SPECIAL REPORT

Perspectives on Peace from Taliban Areas of Afghanistan

By Ashley Jackson

Members of the Helmand Peace Convoy rest in Kabul after marching more than three hundred miles from Lashkar Gah to protest the war. (Photo by Massoud Hossaini/AP/Shutterstock)

Contents

Summary

- For noncombatants living in areas of Afghanistan under Taliban control or influence, the greatest desire is for an end to violence. Although many Taliban fighters also are tired of the conflict, they express little desire to lay down arms until their goals are achieved.

- Taliban members consistently articulated two objectives—withdrawal of US forces and establishment of a "truly" Islamic government. However, few had concrete ideas on how such a government would differ from the current Islamic republic beyond strict implementation of sharia.

- Taliban members were broadly resistant to the idea of peace talks with the current Afghan government, which they view as un-Islamic and illegitimate, and objected to the idea of a power-sharing deal with the government.

- Both noncombatants and Taliban members alike assume that under any peace deal, the Taliban would retain control in its strongholds and seek to consolidate power in currently contested areas.

- The majority of women in Taliban-controlled areas, including those married or otherwise related to Taliban fighters, strongly objected to the Taliban's restrictions on their lives, particularly on their movement and access to health care and education.

- There was a strong sense that the legacy of the conflict must be addressed as part of any peace process. Justice was seen as a mix of punishment for the most egregious offenses and forgiveness. At the local level, a structured, legitimate process of acknowledgment, atonement, and forgiveness will need to be created.

SPECIAL REPORT

RECONCILIATION

ABOUT THE REPORT

This paper examines perspectives on peace and reconciliation among people living in areas of Afghanistan where the Taliban have significant influence or control. Based on interviews with noncombatants, local Taliban members, and senior Taliban leadership, this study offers insights into their views on peace talks and the prospects for postwar reconciliation and justice. This research was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and facilitated by the Conflict, Security and Development Research Group at King's College London.

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**UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE**
Making Peace Possible

A resident of Pul-e Alam points to damage to a home following coalition airstrikes supporting an Afghan security forces operation in August 2017. (Photo by Ahmadullah Ahmadi/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock)

Introduction and Methodology

Long-stalled diplomatic efforts to end the war in Afghanistan gained new life in 2018. The Afghan government, the Taliban, and international forces observed mutual cease-fires for three days over the Eid al-Fitr holiday in June. Few could have predicted this remarkable turn of events: the people of Afghanistan observed the holiday with little violence and no civilian casualties, and pictures of Taliban members, government forces, and civilians celebrating together flooded social media. A significant shift in US policy on talks with the Taliban also created new momentum. Having decided to speak directly with the Taliban leadership during a new round of peace talks, the United States named Zalmay Khalilzad, a former ambassador to Afghanistan, as the government's special envoy in September 2018. The United States and the Taliban have since engaged in several rounds of negotiations, but these talks have primarily focused on two core issues: the withdrawal of US troops and the Taliban's willingness to provide counterterrorism guarantees.

Intra-Afghan peace talks remain elusive. The Taliban refuses to talk directly to the Afghan government until an agreement on US troop withdrawal is secured. The current government consequently has been sidelined in peace efforts, although Taliban officials have met with Afghan politicians and former government officials in nonofficial talks. The broader consequences of a deal between the United States and the Taliban remain unclear, but many Afghans have raised serious concerns that it will imperil the survival of the government and the gains made since 2001, particularly in human rights, women's rights, and freedom of the press. Many fear that the United States will expedite a

HELMAND, LOGAR, AND WARDAK PROVINCES IN AFGHANISTAN

Adapted from artwork by Rainer Lesniewskiparunto/Shutterstock

deal to end its military involvement at the expense of Afghanistan's long-term stability. President Donald Trump has voiced increasing impatience with US military involvement in Afghanistan; for example, reports in December 2018 suggested that he intended to withdraw half of all US troops.

Notably absent from the debates around peace in Afghanistan have been the voices of those in areas that have borne the brunt of the fighting and that have seen few gains since 2001. This report attempts to provide insights not only into how Afghans in Taliban-influenced areas view the prospects for peace, but to answer questions such as what requirements would have to be met for local Taliban fighters to lay down their arms; how has progress on peace talks been viewed at the local level; how do views between noncombatants and Taliban members, and men and women, differ; how do views on a political settlement and a future state differ between Taliban members and civilians; and what should be done to support local reconciliation and transitional justice?

This report is based on ninety interviews conducted between October 2018 and February 2019. Seventy-eight of the interviews were conducted in Helmand, Logar, and Wardak provinces—some face to face; others, because of security concerns, were conducted remotely. Approximately half of those interviewed were noncombatants, of which a third were women. The other half identified as Taliban. Many of this latter group were local fighters, commanders, and district officials, several of whom also described themselves as mullahs or *maulavis* (religious scholars or clerics). The semi-structured interviews covered a key set of issues and events, including participants' experiences of the conflict, the cease-fire over the Eid al-Fitr holiday in 2018, and ongoing peace talks. In addition, twelve interviews were conducted with senior Taliban figures and interlocutors in Afghanistan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates over the past year. This second set of interviews provided context and elucidated where the views of local Taliban diverge from or converge with those of the leadership. The report also draws on other similar studies to contextualize its broader findings.

The three provinces were selected in order to evaluate how dynamics vary across areas where the Taliban has significant influence or control. In Logar Province, twenty-eight interviews were conducted in Charkh District. In Wardak Province, twenty-three interviews were conducted in two neighboring districts, Saydabad and Chak. These areas have long been largely Taliban controlled, and subject to ongoing violence in the form of airstrikes, ground combat, night raids, and improvised explosive devices. In Helmand Province, twenty-seven interviews were conducted in

Nawa, Nad Ali, and Marja districts, south and east of the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. These areas have been subject to a tug-of-war between the Taliban and government, with control repeatedly changing hands. At the time this research was conducted, however, large sections of these districts were under de facto Taliban control. As in Logar and Wardak, the violence continues.[1]

> A woman in Wardak Province talked about wanting to see peace simply because she could not imagine what it might be like, explaining that she was "now 21 years old and my whole life has been spent in war."

Experiences of the Conflict

All of the people interviewed for this report had been affected by war-related violence and had lost relatives or friends. Many traced the beginning of the fighting back to 2003 or 2004, and described a general environment of insecurity, punctuated by more extreme violence, in the years since. Some referred to several wars over the past decade (using phrases such as "in the first war . . . " or "during the second war . . . " in their narratives) because their villages had changed hands multiple times. Narratives of the conflict portrayed a relentless sense of fear and uncertainty marked by periodic surges of violence. The interviewees' stories of war had a brutally repetitive quality. One man told of how his house had been raided and damaged by progovernment forces four times since 2009. Another's farm had been mined by the Taliban, his property ransacked and destroyed by progovernment forces, and his family members killed by both Taliban and progovernment forces. For younger people, the impact has been devastatingly formative. One woman from Saydabad, in Wardak Province, talked about wanting to see peace simply because she could not imagine what it might be like, explaining that she was "now 21 years old and my whole life has been spent in war."

Many of those who could afford to leave have left their villages for safer areas. Many of those who have stayed said that they had been previously displaced, some of them repeatedly, by the fighting. All had suffered significant financial losses, and felt that it would be nearly impossible to fully recover from them. An elder from Helmand described how his home had been destroyed in fighting two years ago, forcing him and his family to flee. When they returned, their possessions had been looted, their crops had withered, and he had since struggled to resume farming, rebuild his home, and feed his family. Most people described returning out of financial necessity. They could not afford to stay in their places of refuge any longer or start over elsewhere. Even though the conflict has upended their lives, people also described carrying on as best they could during periods of stability: reopening their shops in the bazaar, repairing their farms and property, and sending their children (or at least their sons) back to school.

Civilian deaths and injuries remain high, and the UN has assessed that both Taliban and progovernment forces have been responsible for roughly the same number of civilian casualties across Afghanistan.[2] Airstrikes on Taliban-influenced or -controlled areas have dramatically increased since the United States relaxed its rules of engagement on aerial operations in 2017. According to UN reports, civilian casualties caused by airstrikes nearly doubled between 2016 and 2018, and the number of civilians killed in airstrikes was equal to that of 2014, 2015, and 2016 combined.[3] Aerial operations

often appeared to target homes or compounds where Taliban members were present, with the dual objective of slowing Taliban momentum and pressuring Taliban fighters to support peace talks.[4] Compared with the strategies of previous years, in the past few years airstrikes rarely appeared to be conducted as attempts to establish or expand government control. Instead, Afghan and international military forces have focused on protecting cities, such as Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar-e Sharif, and Jalalabad, and not on reasserting government control in rural areas under Taliban influence or control.[5]

In response, the Taliban has consolidated and expanded its control in rural areas, making gains in new areas and increasing efforts to roll out its own form of governance. Recent progovernment ground operations outside of major cities have secured roads or district government compounds, but have not significantly impacted the Taliban presence. Even as the government reexerted control in parts of the districts examined in Helmand, clear front lines were present. In Nad Ali and Nawa districts, white Taliban flags were visible from the main highway. Within a ten-minute drive of the Nad Ali district center, the Taliban had set up a front line marked by a checkpoint and Taliban flags, and Taliban fighters moved freely within government areas. In Logar and Wardak, the government had a far more limited presence. It retained compounds in the district center and controlled the main road, but its control did not extend much beyond its bases or checkpoints. When progovernment forces carried out operations against the Taliban, people said that the Taliban returned soon after military operations concluded. Few felt that the government's military operations have had much effect in recent years, other than to entrench the conflict. A farmer from Helmand's Nawa District said that "the Taliban have never left us, and even when the government comes back, there are IEDs, attacks on checkpoints, and we know the Taliban are here."

This state of affairs is unsurprising: in these areas, the Taliban is a predominantly local organization. All Taliban members interviewed were from the areas or villages where they were fighting, and civilians generally described them as members of the community, whether relatives, acquaintances, or former classmates. In the words of a teacher from Helmand, the Taliban fighters in his area were "young men from the village who have picked up guns." These preexisting relationships have enabled the Taliban and noncombatants to establish an arrangement—however coercive or uneasy—to coexist in daily life. In the areas where research was conducted for this report, as in much of the rest of Afghanistan, the Taliban have set up an extensive alternative "civilian" administration. Provincial and district governors, as well as focal points for health, education, and other issues, oversee nonmilitary affairs. Where the government and aid agencies provide public goods and services, the Taliban seek to co-opt and control them. Health and education in Taliban areas are a hybrid of state- and nongovernmental organization–provided services, operating according to Taliban rules. Taliban courts and judges mete out justice, and the Taliban gather revenue from nearly all business and trade activities, ranging from harvest taxes to customs.[6]

Although the state education and health care systems technically function in these Taliban-controlled areas, people said that many schools and clinics have been damaged or have closed periodically because of the fighting. The quality of these public services tends to be lower than that found in government-controlled areas, owing both to the damage caused by the fighting and the fact that it is difficult to find qualified staff who are able or willing to work in these areas. Fighting and fear of arrest by security forces have curtailed access to major hospitals, particularly for women affected by Taliban restrictions on their mobility. Economic opportunities

US troops patrol at an Afghan National Army Base in Logar Province in August 2018. (Photo by Omar Sobhani/Reuters)

also were scarce. Many described repeated damage to or destruction of their livestock and agricultural holdings. There was little aid and few private-sector actors that were willing to invest in these areas. People in Helmand in particular mentioned that they had been compelled to feed and shelter Taliban members even when they had little to feed their own families.

In instances when the government or development actors wanted to work in these areas, people said that the Taliban had not always granted access. Although Taliban leadership has welcomed health services and, to some degree, education, it has been more reluctant to permit infrastructure or other development projects. However, in recent years Taliban leaders appeared to have become more open, and they were more likely to allow interventions in areas where they had consolidated control. Both civilians and Taliban said that local elders played critical roles in mediating these projects and in the provision of government services. Elders secured Taliban permission for projects such as road construction and hydroelectric dams, or persuaded the Taliban to reopen schools after the fighting abated. However, the elders' ability to mediate had hard limits. If local Taliban leadership felt that a specific proposal would interfere or conflict with their military interests, it would be rejected. When elders asked Taliban officials to limit potential harm to civilians, such as by refraining from planting explosives on main roads or near schools, their requests usually were denied.

Noncombatant Views on War and Peace

From the perspective of noncombatants interviewed for this report, the conflict between the Taliban and the government and international forces had shaped their lives in every way imaginable. Despite their deep-seated longings for the fighting to end, the overall opinion was that the conflict would continue as long as both sides had incompatible views of Afghanistan's future.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE CONFLICT

Noncombatants rarely described much affinity for either side of the conflict, instead conveying their exhaustion, desperation, and profound desire for the fighting to stop. Most viewed the government and the Taliban in practical terms.[7] Many felt that even though the government could bring schools, aid, and economic opportunities, the Taliban provided better security and justice. This sentiment was paradoxical, given that a Taliban presence often leads to violence from progovernment military operations, ground engagements, or airstrikes, but noncombatants did not make this connection in recounting their experiences. Some, particularly women, were critical of the Taliban's harsh rule. Others expressed displeasure with specific (though rare) instances involving Taliban members from outside the local area, whom the interviewees regarded as less sympathetic to the plight of civilians.

The degree to which people felt able to speak openly about their views of the government and the Taliban was questionable. In Logar and Wardak provinces, views of the Taliban were more positive than in Helmand, where the Taliban have been weaker. Those in Helmand may have felt more able to speak freely or critically, given the decline in Taliban influence, or may have been more reticent to talk positively about the Taliban, with the corresponding increase in government influence. Similarly, people in Logar and Wardak may have been afraid to speak negatively about the Taliban. It is also possible that the Helmand Taliban have a more abusive or extortive relationship with noncombatants, as the behavior described by some individuals suggests.

There was a general assumption that the Taliban would retain control for the foreseeable future. In areas where the Taliban had been pushed back, many assumed that they would return. Few in Helmand, for example, had attempted to repair the damage done during operations against the Taliban. On a visit to the district center in Nad Ali, Taliban graffiti remained on the walls of the government compound and shell casings littered the courtyard. The Nad Ali district governor joked that there would be little use in making repairs because the Taliban were sure to return.

Nearly all civilians saw the presence of US forces as responsible for creating and perpetuating the conflict, a view shared with local Taliban members.[8] Some believed that the United States was waging war against Islam or sought to steal Afghanistan's natural resources. Others blamed the United States for deposing the Taliban regime in 2001, and saw the Taliban insurgency as a justified act of vengeance. Although many were skeptical about the sincerity of the United States in peace talks, they believed that the Taliban and the Afghan government both genuinely wanted to end the war. This stands in contrast to broader opinion surveys of the

Afghan population, which found that many Afghans doubt the Taliban's willingness to make peace.[9] However, civilians in the cities and areas of uncontested government control have benefited more from the US and broader international community's presence. Unlike those in urban centers, Afghans in areas of Taliban influence or control have received comparatively few benefits from the presence of foreign forces, and see them only as aggressors.

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Civilians acknowledged that the Taliban will not stop fighting until its leaders' core demands—the US withdrawal and the creation of an Islamic government—have been met. They nevertheless expect the Taliban to stop fighting once US forces withdraw. The Afghan government was viewed in more sympathetic terms than the United States. Some people did not even see the Taliban as being at war with the Afghan government, but only with the United States. Some regarded the Afghan government as a victim of foreign occupation. Many people emphasized the severity of their battlefield losses and that all Afghans were "brothers."[10] Less sympathetic views saw the government as illegitimate, immoral, deeply corrupt, and even complicit in the foreign occupation.

THE CEASE-FIRE

Interviewees almost universally viewed the 2018 Eid cease-fire as a welcome relief from the conflict. They described it in emotional terms, with many feeling that they finally had a glimpse of what peace might bring to Afghanistan. A wife of a Taliban fighter described it as the only time she could remember not worrying about her husband or her family. One man described how he had cried when he saw Afghan security forces walking freely amid Taliban members in the bazaar.

The cease-fire fundamentally changed what people thought might be possible, but few felt that the cease-fire on its own enhanced prospects for peace. Many recognized that major obstacles to peace, including the continued presence of US troops, remained. No one thought the fighting would end quickly or easily, and fighting resumed in these areas as soon as the cease-fire ended. A Taliban mullah from Logar remarked, "We cannot say that cease-fire is a hope for peace, in that the infidels are still here and peace will not be possible until the foreign troops leave." A woman from Wardak's Saydabad District reflected that even though "people were optimistic for permanent peace in the country . . . after those three days the security condition became worse than before, so this was only a false kind of hope."

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES

Little is understood about the experiences of women living in areas under Taliban influence or control. It is difficult for outsiders to talk to women in these highly conservative areas. Although there is a danger in drawing generalizations from a relatively small set of interviews, this research nevertheless provides insight that is otherwise absent from discussions about peace talks.[11]

Many women viewed the Taliban pragmatically—but, of course, the Taliban have had a very different impact on women than on men. Even when they expressed positive sentiments about

the sense of security and justice that the Taliban were able to provide, they voiced strong objections to the restrictions that Taliban control placed on women. Women consistently listed the same restrictions. Their freedom of movement was greatly curtailed: they were no longer allowed to go to the bazaar without permission or unaccompanied, and they could not attend weddings or gatherings with other women without permission or unaccompanied. Bride prices were capped, limiting the social capital women traditionally derived from that practice. The Taliban also exercised tight control over female education, as girls' access to primary schools was variable, and they were generally forbidden to continue schooling once they reached puberty. At first, these restrictions on women, such as the closure of girls' schools, had been gradual, and they could not be fully enforced until the Taliban had near total control. The lack of education for girls beyond puberty was a common grievance. Most women believed that education was important and bitterly objected to Taliban restrictions. Prohibitions on visiting the bazaar or health facilities, either because of Taliban restrictions or ongoing fighting (or both), were also common complaints.

From a geographical perspective, the views of women in Helmand and the women in Wardak and Logar differed in this respect, reflecting regional differences in attitudes and gender roles. Women in Wardak and Logar had more freedoms to begin with, and have more sharply felt the effect of Taliban restrictions. The Taliban saw these restrictions on women as linked to notions of honor and Islam, but also used them to demonstrate power and social control. Even women married to Taliban men believed that women should have greater freedoms than the Taliban in their area allowed. A widow of a Taliban fighter from Logar's Charkh District said that "when the Taliban came, our lives were ruined." Of those interviewed, only two women, both older and more broadly conservative in their views, agreed with the Taliban's restrictions on women's mobility and participation in life outside the home.

When asked about the conflict, women described it in different terms than men, with greater emphasis on the human toll of the suffering and less on its causes or political dimensions. One woman from Wardak recounted a long list of violent episodes and losses before she stopped, as though there were too many traumas to relive, and said, "We spend every moment of our lives in grief, and the war has destroyed our lives." Women with husbands or family in the Taliban or government forces described constant anxiety during periods of heavy fighting, not knowing if they would see loved ones again. One woman from Logar, the widow of a Taliban fighter, said that "people are tired of both the Taliban and the government, and the Taliban and their families are tired of fighting." Nonetheless, she, like most women, believed the fighting would end only if US forces left Afghanistan.

Women did not feel that they could have much, if any, role in making peace. They pointed out that women are not fighting the war and are not involved in political discussions. Involvement in peace also implied participation in public life. A woman from Nad Ali, in Helmand, expressed a typical sentiment: "How can women play any role for peace since we cannot go outside our homes?" A few women felt it was inappropriate for women to be doing such things, while others lamented that they are not allowed or included in such discussions. Most simply thought that, given the norms and traditions in their areas, they would have no opportunity to play any part in peace talks.

These sentiments, however, did not mean that the interviewees believed that women had no role in peace talks writ large. As one woman in Wardak's Saydabad District said, "Women who

Afghan women line up at a polling station during parliamentary elections in Kabul in October 2018. (Photo by Mohammad Ismail/Reuters)

have access to the media have to raise their voice about these issues. . . . Women in this rural area are not able to do anything, but the women living in the cities have to raise their voice." As this fieldwork and other research like it have indicated, the rural-urban divide regarding women's roles is vast, and restrictions on women are most extreme in places like Helmand.[12] This is not to suggest, as media debates around peace talks occasionally imply, that women in these areas do not have social power or conceive of themselves as not having rights. Instead, many of these women genuinely wanted to see their rights restored or respected.

Like most noncombatants, women's hopes for peace were primarily that the violence and uncertainty would end, and that peace would improve their lives in other ways. Many women expressed a desire to live under a "truly" Islamic government that implemented sharia. However, in contrast to men's views of sharia, which largely limited women's freedoms, women's views of the restoration of sharia law gave them greater rights and security. Above all else, women emphasized the importance of education. Like many women, the wife of a Taliban fighter in Wardak hoped that all of "the restrictions that had been placed on women by the Taliban would be lifted" and women would have access to education.

Taliban Views on War and Peace

The Taliban members interviewed for this report, much like the noncombatants, spoke of wanting to see peace in Afghanistan after long years of conflict. However, their views on the conflict reflected their specific demands for an outcome in which the Taliban would dictate acceptable terms to the US and Afghan governments, even if the details of the final outcome were nebulous at best.

MOTIVES AND OBJECTIVES

Fighters' motives for joining the insurgency were complex and occasionally difficult to parse. In one familiar narrative, the insurgency ran on revenge. As one man, a teacher from Logar, described, "The influence of Taliban increased when people lost family members and friends in the fighting. Their relatives joined the Taliban for revenge, so as the Taliban suffered more casualties, they somehow grew stronger and larger." Efforts of progovernment forces to rout the Taliban, particularly with airstrikes and night raids, only provided fodder for the Taliban's recruitment of new fighters. One senior Taliban member, interviewed in Kabul, explained that "whatever you see it is because of revenge. The airstrikes in the provinces result in the ambulance bomb in Kabul. In their mind, whatever is happening is because of something that was previously inflicted on them." In this narrative, the primary motives of individual fighters had a personal, highly emotional dimension.

This line of thinking, however, did not match with some of the expressed motives of individual fighters and commanders. Few Taliban spoke about retaliation as a motivation for fighting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, members of the Taliban and their relatives typically had lost more family members and had been more affected by financial losses and displacement than the broader noncombatant population interviewed. Although a handful of interviewees described personal traumas as motivating factors in their decision to join the Taliban, such difficulties more often appeared to be a consequence of that decision, as they and their families became targets of night raids, arrests, and airstrikes after they joined the insurgency. Revenge, in this case, was not their primary motive. Instead, Taliban described their decision in terms of religious devotion and jihad—a sense of personal and public duty.

In their view, jihad against foreign occupation was a religious obligation, undertaken to defend their values. One Taliban fighter from Logar gave a typical response: "When infidels occupy an Islamic country, it is obligatory for all Muslims to fight against them, so I joined the Taliban based on the Koran." A mullah in Helmand expressed similar sentiments: "Jihad is an obligation for all Muslims, so I joined the Taliban." Older or more senior Taliban offered more complex explanations than ground-level fighters, but they spoke consistently of an unquestioned obligation to wage jihad against foreign occupation.

Religious and political motives were mixed, with religious obligations intertwined with narratives of collective honor, sovereignty, and nationalism. As a mullah from Logar explained, "This occupation not only ignored Islamic values but also it is against the international law. . . . Based on international law, if a country attacks another country, the country that has been attacked has the full right to defend itself against invaders." Another Logar resident, a Taliban commander, like-

wise said, "It is our Islamic or religious duty to do jihad and our duty as Afghans to have a sovereign country." Jihad in this sense is inextricably linked to national identity and the reassertion of Afghan sovereignty.[13]

Taliban uniformly asserted that they want peace. As a Taliban commander and mullah from Logar said, "The Taliban have been calling for peace for years and opened an office in Qatar so that we would have a clear and known address for peace talks." However, most of the Taliban interviewed lacked specific ideas about how peace should be pursued and did not have strong opinions on talks.[14] Many expressed their exhaustion with the war and their desire for peace, but all asserted they would not participate in talks unless their two core demands were met.

The Taliban's first (and most emphasized) demand was the withdrawal of US forces. A fighter from Wardak's Saydabad District echoed many of his compatriots when he argued that the continued US presence drove the insurgency and was the primary obstacle to peace: "You are like the guest that won't leave. I can't do anything as long as you sit in my house. So leave, and then we can find a solution." There was a general narrative that once the Americans had left, Afghans would be able to negotiate peace among themselves. At the same time, the substance of these intra-Afghan negotiations was never well articulated beyond the assumption that the Taliban would hold much of the leverage and control most of the country outside of the cities.

The second demand was the establishment of a "truly" Islamic government. While the withdrawal of foreign forces was a relatively clear-cut demand, an Islamic government was not. Taliban members repeatedly referred to this end goal as a justification for their fight and an essential requirement for peace, but few could articulate in great detail what their ideal Islamic government would look like in practice. When asked how an Islamic government would differ from the current Afghan government (which is an Islamic republic), Taliban members spoke of having rules derived from Islam and a sharia-based justice system. A desire for justice—which many Taliban members felt could not be obtained under the current government without bribery and personal connections—was a common theme. Interviewees did not always agree on all points of governance: some contended that elections were un-Islamic and should be banned, and some felt strongly that an amir should lead the government. Given that many regarded elections as fraudulent, whether because of general opinions about or personal experience with election fraud, Taliban members frequently conflated elections and democracy with corruption. However, it was difficult to discern whether they regarded elections as unacceptable because they were corrupt or because of broader religious objections to elected governance.

Rather than talking about the precise structure of a postwar government, Taliban members more often expressed their visions of life under a "truly" Islamic government. They saw it as free from corruption and immoral behavior—the latter of which often included music and other forms of entertainment, echoing rules implemented in many areas under Taliban influence or control. Their views also focused on regulating the role and conduct of women. Women, as they saw it, should not work in mixed offices or in government at all, and they should be veiled (more pre-

cisely, wear a chadori or burqa) in public. To some extent, the views of the Taliban leadership and its soldiers on the ground diverged on the issue of women in society, as local Taliban have implemented a more restricted view of women's roles and rights than conversations with the leadership and their public statements imply.[15] The leadership "considers [women] as the builders of a Muslim society and is committed to all rights of women that have been given to them by the sacred religion of Islam . . . such as business and ownership, inheritance, education, work, choosing one's husband, security, health, and right to good life."[16] Here, as elsewhere, Taliban leaders couch their support for women in references to Islam, but never clearly articulate the practical terms of this support.[17]

THE CEASE-FIRE

Almost all Taliban interviewees approved of the June 2018 cease-fire. Like many civilians, the Taliban felt it brought welcome relief from uncertainty and violence. Several younger fighters in Helmand felt that the cessation of hostilities had been counterproductive and that they had missed valuable opportunities to target their enemies, but they nonetheless obeyed orders to suspend fighting.

Taliban fighters learned of the cease-fire through their commanders, the mosques, or messaging apps and social media, but few received an explanation of why the Taliban had declared a cease-fire. Some believed the purpose was merely to enable fighters to celebrate the holiday with their families, and commented that they also had received a break, or were ordered not to fight, during previous Eid holidays. These "breaks" were never publicized in the media or implemented in tandem with cease-fires declared by progovernment forces. A senior Taliban official stated that pauses in fighting over Eid were "not just a new thing. . . . Historically, we were letting people go home and rest for Eid; maybe we did big operations during Eid but there were very few in the villages." In previous years, Taliban violence dipped significantly below the norm over the Eid holidays, though this has not been as uniform or consistent across the country as it was in 2018.

Other fighters claimed that the real purpose of the cease-fire was to convince the United States to recognize the Taliban and start negotiations. Individuals affiliated with the leadership echoed some of these views, emphasizing that the primary objective of the cease-fire was to demonstrate their unity of command: "Americans said this group is not united, it is fragmented, and there are twenty groups or something. The Kabul government said the same: there are ten or twenty groups, there is no one Taliban." According to this individual, interviewed in Doha, "The bottom line is that we did this to prove to the world we are under one command, and everyone should respect this command."

Although Taliban fighters were ordered merely to lay down their arms and go to their homes for three days, many contravened these instructions and entered the cities or engaged in celebrations with members of the public, government, and Afghan security forces. One fighter from Wardak, who had celebrated in Kabul, felt it was important to go to government-controlled areas "to show people on the government side that Taliban are not savage or wild, we are human beings, and we love and respect our fellow Afghans." Some described receiving reprimands for their transgressions in attending these celebrations.

Many fighters presented the cease-fire as akin to a victory parade, or a preview of what it will be like when the Americans withdraw and the Taliban exert full control. A Logar mullah remarked that "the Taliban showed that if they come to power, people will be able to live together in peace." A Helmand Taliban commander involved in district security stated that it gave him hope that US forces would see their error and withdraw. A Logar mullah and fighter felt that "it showed to the world that Afghans are brothers and foreigners are the ones that have created disunity in our country, and it sent a message to [the] Afghan government about the power of Taliban." The cease-fire did little, however, to change Taliban perspectives or positions. Another Logar fighter said that it "did not create hope for ending the war because after the cease-fire ended we went to our positions and started fighting against the Afghan soldiers. . . . This is what we have to do until the Americans leave."

TALKS WITH THE UNITED STATES

Few Taliban fighters had much insight into the talks between their leadership and the United States, and relied on news media, rumor, and social media for information. None said that there had been any official communications from their leadership specifically about talks with the United States.[18] The vast majority supported talks between the Taliban and the United States because they understood the objective of these talks as the full withdrawal of foreign forces. All Taliban said they would support an agreement that led to a US withdrawal. Few felt that the US military should maintain any presence in Afghanistan, and the vast majority felt that US forces should withdraw as quickly as possible. Typical of this sentiment, a Taliban fighter from Wardak said that "if the foreign troops leave right now, our security forces and people from our own country can work together to maintain security." A commander from Logar was similarly confident that the Taliban could secure "their" areas and work together with government security forces to ensure security in the cities and areas under government control.

However, some were concerned that the United States did not want to end the fighting or see peace in Afghanistan. Some expressed skepticism that the US military would leave Afghanistan so easily, with many questioning whether US leaders could be trusted to keep their word even if a troop withdrawal was agreed. They overwhelmingly wanted the US military to withdraw some troops before they would take US intentions seriously. The leadership expressed similar doubts about the US commitment to peace, but they were more pragmatic with regard to the terms of a US force reduction, and recognized that the United States would want to maintain "observers" or forces to protect their diplomatic presence in the country. Many in the leadership believed such an arrangement would be possible, but as one senior Taliban official said, "Right now we are at war, and we must end that war before we can agree on these things."

TALKS WITH THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT AND POWER SHARING

Most Taliban saw talks with the Afghan government as unnecessary. Some believed that the United States controlled the Afghan government, so any direct talks with the United States would make dialogue with the government irrelevant, and many felt that the current government would be unable to survive without US support. One former Taliban commander from Logar argued that the government "is a project of the US and when the US leaves it will be finished, so then we can

Taliban officials pray during "intra-Afghan" talks in Moscow in February 2019. (Photo by Pavel Golovkin/AP/Shutterstock)

think about what to do next. But until then, we have to finish the war." A Helmand district commander took a similar line: "If the US stops their support to the government for even a month, we would be able to take all of Afghanistan, and that's why we have to reach an agreement with the US."

Negotiations with progovernment forces over military affairs were seen as distinct from the Taliban's nonmilitary talks with the "civilian" side of the Afghan government and with nongovernmental organizations. The latter were frequent and widespread, and seen as both permissible and desirable. Agreements on development projects and basic services were not considered peace deals, but as agreements that benefited civilians and helped the Taliban consolidate their influence and control, and thus were in line with Taliban's policies.[19]

When asked if they had ever made or would ever consider localized nonaggression agreements with Afghan or international forces, the response was overwhelmingly negative. In only one short-lived instance, local Taliban temporarily agreed on "ground rules" with an Afghan army deployment from a neighboring province. Taliban and noncombatants alike could not recount any other instances of the Taliban and Afghan or international forces striking such détentes. Local Taliban saw such deals as tantamount to disloyalty and rebellion, and felt that such arrangements would be possible only if directly approved by their elders.

Very few expected or wanted the Taliban and the current Afghan government to form a joint government, whether as an interim government or a more permanent power-sharing arrangement. Most found this to be antithetical to their nonnegotiable demand for an Islamic government. As one fighter, a local mullah from Logar, said, "We both are very different from each other, we don't accept each other, and you cannot have two completely different structures in one government." Most assumed the Taliban, in some form, would continue to rule the areas it currently occupied under any peace deal, and might even expand its influence because Afghan forces likely would be weakened by a withdrawal of US troops.

This opposition did not, however, indicate that all fighters believed that the Taliban should strive for total control and exclude all other Afghan factions from a future government. They opposed the current Afghan state and its administration, but in conciliatory narratives they believed that they would be able to live peacefully with their Afghan "brothers" once the war ended. These narratives hinted, however, that other actors would be included in a future government only on terms acceptable to, if not dictated by, the Taliban.

Taliban leaders have refused to engage with the current Afghan government in formal talks. They have privately indicated that they would be open to sharing power in some form, but have refrained from elaborating on this in public statements.[20] However, the Taliban leadership has publicly called for an "inclusive independent Islamic System that is acceptable to Afghans and reflects Islamic and Afghan values."[21] As with local-level Taliban, this statement has little clear practical meaning.

OBSTACLES TO A PEACE DEAL

Taliban members' consistently stated that they wanted peace and would support their leadership in any agreement. Nonetheless, many expressed fears and misgivings about a peace process. Several higher-level commanders referenced what they saw as disingenuous past efforts at peace, specifically the High Peace Council and reintegration efforts, as examples of what would *not* work. One former commander in Helmand said that the Taliban "are afraid that they will not be able to come to peace if there is no good strategy; we saw the High Peace Council, which never had any intention to bring peace at any time." Some feared that the United States and the government would only be prepared to offer the Taliban a deal such as that given to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord who signed a peace deal with the Afghan government in 2016. These Taliban members viewed Hekmatyar's agreement as surrender without dignity or influence.

Some pointed out that their leadership had significant constraints to navigate. In the words of one commander from Helmand's Nad Ali District, "Once the Americans leave, the fighters on the front line on both sides can make peace easily. If we left it up to them, the war would be settled. But, like every war, it is not the fighters who decide."

Many felt that the leadership's benefactors in Pakistan would not support peace and that it would be impossible to stop fighting without Pakistan's approval. Taliban members expressed resentment of Pakistan's influence over their organization and Afghanistan's broader affairs.[22] Even where Pakistan was not mentioned directly, it was alluded to as a force "in the shadows" or "behind the scenes" that was preventing or likely to block any peace deal.

Taliban and Noncombatant Views of Postconflict Life

Both noncombatants and Taliban members broadly assumed that under any peace deal, the Taliban would retain control of areas that it currently held and would assert full control over more contested rural areas. The fate of major cities and those regions that resisted Taliban influence was unclear. Yet few could envision what an end to the war would bring. At times, some spoke of peace as an immediate consequence of the withdrawal of foreign troops. In this idealized vision, those who had fled would be able to return home, and communities would be able to reconcile on their own terms. However, when pressed on the details, flashpoints emerged, suggesting that genuine reconciliation likely will be a long, complex, and precarious process.

Views of a postconflict political settlement often were vague, but there was a strong sense that the peace process would have to address the legacy of the conflict. No one believed that every crime or offense required punitive justice. Everyone had suffered, and many perpetrators were also victims. A reasonably consistent narrative emerged around the need for punitive measures for severe abuses and facilitating forgiveness for everything else. Taliban and noncombatants alike distinguished between those crimes that merited punishment and those that required forgiveness. They felt that some people had used the conflict to their advantage, such as by using the conflict to settle old grudges or stealing land from displaced people. But this was seen as personal enmity, distinct from the war, and worth treating as a criminal matter. Individuals who perpetrated "unacceptable" crimes that could not be justified by military imperatives, including rape, theft, and some instances of large-scale killing, also should be punished. The criminal justice systems that should be applied to "big" crimes and personal enmity was necessary; however, those who spoke of such systems most often meant the Taliban's criminal justice systems. Criminal prosecution was seen as essential to demonstrating that certain behavior would not be tolerated under the new order, and to restoring community security and harmony.

People ultimately felt forgiveness was also important in stopping the cycle of revenge. A man whose father was killed by the Taliban or by Afghan forces might seek to avenge his father's death after the war was over, and that could only lead to more violence. In such instances, forgiveness would be the only way to ensure peace. People spoke of the particular resonance of forgiveness in Islam and local traditions. Although forgiveness is not a requirement in Islamic jurisprudence, sharia often indicates a preference for forgiveness as both a communal and individual process.[23] In the ethical codes of Pashtunwali, an aggrieved party is obligated to seek revenge or retribution for the wrong done to restore honor, but the community plays an essential role in regulating or intervening in this process.[24] Nanawati, a mechanism for apology and forgiveness, is mediated by elders or community leaders (through community meetings, or jirga), but the offender and the victim (or the victim's survivors) actively participate in it—for the former seeking forgiveness and the latter granting it. Community pressure helps ensure that forgiveness is sought, granted, and maintained.

Considering the degree of Taliban control in certain areas of Afghanistan, it is essential to understand how Taliban authorities might facilitate accountability, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Taliban justice is often seen as harsh and deeply punitive, but it can support mechanisms of forgiveness, drawing on a mix of sharia and local

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customs. Taliban judges may encourage forgiveness in cases of murder, for example, to break the cycle of revenge.[25] In some areas, Afghan forces and government workers captured by the Taliban are "demobilized" through a process that entails an apology and a guarantee from elders that the individual will not return to the government.[26] Yet this emphasis on forgiveness should not be confused with a preference for amnesty or ignoring the past. The kind of forgiveness that interviewees described was structured and formal, based on long-held traditions of reconciliation and forgiveness that they associated with restoring justice and social harmony.

Conclusion

For noncombatants interviewed in areas controlled by or under the influence of the Taliban, their greatest desire was to see the violence end. They assumed that the Taliban would continue to govern in their areas under any peace deal, just as local Taliban assumed they would retain control. The structure and composition of any postwar government was of less concern to them than the outcomes of that government. They wanted security; accessible, fair, and effective justice; and a less corrupt government overall.

Local Taliban fighters and commanders articulated two core objectives in line with their leadership's demands: withdrawal of US forces and a "truly" Islamic government. Fighters left the details up to their leaders, but expressed a uniform willingness to lay down their arms should those conditions be met. There is, of course, the risk that this unity may falter with actual changes in strategy, command, or the implementation of a peace agreement. However, there is little indication that recent events have had a negative effect on the Taliban's internal coherence. If anything, many Taliban sought to present the cease-fire and talks with the United States as a sign of their political and military strength.

Public discussions around peace have not mentioned reconciliation and justice to any great extent, but they will be an integral component of ending the war. The international community's resistance to transitional justice after 2001 is well documented, and this absence of accountability led to insurgency, corruption, and state failure.[27] To secure any future peace, there will have to be accountability for past crimes. Interviewees did not see accountability as a purely criminal or punitive process, but they did feel that some punitive measures would be needed to send a message to broader Afghan society that the most egregious offenses would not be tolerated (or rewarded, as they often were after 2001). At the local level, the Afghan people will need to create a structured, legitimate process of acknowledgment, atonement, and forgiveness.

Female interviewees expressed great concerns over the effect that any peace deal might have on women's rights, particularly on fundamental issues such as access to health care and education. The international community must apply significant, sustained pressure on the Taliban to allow women greater access to health care and education, but this must be accompanied by long-term funding for initiatives to enable such access. It will take decades to address the myriad obstacles women face, including the conservative attitudes of the Taliban and other power holders. In some areas under Taliban influence, girls' schools have reopened and women have been able to work around the strictures placed on them, but these instances are rare. The broader women's rights implications of any peace deal are important, but women living in areas under Taliban influence and control also have urgent needs that must be addressed.

As in any political settlement, Afghanistan's future will lie in the details of negotiation and implementation. Taliban fighters and commanders have questioned the viability of power sharing, reflecting the ideological and structural differences between both sides' ideas of governance. There are clear divergences on the issues of justice, human rights, and the fundamental forms of government. Any notion of power sharing, for the Taliban, would be acceptable only on their leaders' terms. Successful peace talks will require compromise on these and other issues.

Genuine dialogue between and among factions has been worryingly absent from the Afghan peace process, and there is little indication that it will be feasible. Interviewees' hopes that Afghans will work out their differences once US forces leave seem inconsistent with the Taliban's military strategy and practices. If an agreement on US troop withdrawal is finalized before an intra-Afghan settlement can progress, the Taliban may take advantage of the resulting power vacuum to seize more, if not total, control. Both Taliban and noncombatants seemed to assume that the Taliban would take over or consolidate control in their areas. In these scenarios, reconciliation would not be a process of public healing but a stark choice—comply with Taliban rule or leave.

Notes

1. The choice of these particular areas under Taliban control or influence was influenced in part by the researchers' previous local connections and relationships. Research of this nature can endanger both interviewers and interviewees, and interviewers may find it difficult to access areas and individuals of particular importance. Personal connections created the trust required to work safely. Local Taliban leadership knew about the research and, in some areas, provided more formal permission to conduct the interviews. Preexisting relationships also were essential to create the trust required for the researchers to talk openly about sensitive issues with the individuals interviewed. Nevertheless, relying on local relationships also presented challenges, not least because it influenced the specific pool from which sources were drawn. Moreover, as with any research in conflict-affected areas, people had incentives to hold back, exaggerate, or falsify their accounts or preferences. At the same time, personal connections and an understanding of the local context enabled a stronger analysis of events and factors that have shaped people's views. The author of the report has been conducting research in these areas since 2017, and local researchers were from the areas examined. They also reinterviewed some of the same individuals who were interviewed before the cease-fire for a separate research project. Although this is not a precise measurement of opinion, this interview structure provided a comparative basis for whether or how attitudes might have changed over time.

2. The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) Human Rights Unit attributed 4,072 civilian casualties to the Taliban and 4,147 to Afghan and international military forces in 2018, and 698 civilian casualties to the Taliban and 608 to Afghan and international military forces in the first quarter of 2019. UNAMA, *Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2018* (Kabul: UNAMA, 2019), www.unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_annual_protection_of_civilians_report_2018_-_23_feb_2019_-_english.pdf; and UNAMA, *Quarterly Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 1 January to 31 March 2019* (Kabul: UNAMA, 2019), www.unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_-_first_quarter_report_2019_english_.pdf.

3. The UNAMA Human Rights Unit documented 1,015 civilian casualties from airstrikes in 2018 and 590 in 2016. See UNAMA, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2018*; and UNAMA, *Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2016* (Kabul: UNAMA, 2017), www.unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_annual_report_2016_final280317.pdf.

4. Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Mujib Mashal, "U.S. Heightens Attacks on Taliban in Push Toward Peace in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, February 8, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/02/08/world/asia/pentagon-afghanistan-airstrikes.html.

5. Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Helene Cooper, "Newest U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan Mirrors Past Plans for Retreat," *New York Times,* July 28, 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/asia/trump-afghanistan-strategy-retreat.html.

6. As relayed by interviewees. See also Ashley Jackson, *Life Under the Taliban Shadow Government* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2018); and Jelena Bjelica and Kate Clark, "One Land, Two Rules (1): Service Delivery in Insurgent-Affected Areas, an Introduction," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2018, www.afghanistan-analysts.org/one-land-two-rules-1-service-delivery-in-insurgent-affected-areas-an-introduction.

7. This sentiment mirrors findings from a 2009 study based on 192 interviews with Taliban fighters and civilians, as well as a study of local perceptions of government and Taliban legitimacy. See Sarah Ladbury, *Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why Do Men Join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami? How Much Do Local Communities Support Them* (Kabul: Cooperation for Peace and Unity, 2009); and Florian Weigand, "Afghanistan's Taliban—Legitimate Jihadists or Coercive Extremists?" *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 11, no. 3 (2017): 359–81.

8. The NATO training and support mission, Operation Resolute Support, involves troops from thirty-nine nations, including the United States. Nonetheless, people almost always referred to the United States and not to NATO or foreign forces more generally.

9. Omar Sadr, *The Fallacy of Peace Processes in Afghanistan: The People's Perspectives* (Kabul: Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018); Samad Delawar, "Hasht-e-Subh's Survey: People's Pessimism with Regard to Peace with the Taliban" [in Pashto], *Hasht-e-Subh*, March 25, 2018; and Swisspeace, Salah Consortium, and Afghan Women's Network, "A Survey of the Afghan People Perception on Peace and Ceasefire," August 18, 2018, http://awn-af.net/index.php/cms/content/501.

10. This position has been echoed in Taliban leadership statements. See *Al Emarah*, "Message of Felicitation of the Esteemed Amir-ul-Mumineen Sheikh-ul-Hadith Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada (may Allah protect him) on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr," June 12, 2018.

11. Notable exceptions include Pamela Constable, "In Taliban-Controlled Areas, Afghan Women Face Restrictions, but Some Find

Ways to Push Back," *Washington Post*, March 13, 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-taliban-controlled-areas-afghan-women-face-restrictions-but-some-find-ways-to-push-back/2019/03/12/aed31eb6-41db-11e9-85ad-779ef05fd9d8_story.html.

12. Nancy Hatch Dupree, *The Women of Afghanistan* (Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan, 1998); and Anna M. Pont, *Blind Chickens and Social Animals: Creating Spaces for Afghan Women's Narratives Under the Taliban* (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, 2001).

13. This sentiment echoes findings from research conducted in 2017 with Taliban fighters, commanders, and supporters in Badakhshan, Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Paktia, and Wardak provinces. See Borhan Osman, "A Negotiated End to the Afghan Conflict: The Taliban's Perspective," Peaceworks no. 137 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2018).

14. This collective response echoes findings from research with Taliban fighters, commanders, and supporters. See Osman, "A Negotiated End."

15. Author interviews with Taliban interlocutors and members of the senior leadership in June 2018, October 2018, November 2018 and January 2019.

16. See *Al Emarah*, "Complete Transcript of Speech Delivered by Delegation of Islamic Emirate in Moscow Conference," February 5, 2019.

17. See Secunder Kermani and Sami Yousafzai, "Taliban 'Not Seeking to Seize all of Afghanistan,'" *BBC*, February 6, 2019; and *Al Emarah*, "Message of Felicitation of Amir-ul-momineen, Sheikh Haibatullah Akhundzada on the Eve of Eid-ul-fitr," July 2, 2016.

18. In March 2019, after the conclusion of this field research, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's chief negotiator, released an eight-minute audio recording in which he spoke at length about the progress on peace talks and sought to allay potential concerns within the movement.

19. See Jackson, *Life Under the Taliban Shadow Government*.

20. Author interviews with Taliban interlocutors and senior leaders in June 2018, October 2018, November 2018, and January 2019. See also Borhan Osman and Anand Gopal, *Taliban Views on a Future State* (New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 2016).

21. *Al Emarah*, "Complete Transcript of Speech."

22. This position echoes that found in previous research on Taliban attitudes toward Pakistan. See Matt Waldman, *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents* (London: Crisis State Research Centre, London School of Economics, 2010); and International Security Assistance Force, *The State of the Taliban* (Kabul: International Security Assistance Force, 2012).

23. For example, the Sunni *fiqh*, criminal law relating individual forgiveness, and international law pertaining to group forgiveness. See Russell Powell, "Forgiveness in Islamic Ethics and Jurisprudence," *Berkeley Journal of Middle Eastern & Islamic Law* 4, no. 17 (2011): 17–34.

24. Tazreena Sajjad, *Transitional Justice in South Asia: A Study of Afghanistan and Nepal* (London: Routledge, 2013).

25. Jackson, *Life Under the Taliban Shadow Government*; and Antonio Giustozzi, Claudio Franco, and Adam Baczko, *Shadow Justice: How the Taliban Run Their Judiciary* (Kabul: Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2012).

26. See Jackson, *Life Under the Taliban Shadow Government*.

27. Ahmad Nader Nadery, "Peace or Justice? Transitional Justice in Afghanistan," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, no. 1 (2007): 173–179; Patricia Gossman and Sari Kouvo, *Tell Us How This Ends: Transitional Justice and Prospects for Peace in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2013); and Ehsan Qaane and Sari Kouvo, "Peace in The Air, But Where Is Justice? Efforts to Get Transitional Justice on the Table," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, February 28, 2019, www.afghanistan-analysts.org/peace-in-the-air-but-where-is-justice-efforts-to-get-transitional-justice-on-the-table.

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