taliban militants were forced to flee the area and return back to the other side of the Durandline.

44 http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/pakistan/2013/10/131010_pakistan_afghani_taliban_clash_tk.shtml
4. Peace talks with the Taliban

"All governments play double games with us. In the name of peace talks, they deceived us and killed our people. We are one hundred percent sure that Pakistan fully supports the United States in its drone strikes."

The statement above belongs to ShahidullahShahid, a Taliban spokesman. It is clear from the attitude of Taliban that they don’t believe in peace talks anymore, neither with Pakistan nor Afghanistan. United State could play a significant role in peace talks, but the White House administration gives the lead to Pakistani authorities, not even giving enough consideration to the role of Afghanistan in the process.

Afghanistan sacrificed more than Pakistan for the success of the talks. Establishing of the Afghan High Peace Council appointed by President Hamid Karzai himself was an honest and significant effort toward achieving peace and stability.

Talks in Afghanistan

The initiative for peace talks in Afghanistan started in 2005. Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) launched. The main focus of APRP was on offering mid-to low-level fighters’ incentives to rejoin society is similar to many previous reintegration programs in Afghanistan and reintegration initiatives in other countries such as Sierra Leone and Aceh province in Indonesia. Where it fundamentally differs from these other country contexts is that it will be implemented in the absence of a peace agreement or a disarmament process agreed upon by major parties to the conflict. While APRP presents a comprehensive plan for reintegration that could have significant positive impacts in a post-conflict setting, the fact that Afghanistan is in the midst of an escalating conflict renders many of these activities extremely risky.46

In 2010 The Afghanistan High Peace Council was formed to initiate peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Programme (APRP). The Afghanistan High Peace Council is a body of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program to negotiate with elements of the Taliban. The former president BurhanuddinRabbani was selected as the chairmen of the council alongside some former Taliban seniors. Rabbani was assassinated by Taliban

46Oxfam International, Reintegration Briefing Note, May 2010
suicide attackers in his guesthouse on 20 September 2011. Later, his son, Salahuddin Rabbani was appointed in his place, who was the ambassador of Afghanistan to Turkey.

An investigative delegation established by Afghan President Hamid Karzai said evidence and a confession provided by a man involved in Rabbani's killing had revealed that the bomber was Pakistani and the assassination had been plotted in Pakistan. “The so-called evidence given to the Pakistan embassy in Kabul is actually a confessional statement of an Afghan national, Hamidullah Akundzadeh, accused of masterminding the assassination,” Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.47

The incident mentioned above is considered one of the turning points in peace talks with Taliban. Afghan officials lashed out at Islamabad over the killing, saying it was planned in Pakistan and carried out by a Pakistani suicide bomber. Later, the Afghan National Directorate of Intelligence blamed the Shura of Quetta for the assassination. It proved that the lack of harmony among the countries on both sides of Durand-line will be the cause of failure of peace talks. The non-cooperation of the involved countries is not the only reason of failed talks. The lack of responsible and credible leadership among Taliban is a major obstacle.

In February of 2012, the third annual Pakistan–Afghanistan–Iran trilateral summit called for an Afghan-led peace initiative free of foreign intervention. Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan held a two-day summit on counter terrorism in Islamabad on February 1-17, 2012. President Asif Ali Zardari, President Hamid Karzai and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad attended the summit. The three neighboring countries decided to ensure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of regional states and agreed to commence a process for an agreement pledging not to allow any threat emanating from their respective territories against each other.48

June 2012. The Taliban dispatches officials to track II meetings in Paris and Kyoto. The Kyoto meeting is also attended by Masood Stanekzai from the Afghan High Peace Council.49

47http://en.ria.ru/world/20111003/167345267.html
48 Pakistan-Afghanistan parliamentarians’ Dialogue-VII, December 11-12, 2012; Islamabad
49Ananta Aspen Center- Delhi Policy Group, Afghanistan Task force Report
December 2012, launch of Peace process roadmap to 2015. According to which, “By 2015, Taliban, Hizb-e-Islami and other armed groups will have given up armed oppositions transformed from military entities into political groups, and are actively participating in the country’s political and constitutional process, including national elections. Afghanistan’s political system remains inclusive, democratic and equitable, where all political actors co-exist and promote their political goals and aspirations peacefully under the constitution. 50

Inside Afghanistan, the ideas are widely divided when it comes to deal with the Taliban. The Karzai administration concentrate on peace talks with Taliban, but the opposition groups, mainly the Northern Alliance is not agree. The Northern Alliance and a big number of the population consider Taliban as their enemy number one and want to see them defeated. Some politicians and lawmakers accused Karzai of treason, because he calls Taliban his “brothers”.

Talks in Pakistan

The TTP began as a coalition of scores of militant groups, and the numbers have grown since then. In Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, security officials count at least four separate operating TTP outfits. In last May's elections, Pakistan's two leading political parties campaigned on a platform of peace talks. Afterwards, all major parties threw their weight behind negotiations, which Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has called the “last chance” for the TTP.51

The series of agreement TTP signed with the government of Pakistan;

April 2004. The Shakai Peace Agreement between the Taliban loyalist Nek Muhammad Wazir and the Pakistani government. In exchange for releasing insurgent prisoners and paying compensation to tribesmen for property damage as a result of its military operations, Nek Muhammad agreed to register foreign militants and stop cross-border attacks into Afghanistan. The agreement was signed by BaitullahMehsud and members of the local jirga. On June 11 2004, the military operation was re-launched.

51 http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2014/0326/Pakistan-holds-peace-talks-with-Taliban-5-things-you-need-to-know-video
Nek was killed by a missile launched from a US drone on June 19, 2004. The agreement remained in place for less than 50 days.\textsuperscript{52}

February 2005. The Sararogha Peace Agreement between Baitullah Mehsud (late leader of the TTP) and the Pakistani government. In exchange for compensation for homes damaged during military operations and promising not to target Baitullah Mehsud or his supporters, Baitullah agreed not to attack Pakistani targets and to refuse shelter to foreign militants.\textsuperscript{53}

Miranshah Peace Accord was signed on 5 September 2006. As per the agreement; a 10 member committee was to be established. The committee comprised clerics/elders and representatives of the political administration. The committee was to be responsible for establishing a link between the government and the Uthmanzai tribes and review and ensure the implementation of the agreement. Any individuals or group not abiding by the agreement or disrupting peace in Waziristan was to be proceeded against. The agreement was signed by Hafiz Gul Bahadar, Maulana Sadiq Noor and Maulana Abdul Khaliq. The peace deal broke down on May 20, 2007.\textsuperscript{54}

May 2008. The Swat Agreement between the provincial governments (of Khyber–Pakhtunkhwa). The first peace deal in Swat was struck on April 20, 2008 between the Awami National Party-led provincial government and followers of the TNSM led by Sufi Muhammad. As per the agreement, the government accepted the right of every Muslim to ‘peacefully’ work for the enforcement of Sharia.

The second Swat peace agreement was inked on May 21, 2008 between Swat militants operating under the command of Fazlullah and the Awami National Party-led government. It was a 16-point handwritten accord in Urdu.\textsuperscript{55}

Pakistan needs a comprehensive counter-insurgency policy based on three pillars: military, political and economic. Priority should be given to integrate the tribal areas into Pakistan through political and administrative reforms. Such policies should

\textsuperscript{52}Analysis of Peace Agreements with Militants and Lessons for the Future, Sohail Habib Tajik, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Jan-Mar 2011
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid
\textsuperscript{54}Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU) Brief Number 10, Towards a Durable Peace in Waziristan Shabana Fayyaz, 23rd April 2007
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid
prioritize national interest with strong political and public backing. Institutions need to be strengthened to enable the people to not only live in peace but also to access justice.\textsuperscript{56}

4.1. The Lack of credible leadership among Taliban

The efforts which have been taken during a couple of last years would be enough for a relative peace, but with whom? Where? There is not one group of insurgents, not a unified and single militant group called “Taliban” with a specific address, but several terrorist militant groups which are active in the region.

The Taliban can be described as a decentralized organization (\textit{as opposed to a fragmented one}). The predominant mode of organization used by the Taliban is personal networks, formed around charismatic leaders. At the lowest level, the networks consist of a local commander with a few fighters gathered around him, usually recruited personally by him on the basis of his reputation as a leader. A variable number of these small groups are networked together around a larger figure, for example a district-level Taliban leader. In turn, this network would be linked to a larger network through its leader, who would pay obedience to some greater figure, for example a province-level leader. The figures at the center of these larger networks might well be nationally renowned Taliban leaders; they might or might not be further networked around some of the top Taliban leaders.\textsuperscript{57}

After the fall of the regime of Taliban, the leadership also fell apart. Some of the key members were captured, some killed and the remaining fled to Pakistan. Those Taliban leaders who remained in the country are not in the position of leading a peace and reconciliation talks. The \textit{Shura of Quetta} holds an important role to play, but does not cooperate with Pakistani and Afghan government. The factions among various groups of Taliban proved it difficult to find a single address for negotiations.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid
\textsuperscript{57}Antonio Giustozzi, \textit{Negotiating with the Taliban Issues and Prospects}, A Century Foundation Report, 2010
4.2. Qatar Peace Talks (also known as Qatar Process)

Although some other initiatives took place, such as “talks on the Maldives” and some activities by the Saudi official to help speed up the process of reconciliation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but Qatar process was one of the significant talks. This was the first time when Taliban leadership appointed their representatives to the process.

At the end of 2009 the German foreign intelligence service (BND) succeeded in establishing contact with Tayeb Agha, Mulla Omar’s former personal secretary. The first meeting was arranged in spring 2010 in Doha. In November 2010 and again in May 2011 the BND brought Tayeb Agha to Munich, where he became the first emissary of the Taliban leadership to conduct direct talks with an American delegation from the State Department and intelligence services, conducted under the auspices of the German foreign ministry.59

A lot of hopes were bonded to this process. The international community and Afghans were waiting for a result of the talks. In Afghanistan, not everyone was optimistic. Especially women were concerned about the rights and opportunities which they achieved in last decade will be jeopardized by the talks with religious extremists and promising them the contribution in the government.

The outcome of these talks was a series of confidence-building measures. The first part of the agreement was the opening of a Taliban liaison office in Qatar, which could serve as a forum for future talks between Mulla Omar’s emissaries and representatives of the international community. The United States and the Afghan government made the opening of the liaison office conditional on the Afghan Taliban distancing itself publicly from international terrorism. The second part of the agreement related to an exchange of prisoners.60

The United States raised the prospect of transferring five high-ranking Taliban leaders from Guantanamo to Qatar, where they would be reunited with their families and placed under house arrest. In return the Taliban was willing to release three U.S.

58 The Bundesnachrichtendienst, Federal Intelligence Service is the foreign intelligence agency of Germany
59 Nils Wörmer, Exploratory Talks and Peace Initiatives in Afghanistan, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, December 2012
60 Ibid
citizens, including Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl who they have held since June 2009. In mid-March 2012 the Taliban suspended the liaison office and prisoner swap talks on the grounds that the United States was always adding new demands. But they indicated via various channels that this did not mean the end of the Qatar process.\textsuperscript{61}

Not being involved in the talks, the Afghan government was extremely reserved about this initiative. When it first heard of the talks, this caused a diplomatic upset with Qatar, and Karzai pointedly announced his wish to reopen the Saudi channel. Important leaders of the Afghan political opposition have expressed reservations and stiff criticism of the Qatar process. They believe there should only be talks with the Taliban if all Afghan groups are included, especially those who fought against the Taliban before 2001.

Altogether, the initiative under the name of Peace Talks with Taliban in Qatar is being pursued at a time when the war between Taliban and the Afghan government is continuing. It is a doubtful process where the latter was not included initially and when involved, wasn’t given a competent position.\textsuperscript{62}

At a point, the Afghan government was also not willing to participate in Qatar talks, because they representatives of Taliban put a flag of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on the building where the talks were supposed to take place. They brought down the flag after the insisting of the afghan officials and US pressure to bring the flag down. Eventually the Qatar talks didn’t have any achievements. Unfortunately, like most of the other talks, the Qatar Process also failed to bring peace into the region.

\textsuperscript{61}Ibid
Conclusion

Increasing the number of NATO forces and facilities will not help to resolve the conflict. Currently the number of security forces in Afghanistan is larger than the combined number of Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The experiences of last decade shows that the situation has not been changed as expected in the beginning of NATO intervention in Afghanistan. Back then, a small number if United States forces and Northern Alliance were able to wipe out Taliban from the rest of the country in three weeks and now it is taking more than a decade to cope with the Taliban insurgents. Why? It is a big question mark. The foreign and defense policy makers in the White House simply neglect the fact that this specific part of the world needs a different approach.

Surprisingly, in both countries Afghanistan and Pakistan the number of Taliban shows a significant growth after the invention of international forces. The reason behind their growth is the result of failed peace talks. First both concerned countries should start a trust building process, more talks and meetings should take place with the so-called representatives of Taliban. More bilateral and trilateral agreements should be signed and both sides should show an honest commitment to the cause of peace and prosperity which, unfortunately, is not easy to achieve without the help and support of United States of America.

Both countries are trying to keep their image as positive as possible by simply denying certain facts regarding the insurgencies in their territory, which does not help the situation. Hiding the real problem will not solve it. The going on blame game between two countries buys more time to Taliban, the Afghans ones and TTP, and as it looks in last period of time, they are using it wisely.

The issue of peace talks in Afghanistan is based on tribal and ethnic bases rather than political. It is difficult because the process of peace talk with Afghan Taliban is mostly not welcomed by those political groups and parties inside the country, which were involved in fight against Taliban before 9/11. Most of the Taliban leaders are Pashtun and the opposition of the current government is mainly of Tajik ethnicity, so when it comes to flexible peace agreements and deals with Taliban, even some elements
inside the current government are opposed to it. Some minorities still support the peace talks, but they are not optimistic to the results.

Many times, the process was damaged by the drone attacks and raids of United States and NATO forces. When the Afghan government agrees on some terms with Taliban and also Taliban show flexibility in their conditions, an increased in NATO air strikes and raids are witnessed and as the result of such actions by NATO, the Taliban seniors are discouraged to go on with peace talks. In some cases the United States tried to talk with the Taliban representatives which caused some tensions between the Karzai administration and the United States over engaging the Taliban underscores the challenges of seeking a political settlement.

On the other hand, some political analysts believe that peace talks with Taliban will bring no end to fighting. Taliban refuse to accept the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. They demand the change in current constitution, which is not acceptable for the people of Afghanistan, neither the international community. The denial of basic human rights and rights of women is another major obstacle in the way of achieving relatively flexible conditions. People in Afghanistan experienced the terrible period of Taliban’s government and they will never accept the presence of Taliban in any shape or form.

The Afghan Taliban demands the withdrawal of the foreign troops. Even if the foreign troops will withdraw, Taliban will continue their insurgency and attacks. Currently, Taliban are using the foreign troops to justify their operations. Taliban have no place in the government and will not have any in the future. Gradually, they should be forced to drop their arms and start living a peaceful social life and continue their political struggle for achieving what they want through a democratic process.

Several current affairs analysts in Afghanistan strongly agrees on the point that the peace talks in Afghanistan were disturbed by Pakistan several times. When a senior Taliban leader agrees and shows positives signs to peace talks, next day, he is arrested by ISI or mysteriously assassinated by unknown armed groups in Pakistan. The afghan intelligence officials believe that Pakistani intelligence is behind these actions, in order to keep Afghanistan distant from reaching a deal with Taliban.
Pakistan’s support is important in peace talks, but they also face the same problem dealing with TTP. TTP totally lost faith in peace talk with Pakistani government. Almost all of the peace agreements signed between Pakistan and TTP were broken by Pakistani military. None of these peace deals lasted long, which resulted in the gradual spread of the Taliban and their ideology through the tribal areas.

Pakistan also has some historical problems with the geographical locations where the TTP and their affiliates are located. The FATA region rarely accepted the rule of the central government. The tribal leaders administrated their areas by tribal codes and traditional Jirgas. They are armed and have the total control of their areas. If they will be forced by Pakistan, Afghanistan and United States, they will not have any other way rather than surrender or go on fighting, which will cause further atrocities.

Pakistan is experiencing a dangerous period of time. There are more extremist militant groups active than any other Muslim country of the region. The Pakistani government and ISI created the beasts, which they are not able to control now. Pakistan is at edge of collapsing if it does not find a solution for the current insurgencies taking place all over Pakistan. A strong wind and the country will tear apart. The ongoing conflict between BLA (Baluchistan Liberation Army) a group of Baluch Nationalists and the government of Pakistan, the TTP (Tehrik-e Taliban Punjab) in the state of Punjab, LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba) and some other extremist religious groups pose a serious threat to the stability of Pakistan.

Pakistan needs to stop double crossing the United States and international community and take the process of peace talks serious. It had been proved several times in the past that the lack of harmony among the countries on both sides of Durand-line is the cause of failure of peace talks. A serious partnership between two countries is needed, of course with the direct help of United States of America as a third party. If the issue of armed insurgency and religious extremism will not be solved in the region, all South Asia and Central Asia will be directly affected, and the result of the world will experience more terrorist attacks time to time.

The biggest obstacle is in the way of reaching a deal with Taliban, both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban is the lack of a leadership. Even if the government starts a series of serious talks with whom they should begin? As it was proved in the past, their
representatives do not hold the qualification and the real leaders do not come to the table of discussions.

The countries of the concerned region are among the fastest growing countries in the world in regards to their population. It is obvious that with the fast growth of population, it will more difficult to tackle these movements. A cure should be found, before this epidemic of religious fundamentalism destroys in peace and stability. Even of the Obama administration and its allies appear to have gradually embraced talks as the best way to end the war, it should be done in cooperation with the Pakistan, Afghanistan and in some cases, even with Iran.

The withdrawal of the United States NATO forces from Afghanistan will be a big challenge for the countries of the region. I really hope that the United States will not do the mistake of leaving Afghanistan, as they did after winning the cold war against the Soviet Union and then left the Afghans by their own.
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Statement by President Karzai in NATO Summit in Lisbon Final


The Bonn agreement (*documents*)

**Links:**

- Pakistan holds peace talks with Taliban: 5 things you need to know, By Umar Farooq, Correspondent / March 26, 2014, Source: http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-
Central/2014/0326/Pakistan-holds-peace-talks-with-Taliban-5-things-you-need-to-know-video


- Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan Eisenhower Hall Theatre, United States Military Academy at West Point, West Point, New York 8:01 P.M. EST, Source: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan


