

TRIBAL IDENTITY DYNAMICS: A CASE STUDY OF US-HAQQANIS RELATIONSHIP

*Rashid Ahmed, Anum Babur and Qaim Raza Jaffry**

Abstract

The rise of the Haqqani group to eminence was amplified by US-support during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. However, with the consolidation of Taliban supremacy in the post-Soviet era, the Haqqanis were marginally side-lined for being non-Kandaharis. Owing to this identity-clash with the Taliban, they were eager to switch sides. The focus of this article is, therefore, retrospective as it presents an empirically-grounded analysis of the US-Haqqanis relationship to argue that identity and prestige have always been the core concerns for Haqqanis. The US was unable to recognize Haqqanis' potential as a local partner due to the lack of knowledge about the complex tribal identity dynamics of Afghanistan. Taking Haqqanis on board would have augmented the stability and legitimacy of the Afghan government in the post-2001 era. This also has implications for the current Afghan peace process as the backing of Haqqanis for the US-Taliban deal has ensured a wider support-base for the deal. Hence, the US needs to be cognizant of the tribal identity landscape of Afghanistan for lasting peace in the region.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban, Haqqani Group, Peace Process, US.

Introduction

This paper seeks to highlight the understudied connection between the US and Haqqani group during the era of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan until the onset of the War on Terror and subsequent dynamics of their relationship to date. The paper strives to answer questions, such as why the US supported Jalaluddin Haqqani and his network during the Soviet-Afghan war and what was the impact of such support on military capability, political clout and evolution of the identity of this group from fighting with the Soviet forces to the Taliban regime after Soviet withdrawal and up to the post-2001 era. The paper also explores why this group joined the Afghan Taliban in 1995 then decided to switch sides after 2001 and why it could not join the US-supported Afghan government. Finally, this paper studies the implications of this retrospective analysis to the current Afghan peace process.

The paper engages in a detailed account starting from Jalaluddin Haqqani's group coming into the limelight while revolting against the Daud regime to its

*Dr. Rashid Ahmed is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad. Ms. Anum Babur is a Lecturer at the Department of International Relations, National Defence University, Islamabad. Dr. Qaim Raza Jaffry is a former Deputy Director Libraries and Information Services at National Defence University, Islamabad.

patronization by the CIA during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The US provided Jalaluddin Haqqani a great deal of money and war materials during the Soviet-Afghan war. The US officials were so charmed that the former congressman Charlie Wilson once called him goodness personified.¹ Conversely, after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, US weapons supply to Haqqani's group was reduced. However, the heavy US-support during 1979-1989 converted this group into a cohesive militia as "CIA's support of money and material gave Haqqani's group a tremendous amount of influence within Afghanistan's *mujahidin* community and underpinned their capacity for assembling coalitions of commanders from various parties."² The US aid also enabled Haqqanis to "broker arms deals with other field commanders... and their willingness to equip Arab volunteers was, no doubt, a factor in their unique relationship with foreign fighters during the early years of the conflict."³

The flow of resources to the Haqqani group by the US during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan not only increased its military capability and political leverage in the region but also made it arrogant and identity conscious. The sense of identity and prestige influenced the subsequent trajectory of the US-Haqqanis relationship and is key to understand their fallout.

After 9/11, US short-sightedness coupled with a lack of understanding of Afghanistan's tribal politics resulted in the mishandling of the Haqqani group. In 2001, the Haqqani group was even ready to switch sides in favor of the US due to identity friction with the Taliban but the US let this opportunity pass by. Mathew Snow argues that "had America listened to Pakistan not only could their relationship have perhaps fostered into a true alliance but the next decade of military involvement could have been drastically different. Jalaluddin could have stabilized the Afghan border region early in the conflict and Pakistan could have become a greater partner in the War on Terrorism, clearing and reinforcing the border from their side of the country."⁴ This statement is supported by the demonstrated control of Haqqanis of the Afghan border-regions, inhabited by the Zadran tribe to which Haqqanis themselves belonged and among whom they enjoyed popular support as well as the political clout and linkages Haqqanis developed in the hey-day of their power.

Since identity and prestige have been the main factors in determining the affiliations of Haqqanis, the US missed the opportunity of brokering a more stable regime in Afghanistan post-2001 by ignoring the complex tribal identity dynamics of Afghanistan and not taking the Haqqanis on board. The US would be well-advised to keep the Haqqanis engaged along with the Taliban in the current Afghan peace process and be mindful of the fact that whether alone or with the Taliban, Haqqanis pride themselves on their separate sense of identity and their incorporation in the peace process would ensure a wider support-base for more lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Haqqani Network and Its Roots

Scholars note that the Haqqani network was pioneered by Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani, a Pashtun cleric from Afghanistan's southeastern Khost province. He belonged to the Zadran tribe in Afghanistan but his career as a competent and recognized

mujahideen commander enabled him to forge links exceeding his country's medley of tribal and ethnic groups.⁵ The Zadran Pashtuns' home area straddles the Pak-Afghan border.⁶ In Afghanistan, Zadrans mostly inhabit the hills of Suleman Range between Khost and Zurmut.⁷ This southeastern part of the country is also known as Loya Paktia (Greater Paktia). Most of the tribes in this region are different from their ethnic kin in the East and the South. Except for Ahmadzai, Kharoti and Sulemankhel tribes, all other tribes do not belong to the famous Pashtun tribal confederation, i.e., Ghilzai and Durrani. Yet, minor tribes that inhabit the Khost basin are sometimes grouped under the same monolithic label as Khostwal.⁸ Therefore, Zadrans are included in the Khostwal Pashtuns.⁹ Since the 19th century, there has been a conflict between Spur Khel and Mazaey Khel clans within the Zadran tribe.¹⁰ Generally, Haqqanis trace their lineage to the Mazaey while their rivals, such as Bacha Khan Zadran belong to the Spur.¹¹

Jalaluddin Haqqani revolted against the Daud regime after toppling King Zahir Shah's monarchy in 1973.¹² Regrettably, this campaign received no people-support and was suppressed in 1975.¹³ These individuals remained members of the apex committee of Hizb-i-Islami from the year 1976 to 1979. In 1979, Khalis developed differences with Hekmatyar, thus, gathered his supporters in their group, Hizb-i-Islami-Khalis. In the same year, a Jirga (traditional assembly) of Paktia tribes placed Hizb-i-Islami-Khalis under Haqqani command. From 1981 to 1984, Haqqani's role in Hizb-i-Islami-Khalis grew significantly which increased his influence in Zadran and beyond.¹⁴ After defeating the state forces in 1983 and capturing Khost and Urgan, Haqqani further expanded his power in Paktia. During the military operation against the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) forces, Haqqani led his militia besides coordinating with other Zadrans. He even engaged other tribes to launch large-scale offensives against the Soviets.¹⁵

Jalaluddin Haqqani's Connections with the US

The relevant literature reveals that among the anti-Soviet resistance groups being supported by the US, it was Haqqani's militia that was armed the most. US support to Haqqani's group was because "it had established a close association with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the mid-1980s. CIA allocated large sums of war resources to the Haqqani group to gain supremacy over the USSR. Such a strategy was followed by the US due to a CIA handlers' observation that [Haqqani] could kill Russians like you wouldn't believe."¹⁶ Peter Tomsen's admission of the US promising more arms to Haqqani to fight against the Najibullah regime further strengthens this contention.¹⁷ As it turned out, the Haqqani network benefitted from various patrons to develop into a powerful force as "different nations handled Jalaluddin Haqqani to achieve their vested interests."¹⁸

Nevertheless, out of all the other states involved with Haqqani, the US held the primary position. Ambassador Tomsen asserts that it was CIA that increased Haqqani's capacity to wage war.¹⁹ During these years, "CIA provided cash directly to the resistance commanders ... The Haqqani family would use that money in business ... It published magazines and run a radio station as well."²⁰ CIA also provided construction materials

and logistic support to Haqqanis. After 1986, the US strategy in Afghanistan transformed with Haqqani becoming a “unilateral asset of CIA – a term used by the American intelligence officers themselves.”²¹ During those days, Haqqani frequently met CIA officers to pick up supplies.²² Thus, the Haqqani network acquired the prestigious role of being a facilitator and a conduit for local and foreign elements.

Here the question arises, why CIA and other state agencies were supporting Haqqani separately. The answer to this question lies in the fact that a number of characteristics possessed by the Haqqani militia made it the most favored recipient of CIA and others’ funding. These included “Haqqanis’ advantageous strategic location and well-developed capacity for mobilizing tribes for war.”²³ Both factors helped the US strengthen its position in Afghanistan and to counter the Soviet advances in 1979. The Haqqanis’ position was consolidated throughout the 1980s. According to a CIA official, who was in charge of the provision of American assistance to Afghan *mujahidin*, “60,000 tons of materiel were shipped across the border every year. Out of this supply for various resistance parties, twenty percent were routed directly to Haqqanis.”²⁴ This implies that Haqqanis were at least supplied 12,000 tons of war materiel every year during the 1980s.

As the Haqqani network gradually augmented its strength and operations, its international reputation grew. The “Haqqanis’ strategically important position and growing reputation for effectiveness increased their influence in the CIA and intelligence agencies of other resistance-supporting states.”²⁵ The Haqqani group, under Jalaluddin Haqqani, acquired the status of a reliable US partner as “Haqqani was seen by CIA officers perhaps the most impressive Pashtun battlefield commander in the war. These impressions translated into direct financial and military support as well.”²⁶

Haqqani and the Taliban (1994-2001)

As discussed earlier, Jalaluddin Haqqani, founder of the Haqqani network, belonged to Loya Paktia. The tribes in the southeast (Loya Paktia) have always been left autonomous by the rulers of Afghanistan due to their remote location which also made them difficult to coerce. Similarly, there was some advantage in leaving them autonomous due to their ability to mobilize against external enemies.²⁷ History reveals that they have been loyal to the royalty and because they supported the Afghan monarchy, they used to consider themselves as king-makers in Afghanistan. Their loyalty was officially recognized “as a reward for their service to the kings, [and] the tribes of Loya Paktia were exempted from paying taxes and conscription by the central government for over a hundred years and also remained free from most forms of state influence. This feeling of power had contributed to an extreme sense of independence and self-confidence among the Loya Paktia Pashtuns.”²⁸

Keeping that in perspective, one can understand why Haqqanis have always guarded their tribal and regional identity during every peaceful and troubled period, starting from Daud’s era and the Soviet invasion (1979-1989) to the civil war years of 1992-1994 when they did not side with any warring-group and consolidated their power

base. Even being part of the Taliban regime, they kept their distinct identity alive. This sense of identity and prestige came to play a great role in the subsequent US-Haqqanis relationship and its falling apart.

The Taliban leadership belonged to Kandahar, therefore, they kept Haqqanis at arm's length. Most of the authors are in agreement that Haqqani never wanted to join the Taliban. Brown and Rassler claim that "Haqqani was opposed to joining the Taliban but due to their popularity among the population in the greater Paktia area and among his fighters, he was pushed to form an alliance."²⁹ Similarly, Dressler also believes that Jalaluddin Haqqani joined the Taliban in 1995 after the Taliban seized his power-base in Loya Paktia.³⁰ It is also argued that "bin Laden played a role in the deal brokered between Haqqani and the Taliban."³¹ However, one finds this argument as doubtful since bin Laden came to Afghanistan in 1996.

Once Haqqanis joined the Taliban, they helped them attain an edge over the Northern Alliance. Such a triumph was of immense importance in the face of defeat suffered by the Taliban during battles in the outskirts of Kabul, Shindand, and Herat in 1995, after which analysts started predicting the Taliban's decline.³² As a consequence of the aforementioned developments, "Haqqani and the Khost Taliban commander, Ehsanullah, raised a force of 2,000 to be sent to Kandahar and Kabul to add to the Taliban's might."³³ However, the alliance did not prove to be fruitful in the long-run as Kandahari commanders alienated Haqqani's fighters due to which large numbers of Haqqani recruits started deserting their ranks. This had the unwanted consequence that "by the end of two months, only 300 men were left. Later on, in 1999 and 2000, the Haqqani linked tribes and the Taliban came to loggerheads once again. Neither did the Haqqanis approve of the Taliban's ban on children playing games nor did they appreciate the continued appointment of Kandaharis to influential positions in the Taliban's government."³⁴ As a consequence of such moves, the rift between the two deepened.

Similarly, though Jalaluddin was allotted an unimportant Ministry during the Taliban rule, i.e., Borders and Tribal Affairs, yet in practice, Haqqani and his men remained an independent ally of the Taliban regime as they did not fully accept their authority, especially over Loya Paktiya. In the northern areas of Kabul, Haqqani's forces proved to be of immense importance to the Taliban's military campaign in their struggle against the Northern Alliance.³⁵ Haqqani, while being a minister in the Taliban government, was never part of Omar's Kandahari decision-making circles.³⁶

Haqqani's group had played an instrumental role in defeating the Soviets and because of this he disliked the arrogance of the Kandahari Taliban. Moreover, as narrated by Maulvi Saadullah, a Haqqani's confidant during the 1990s, "Haqqani favored an Islamic republic,"³⁷ as opposed to the Taliban, who favored Islamic Emirate. Eventually, relations between the two groups further deteriorated after the Taliban suffered losses at the hands of Massoud's fighters in Mazar-e-Sharif. After 9/11, Haqqani was given charge of all Taliban forces to wage the war of resistance against the looming US invasion.³⁸

US Mishandling of Haqqanis after 9/11

There were many reasons which forced Haqqani to join the resistance against the occupation forces. As mentioned earlier, Haqqanis and the Taliban were not natural allies. During the Taliban regime, Haqqanis were never treated like Kandaharis because of which they started considering a shift in their alliance. After the end of the Taliban government in 2001, the US proposed to Haqqanis “an unconditional surrender. In Loya Paktia, Bacha Khan Zadran became an important US ally as he helped the US forces to liquidate the Taliban and Al Qaeda members. However, Bacha Khan “tended to exaggerate the presence of Al Qaeda and Taliban members in [Paktia], in order to eliminate his own political rivals.”³⁹

Subsequently, Haqqani leaders made advances to the Afghan government in the early years but these offerings were snubbed; however, by that time, Haqqani’s political rivals had gained strong positions in the new system. Consequently, he joined the Afghan Taliban. Joining the Taliban gave a sense of legitimacy to his actions. Jalaluddin’s group is still recognized as an autonomous entity within the Taliban and its leadership is primarily bound together by tribal lineage and family membership. Jalaluddin’s son, Sirajuddin, had already taken over much of the day-to-day operational concerns even before Jalaluddin’s demise on September 3, 2018.⁴⁰

In October 2001, Haqqani paid a visit to Islamabad to hold meetings with US officials which failed due to US demand for a kind of unconditional surrender. Thereafter, Haqqani departed saying “we will retreat to the mountains and begin a long guerrilla war to claim our pure land from infidels and free our country as we did against the Soviets.”⁴¹ More light is shed on this turn of events by Thomas Ruttig, who expounds that:

*Between 9/11 and the Bonn conference on Afghanistan that started in late November 2001, several attempts were made to encourage a moderate faction of Taliban to break away from the mainstream movement and to become part of the following political movement. It was reported that the US and British agencies saw Haqqani as the possible leader of such a group and offered him a leading role in future Afghan government. Possibly it was a case of lack of coordination between different authorities: one report indicates that Haqqani’s brother Ibrahim Omari was arrested by the military while other US agencies negotiated with him.*⁴²

As to the matter of Ibrahim Omari’s arrest and torture when the Taliban government was toppled and replaced by the Karzai regime, he was sent by Haqqani to indicate a willingness for negotiation with the Afghan and American authorities. He was successful in establishing contact with CIA in 2002 at Gardez.⁴³ As recorded by Coll, “a senior officer named Mike in Afghanistan was trying to persuade Ibrahim to arrange a meeting with Jalaluddin in the United Arab Emirates. Mike wanted to propose to the Haqqanis to help CIA locating Osama bin Laden. At the Ariana, speaking through a Pashtu translator, Mike warned Ibrahim that the US would track down and kill his brother if he did not cooperate.”⁴⁴

It so happened that while Ibrahim Haqqani was engaged in talks and negotiations with a team of CIA agents, a special unit stationed in Kabul earmarked him as a viable target for arrest. The chief of CIA at Kabul station was aware that Ibrahim was a possible target but Mike and his fellows were not. Thus, Ibrahim was arrested on May 4, 2003 and “ended up in the custody of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and later in the US military custody.”⁴⁵ The US also made several other slips in their dealings with the Haqqani network. Instead of inviting Jalaluddin Haqqani to the Bonn Conference as a relevant voice in the Afghan conflict, the US invited Bacha Khan Zadran from the rival Zadran tribe, a sworn enemy of Haqqani.⁴⁶ Amanullah Zadran, Bacha Khan’s brother was entrusted with the Ministry of Tribal and Border Affairs, a position previously occupied by Haqqani during the Taliban regime. The interim government formed under President Hamid Karzai further served to sideline the Haqqani network from Afghan political circles and processes.

Later on, the US contacted the Haqqani group once more while they were searching for a moderate faction to make the new Afghan government more broad-based.⁴⁷ However, this attempt bore no fruit as owing to “lack of coordination between the various US authorities, thus, the initiative failed. Consequently, Haqqani dismissed the plan of joining the new Afghan government.”⁴⁸ However, all political ties had not been severed yet: Haqqani’s followers among the Zadran tribe still maintained contacts with the Kabul-based UN team in 2002. Haji Abdul Rahman Zadran, Jalaluddin Haqqani’s cousin and also holding the command of Haqqani network’s operations branch, was part of an April 2002 delegation of elders from Loya Paktia region who met high ranking officials of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to register their protest against US attacks on their villages. Thereafter, the Haqqani network became engaged in a full-fledge campaign against the US⁴⁹ which was launched in Paktika province.⁵⁰

In June 2003, Haqqani was made a member of the new Taliban Supreme Council. One month later in Khost, the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and Hezb divided their operation bases in Loya Paktia⁵¹ and in 2004, this network started small hit-and-run attacks on the US.⁵² However, by April 2006, Haqqanis had expanded their operational network to a broader area. Taliban recruitment in the Zadran areas also increased.⁵³ The Haqqani network started moving openly in this area and even attacked the US base in Laka Tika. Haqqanis carried out some high-profile attacks during that time.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the Haqqani network kept on trying to develop communications with the US authorities, and in 2010, they were successful in developing this connection through Barnett Rubin (a Senior Adviser to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan in the US Department of State). Rubin reported that:

In 2010, a non-US national, employed by him at the Center on International Cooperation, New York University, held a series of meetings with Ibrahim Haqqani; first in Rawalpindi and then in Dubai with the support of a European government. All of these meetings were reported to US Special Representative for Af-Pak Richard Holbrooke and Marc Grossman. The US refused any official engagement, despite requests from Ibrahim Haqqani. Finally, a meeting took place in Dubai in August 2011. However, these

contacts were broken off after the attack on the US embassy in Kabul in September 2011. The suspected organizer of this attack was Badruddin Haqqani. The contacts continue and led to the opening of a channel to Badruddin, who sent a letter meant for Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. Unfortunately, the letter arrived at the same time as the news of Badruddin Haqqani's death in a drone attack. The courier who had helped contact Badruddin was subsequently assassinated in a very professional manner by a team of armed men in Khost.⁵⁵

Steve Coll agrees with Rubin that on August 10, 2011, a meeting took place between Frank Ruggiero (Acting Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs), Jeff Hayes (Staff Member of US Security Council), and Ibrahim Haqqani in a hotel in Dubai.⁵⁶ Frank Ruggiero met Ibrahim Haqqani for exploratory conversations after President Obama realized that unlike Al Qaeda, Haqqanis were natives to the region and could not be completely uprooted.⁵⁷ A meeting was held in Doha between Marc Grossman and Tayeb Agha, who wanted to get the Taliban recognized as a legitimate movement by opening an office in Doha and get five Taliban leaders freed from prison in return for US Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl held by the Haqqanis since 2009.⁵⁸

In view of the above-mentioned record of the dealings between the US and Haqqani network, the US authorities miscalculated the importance of Pashtun culture in deciding Haqqani's fate. The Haqqani group assiduously took up the cause of resistance against the US and other occupying forces as "Haqqani's son, Sirajuddin, shortly after his father was insulted, experienced a religious awakening and grasped the reins of the Haqqani Network as they began to slacken in Jalaluddin's aging grip. From 2002 to 2006, Sirajuddin reconstituted the network and rekindled the Taliban's might through arduous fundraising and solicitation of foreign manpower."⁵⁹

On July 7, 2015, Pakistan helped bring about a round of dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The US and the Afghan government did not oppose Haqqani's representatives in that meeting.⁶⁰ In August 2016, Sirajuddin Haqqani became deputy to the new Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada. In 2018, the peace efforts between the Taliban and the US were intensified and finally, a peace accord was signed on February 29, 2020. The agreement was welcomed by the Afghan political elites and there were calls for an early intra-Afghan dialogue, proposed to commence from March 10, 2020. However, "the date and modalities of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire including joint implementation mechanisms ... would be announced along with the completion and agreement over the future political roadmap of Afghanistan."⁶¹ Though intra-Afghan dialogue failed to take place earlier due to disputed presidential election of 2019 and failure to reach an agreement over prisoner exchange between the Taliban after the Afghan government released 3000 Taliban prisoners till May 2020,⁶² the details started appearing in the news that the first high-level intra-Afghan meeting was scheduled to be held in recent future.

The support of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the head of Haqqani Network and Deputy Head of Taliban for this peace deal seemed extraordinary. He shared his views nine days before the signing of the US-Taliban Peace deal in an op-ed published in the *New York Times* stating that "my fellow Afghans will soon celebrate this historic agreement. Once

it is entirely fulfilled, Afghans will see the departure of all foreign troops.”⁶³ Now, it is for the US to ensure that the Taliban as well as Haqqanis remain engaged in the peace process and a successful intra-Afghan dialogue takes place involving all parties.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned record explains that it is the identity and social prestige for which Jalaluddin Haqqani and his followers have been fighting since the 1970s. Haqqani rebelled against the Daud regime because he was pro-monarchy. Their loyalty to the royalty was because the monarchy had given the people of Loya Paktia a special status in Afghanistan. That is why they used to consider themselves as king-makers. Similarly, during the Soviet invasion, Haqqani was given special status by the US. The US direct aid and enormous supply of war material increased Haqqani's military and political influence in Afghanistan and transformed his militia into a powerful war machine. The CIA support gave Haqqanis a feeling of superiority amongst other Afghans.

The resultant friction between the Kandahari and non-Kandahari identities within the greater fabric of the Taliban never let Haqqanis fully own the organization during the Taliban's war against the Northern Alliance before 2001. Though the Taliban used Haqqani's men and firepower resources, yet, they kept his group at arm's length. Nevertheless, US authorities' lack of knowledge of the Afghan tribal society made them choose the wrong allies in Afghanistan. The Afghan allies of the US administration and CIA used the superpower's military and political influence in Afghanistan to settle their scores. President Karzai and the US forces mishandled Jalaluddin Haqqani while he was willing to switch sides. His brother Ibrahim Omari was picked up by one section of CIA while he was cooperating with another section of the same intelligence agency. Similarly, CIA's threatening behavior and their demand for an unconditional surrender from Jalaluddin Haqqani pushed him into a corner. Consequently, he was left with no choice but to revolt.

After the death of Jalaluddin Haqqani when his son Sirajuddin Haqqani became the head of Haqqani Network, this group carried out further ruthless operations against the US and Afghan forces that earned them prestige among the Taliban, therefore, Sirajuddin Haqqani was made the Deputy Head of the Taliban. Thus, Haqqani's decision to revolt against the occupation forces post-2001 was taken very rationally. Jalaluddin Haqqani, rather than raising the flag of rebellion against the Afghan government and the occupation forces all by himself, joined the Taliban ranks to legitimize their resistance. This decision brought a large number of recruits from other tribes as well. Taking the Haqqanis onboard in the US-Taliban deal ensured wider acceptability of the peace accord and bodes well for peace in Afghanistan in the future provided that the Afghan government and the Taliban can iron out their differences.

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- ⁵⁵ Email Message of Barnett Rubin to the author dated April, 8, 2020. Rubin is Associate Director and Senior Fellow of Centre of International Cooperation, New York University. From April 2009 until October 2013, Rubin was the Senior Adviser to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan in the U.S. Department of State. In November-December 2001 Rubin served as special advisor to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, during the negotiations that produced the Bonn Agreement.
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