

Stabilizing Afghanistan: The Need for a Comprehensive Approach

Marta Furlan

A Farsighted “New Strategy” for Afghanistan?

On Monday, August 21, 2017, in a speech at the Fort Myer military base in Arlington, Virginia, President Donald Trump disclosed a revised vision for the American war in Afghanistan.¹ Reconsidering his initial “instinct” to withdraw troops from a war that has become America’s longest (it began in October 2001, after the dramatic events of 9/11) and costliest (it has cost American taxpayers more than \$100 billion), Trump announced a “new strategy” for Afghanistan that is rooted in “principled realism.”

The first pillar of Trump’s “new strategy” is the decision to increase the number of American troops in Afghanistan. Claiming to learn from the experience in Iraq – when in 2011 American forces withdrew prematurely and left behind a vacuum that was promptly exploited by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) to gain terrain and supporters, the President welcomed the recommendations² coming from the Commander of the US Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and NATO’s Resolute Support Mission, General John W. Nicholson, and from Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and decided to add more American troops to the 11,000 already deployed in Afghanistan.³ Linked to this decision is the second pillar of the “new” strategy: while the core aims of American troops in Afghanistan will remain training Afghan forces and conducting counter-terrorism operations, the rules of engagement will be loosened and more flexibility in responding to security threats will be allowed. The third pillar is that decisions will no longer be taken on the basis of predetermined deadlines, but exclusively on the basis of the actual conditions on the ground, in the attempt to

Marta Furlan is an MA student at Università degli Studi di Trento in Italy and an intern at INSS.

contradict the Taliban's argument that "Americans have all the watches but we have all the time."⁴ Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the American engagement will fulfil the promise made by Trump since the earliest days of his electoral campaign: prioritize American national interests vis-à-vis the interests of foreign countries. In fact, despite arguing that the "new strategy" will witness an integration of all the military, economic, and diplomatic instruments of American power, Trump has made no mention of non-military measures and has rather emphasized that the United States in Afghanistan will eschew any effort at "nation-building" and will limit its involvement to "killing terrorists."

According to Trump, this "strategy" will succeed in achieving victory. However, as far as "victory" is concerned, the definition provided by the President has remained fairly vague: "attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al-Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge." From this phrasing, it seems that the US end-goal is to stabilize Afghanistan so as to prevent the country from again becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups, as it was throughout the 1990s when the Taliban government offered sanctuary to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda.⁵ However, is the militaristic approach adopted by Trump an effective "strategy" to solve the problems that have afflicted Afghanistan over the past two years and bring stability to the country?

Afghanistan: Trapped between Volatile Security, Fragile Politics, and a Bleak Economy

Since the end of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in December 2014 and its replacement with the more modest Resolute Support Mission, Afghanistan has witnessed a deteriorating security situation, as the reduction of international forces deployed on the ground has created considerable opportunities for both old and new violent groups. Already in the early 1990s, when they took their first steps from the Deobandi madrasas of Pakistan where they had received their indoctrination to the Pashtun southern regions of Afghanistan, the Taliban proved able to exploit a deteriorating security environment, state inefficiencies, and the disaffection of the people from the central government.⁶ They launched military attacks against local warlords; referred to a shared identity and system of values based on a peculiar fusion between the Pashtun tribal code (*Pashtunwali*) and Sunni Islam; and replaced Kabul as the source of

public services by building schools, mosques, roads, clinics, and *sharia* courts. In this way, the Taliban managed to garner both territorial control and popular support in the southern part of the country.⁷ From there, they expanded toward the north through a brutal military campaign, and in 1996 proclaimed their Taliban emirate over approximately 90 percent of the country.⁸ However, the Taliban emirate was a shortlived experiment of jihadi state-building that ended in 2001, when the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) defeated the Taliban and prompted the remnants of the group's leadership to relocate in the Pashtun tribal area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this new haven in the AfPak area, the group reorganized and prepared for a renaissance when new opportunities for action in Afghanistan would emerge.⁹

Those opportunities presented themselves in 2015, with the reduction of the international commitment in Afghanistan. Consequently, since 2015, Afghanistan has become the theater of an impressive Taliban resurgence that has seen the group achieve its most significant military successes and territorial gains since 2001. By means of their renewed military campaign, in fact, the Taliban have succeeded in bringing an increasingly large portion of Afghan territory under their control or influence. According to the movement's official site, *Voice of Jihad*, the Taliban today enjoy "full control" over 34 districts and "partial control" over 167, and have a "significant" presence in 52 others. These figures are not far from those reported by other sources such as SIGAR, which reports "full" Taliban control over 33 districts and "partial" control over 116 districts.¹⁰

In these areas, the Taliban have not only imposed their presence by using force and sowing fear, but have also drawn on their past experience to win the hearts and minds of the people by providing the security and the public services that Kabul is not always able to guarantee. Indeed, the introduction of structures of "shadow governance" has enabled the Taliban to consolidate and legitimize their presence and reap discrete levels of popular acceptance, especially in the southern Pashtun tribal belt that is the group's traditional stronghold, and in those rural and isolated areas that the governing arm of Kabul struggles hardest to reach.¹¹

This resurgence on the part of the Taliban has been accompanied by a parallel resurgence of the al-Qaeda threat. The bonds linking al-Qaeda and Afghanistan date back to the establishment of the group at the time of the Afghan-Soviet conflict; it was after his military experience alongside the Afghan mujahidin and the exposure to the politico-religious narrative

promoted in that context by fundamentalist ideologue Abdullah Yusuf Azzam that bin Laden founded al-Qaeda in 1988. Yet it was not until 1996, when the Taliban emirate opened its doors to bin Laden, exiled from the Sudan of al-Turabi and al-Bashir, that the linkage between al-Qaeda and Afghanistan was solidified to the point that it could not be severed, even by the US-led OEF.¹² This “special relationship” is still evident in the al-Qaeda presence in the de facto ungoverned area stretching across Afghanistan and Pakistan, where bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri succeeded in relocating al-Qaeda after the defeat of 2001, due to the weakness of Kabul and the connivance of Islamabad. From there, al-Qaeda has continued to project its power over the Afghan militancy and influence the Afghan insurgency. More recently, exploiting the reduction of the international military presence and the subsequent Taliban resurgence, al-Qaeda has managed to reconstitute a physical presence in Afghanistan by means of opening new training camps in the country’s southeast.¹³

Besides the resurgence of the Taliban and the physical reappearance of al-Qaeda, the security of Afghanistan has been negatively affected by the emergence of ISIS-Khorasan as new terrorist group active in the theater. At the apex of its expansion and power in early 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) decided to expand to Afghanistan in order to gain a *wilayat* of high strategic value and stretch the borders of its self-proclaimed caliphate.¹⁴ Moved by this intent, in January 2015 ISIS proclaimed the creation of its Afghan branch under the name ISIS-Khorasan (a reference to an ancient

With Afghanistan’s instability linked not only to security, but to political and economic factors as well, the militarized approach adopted by President Trump appears profoundly inadequate to stabilize the country.

name used to designate the easternmost region of the Persian Sassanid Empire) and established its safe haven in the northeastern province of Nangarhar. From there, the group carried out its first attacks with the aim of expanding its influence over Afghanistan.

Interestingly, at the onset of its Afghan experience, ISIS-K saw its capacity of penetration impaired by two obstacles: first, the fight waged against it by a Taliban group determined to preserve its credibility as leader of the Afghan insurgency and unwilling to share territory and influence with a parvenu group; second, the resistance of the Afghan population

that regards ISIS-K as an entity alien to the Afghan reality that promotes a purist Salafi interpretation of Islam incompatible with the Hanafi doctrine prevailing in Afghanistan and does not understand or respect the country’s

complex tribal and ethnic mosaic. Notwithstanding these obstacles, however, ISIS-K has displayed an impressive capability to perpetrate large scale terrorist attacks.¹⁵ This was especially true over the past year, as the loss of territory in the traditional Jazira region¹⁶ has encouraged ISIS to invest ever more resources and efforts in the preservation and growth of its Afghan province.¹⁷

In addition, the group proved able to exploit the aura of brutality gained in the Syrian-Iraqi arena to attract to its ranks some of the most radical members of Tariq-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), who were frustrated by years of unsuccessful jihad and fascinated by the unprecedented military accomplishments of ISIS.¹⁸ Even more relevant, though, was ISIS-K's ability to coopt into its ranks disappointed Taliban who defected from the group in the spring of 2015, when the death of the founding father Mullah Omar was disclosed and the leadership was transferred to Mansour among several controversies and bitter discussions.¹⁹

With the resurgence of old terrorist groups and the emergence of new ones, Afghanistan is today a country characterized by an ever-deteriorating security environment that has seen a dramatic rise in fighting between the insurgents and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the number of terrorist attacks, and the number of casualties. As reported by the UN Secretary General, in fact, from November 18, 2016 to May 31, 2017 there have been a total of 11,412 security incidents, including armed clashes, improvised explosive devices, targeted killings, abductions, suicide attacks, criminal acts, and intimidations.²⁰ In the same vein, the United Nations Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that from January 1, 2017 until June 30 there were 5,234 civilian casualties, constituting a 1 percent increase over the same period last year.²¹ Of these casualties, UNAMA attributed 43 percent to the Taliban, 19 percent to unidentified anti-government elements, and 5 percent to ISIS-K.²²

Moreover, the revived insurgency mounted by the Taliban and the arrival of ISIS-K has led the government to suffer a growing loss of territorial control; as reported by USFOR-A, as of May 2017, 45 districts in 15 provinces were under insurgent control (11 districts) or influence (34 districts), a 2.2 percent increase over the same period last year. The number of contested districts, however, has remained unchanged. Consequently, today 3 million Afghans live under insurgent control or influence and another 8.2 million live in contested areas.²³

This bleak situation underscores that the NATO and American missions operating in Afghanistan for sixteen years were not able to cancel the threat posed by terrorism, and that the ANSF are still not trained and equipped adequately to fight against insurgents. Called to deal with problems such as the lack of access to the most advanced weapons and other military technologies; the absence of a national strategic culture capable of joining all the different components of the Afghan social texture into the ranks of the army; and the necessity to leave several areas outside of Kabul's protective umbrella in order to concentrate forces in the major urban centers and in the regions where the threat to security is most serious, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) have often revealed their inadequacy and their dependency on external military support.²⁴

The limited competency and autonomy of the Afghan security forces are further exacerbated by endemic corruption in the upper ranks of the military establishment, which impedes the efficient and rapid transfer of weapons, food, and munitions from one outpost to the other; the widespread phenomenon of the so-called ghost soldiers who figure in the government's payroll but do not actually serve in the army; the high number of defections and the consequent climate of mutual suspicion within the army's ranks; and the threat of infiltration on the part of individuals linked to terrorist groups, who penetrate the army to conduct their attacks against military targets.²⁵ These factors not only hinder the efficiency of the ANSF but also compromise their credibility in the eyes of the local population, thus creating a worrying climate of distrust.²⁶

The limited competency and autonomy of the Afghan security forces are further exacerbated by endemic corruption in the upper ranks of the military establishment.

Besides the deteriorating security environment, Afghanistan's stability is undermined by the weakness of the central government in Kabul and the fragility of Afghanistan's democratic experiment. When in September 2014 the National Unity Government (NUG) was formed²⁷ with the Pashtun Ashraf Ghani acting as President and the Tajik Abdullah Abdullah acting as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), it seemed that the country was transitioning toward full democracy and stability. However, such hopes

were soon dashed: the patronage, corruption, nepotism, and factionalism that have historically characterized the country's politics and that find their roots in the predominance of tribal and ethnic associations over

national identity, have not spared the NUG²⁸ and have fostered within Ghani's government ethnic-tribal frictions and personal rivalries that often paralyzed policymaking. Hindered by these problems, the government failed on many occasions to implement the reforms promised on time, hold the overdue parliamentary elections, fill the vacant governmental posts, and deliver public services consistently and uniformly across the country.²⁹

More specifically, the rural areas are beyond the government's reach and have either descended into de facto anarchy or fallen victim to the political games, abuses of power, and personal interests of corrupt local governors over whom Kabul has no effective monitoring system.³⁰ Similarly, the governing performance of the NUG has been extremely disappointing in the northern regions, where warlords like Abdul Rashid Dostum, Ahmad Zia Massoud, and Atta Muhammad Noor³¹ exercise their power undisturbed, thanks to historical clan bonds, as well as in the southern and eastern regions where insurgent groups have managed to assert their territorial control and influence.

Against this background, it is not surprising that according to the latest poll conducted by the Asia Foundation,³² Afghan perceptions of the performance of governmental institutions have reached historical lows; in 2016, only 49.1 percent felt the NUG was doing a good job. Satisfaction rates are also low for provincial governments (52.9 percent), municipal governments in urban areas (42.4 percent), and district governments in rural areas (50.7 percent).

Finally, Afghanistan's internal instability is also linked to the weakness of the country's economy. According to the World Bank,³³ from 2015 to 2016 the country's GDP increased only 0.4 percent due to a decline in the industrial and manufacturing activities that offset the rise in agricultural production. Furthermore, over the same period, the population grew by 3 percent, which led to an inevitable decline of the overall per capita income. In this context of increasing poverty, domestic demand and private investments have declined; business sentiment remains largely suppressed; no new firms were registered, and unemployment has remained high at 24 percent, leaving many young people with no other or better option than joining insurgent groups and criminal networks. Also, the collection of domestic revenues on the part of the government has declined by 25 percent in the past year, leaving the country dependent on foreign aid to finance its public expenditures and balance its budget.

Similarly, the IMF has underlined how poor infrastructures, inadequate development of the country's human capital, a weak trade performance due to the temporary border closing with Pakistan, rampant corruption, and the thriving of the illicit narcotics sector are some of the main obstacles to the country's economic development.³⁴

The Need to Look Beyond the Military

It is thus clear that Afghanistan's instability is linked not only to security, but to political and economic factors as well. Given this complexity, the militarized approach adopted by President Trump appears profoundly inadequate to stabilize the country: while the increase in the number of troops is to be welcomed because it can strengthen the military capabilities of the ANSF and reduce the military threat posed by insurgent groups, a strategy that eschews "nation-building" and does not couple military measures with political and economic measures will fail to bring lasting stability to Afghanistan.

On the political level, it is necessary to address the low legitimacy that impairs the government of Kabul and has driven many Afghans to support the alternative structures of "shadow governance" established by tribal leaders, warlords, and insurgents. This can be done by ensuring a more

Moving from the theoretical definition of nation-building measures to their actual implementation is especially problematic, since Kabul lacks the capacity, Washington lacks the willingness, and the European Union lacks both.

balanced division of powers through the introduction of a quota system whereby the appointment of governmental officials and institutional figures guarantees a proportionate and fair degree of direct representation to all of the country's diverse ethnic groups. Doing so is crucial to encourage all Afghans to trust the national government regardless of their subnational ethnic identities. Second, it is necessary to fight the corruption, nepotism, and patronage that are eroding the credibility of the Afghan political system. This requires establishing clear requirements of transparency for all the nominations to official positions through ad hoc regulations and creating anti-corruption agencies in charge of ensuring that

those requirements are respected and that punitive measures are enforced in case they are violated. Finally, it is crucial to pursue reconciliation between Kabul and those many powerbrokers and insurgents that act outside of the legitimate institutions of the state and whose military and

proto-governance activities pose a serious challenge to the credibility of the central government. Following the precedent set in 2015 by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group composed of the United States, China, Russia, and Pakistan,³⁵ efforts should continue to help Kabul identify potential partners of dialogue among its current opponents and initiate negotiations with them.

On the economic level, a crucial measure is the launch of development projects aimed at modernizing agricultural production and incentivizing industrial activities in order to stimulate economic growth and create new jobs. Equally important is the promotion of trade between Afghanistan and regional as well as international partners. This can be done by lowering the current regulatory and operational barriers and investing in the improvement of Afghanistan's infrastructure. Finally, it is necessary to upset the narcotics industry by resorting to a mixture of interdiction (prevention of narcotics reaching their destination) and eradication (physical destruction of the illicit crops). On the one hand, Afghan law enforcement agencies and police must be trained, equipped, and provided with technical support to detect and seize the shipments of illicit drugs; on the other hand, the Afghan state must offer material incentives for the abandonment of poppy cultivation and develop economic projects that can offer legal and profitable alternatives to farmers.

Notwithstanding President Trump's position, engaging in such measures of nation-building is not "dictating" to Afghans how to live, but rather helping them to govern themselves effectively. However, moving from the theoretical definition to the actual implementation of these measures is especially problematic, since Kabul lacks the capacity, Washington lacks the willingness, and the European Union lacks both. As was the case in other nation-building projects from Kosovo to East Timor,³⁶ the only way ahead for a long term stabilization of Afghanistan seems to lie in the cooperation among a variety of actors that have a shared interest in making the "heart of Asia" a safe, prosperous, and self-sufficient country. This multiplicity of actors includes regional states such as India, China, and Russia; international powers such as the United States and the European Union; Afghan officials and experts; transnational organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, and the World Bank; aid and development agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP); and international and regional NGOs. Until multilateral and multidimensional

cooperation in nation-building is achieved, the hopes that war in Afghanistan will end remain an illusion.

Notes

- 1 See "Full Transcript and Video: Trump's Speech on Afghanistan," *New York Times*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/world/asia/trump-speech-afghanistan.html?mcubz=1>.
- 2 Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. General Seeks "a Few Thousand" More Troops in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/us/politics/us-afghanistan-troops.html>.
- 3 H. Cooper, "U.S. Says It Has 11,000 Troops in Afghanistan, More Than Formerly Disclosed," *New York Times*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/30/world/asia/afghanistan-troop-totals.html>.
- 4 Con Coughlin, "Afghanistan: The Clock is Ticking for Obama as the Taliban Bides its Time," *The Telegraph*, December 4, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/6724196/Afghanistan-the-clock-is-ticking-for-Obama-as-the-Taliban-bides-its-time.html>.
- 5 For an account of the relationship between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, see for instance Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knop, 2006).
- 6 Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), chs.1-3.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., ch. 3.
- 9 Ibid., ch. 17.
- 10 Bill Roggio, "Taliban Controls or Contests 40 Percent of Afghan Districts: SIGAR," *Long War Journal*, May 1, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/05/taliban-controls-or-contests-40-percent-of-afghan-districts-sigar.php>.
- 11 "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.cfr.org/interactives/taliban?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!/taliban?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115; A. Giustozzi, "Hearts, Minds, and the Barrel of a Gun: The Taliban's Shadow Government," *Prism* 3, no. 2 (2012).
- 12 Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*.
- 13 Katherine Zimmerman, "Al-Qaeda's Strengthening in the Shadows," Statement before the House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence on "The Persistent Threat: Al Qaeda's Evolution and Resilience," American Enterprise Institute, July 13, 2017.
- 14 Seth G. Jones, "Expanding the Caliphate: ISIS's South Asia Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, November 6, 2015.
- 15 Global Terrorism Database, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?perpetrator=40371>.

- 16 *Jazira*, literally, “island.” The term designates a region mainly between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers. Today the area is divided in two halves by the Syrian-Iraq boundary. It roughly coincides with the Syrian governorates of Raqqa, Hasakah, and Deir el-Zor and with the Iraqi provinces of Nineveh and most of Salah al-Din and al-Anbar. It is the area where ISIS proclaimed its caliphate in June 2014.
- 17 See Massoumeh Torfeh, “ISIL in Afghanistan: A Growing Threat,” *al-Jazeera*, August 20, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/isil-afghanistan-growing-threat-170813133122968.html>.
- 18 Caitlin Forrest and Richard DeKold, “Warning Update: The Expansion of ISIS in Northwestern Afghanistan,” Institute for the Study of War, February 22, 2017, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/warning-update-expansion-isis-northwestern-afghanistan>.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 UN, Report of the Secretary-General, “The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security,” June 15, 2017, p. 4.
- 21 UNAMA, “Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Midyear Report 2017,” July 2017.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 USFOR-A, response to SIGAR data call, 5/15/2017, 3/01/2017, and 5/28/2017; SIGAR analysis of USFOR-A provided data, 6/2017.
- 24 Caitlin Forrest, “Afghanistan Partial Threat Assessment,” Institute for the Study of War, November 22, 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/afghanistan-partial-threat-assessment-november-22-2016>; John F. Sopko, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, “Assessing the Capabilities and Effectiveness of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces,” Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, February 12, 2016, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-16-17-TY.pdf>.
- 25 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/high-risk-list/index.html>.
- 26 “A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2016,” The Asia Foundation, https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016_Survey-of-the-Afghan-People_Exec-Summary.pdf.
- 27 Full text of the government of national unity deal available at <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/miscellaneous/the-government-of-national-unity-deal-full-text/>.
- 28 Sameer Lalwani, “Ambling Blindly Back Into the Mountains: 5 Hard Questions for the Next Phase of Afghanistan,” *War on the Rocks.com*, February 23, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/02/ambling-blindly-back-into-the-mountains-5-hard-questions-for-the-next-phase-of-afghanistan/>.

- 29 Pamela Constable, "Afghan President is under Siege as Violence, Joblessness Persist," *Washington Post*, August 13, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghan-president-under-siege-as-violence-joblessness-persists/2017/08/12/f85d680e-779b-11e7-8c17-533c52b2f014_story.html.
- 30 Rustam Qobil, "At the Mercy of Afghanistan's Warlords," *BBC*, November 28, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-19983266>.
- 31 Ahmed Rashid, "Trepidation at the Return of Afghan Warlords," *Financial Times*, May 31, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/b7beff98-3e3d-11e7-82b6-896b95f30f58>; Shawn Snow, "Fortress Kabul and Afghanistan's Warlords," *National Interest*, September 6, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/fortress-kabul-afghanistans-warlords-17582>; Shawn Snow, "Afghanistan Still Hasn't Recovered From the Soviet Invasion," *National Interest*, July 31, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/afghanistan-still-hasnt-recovered-the-soviet-invasion-17196>.
- 32 "A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2016."
- 33 World Bank, "Navigating Risk and Uncertainty in Afghanistan," Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, October 4-5, 2016, pp. 2, 5-6, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/933791475512010365/WB-Brussels-ConfAF-Presentation-FINAL.pdf>; World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update*, October 2016, p. 13, <https://goo.gl/jDAeFC>.
- 34 IMF, "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Request for a Three-Year Arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility," IMF Country Report, No.16/252, July 2016, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2016/cr16252.pdf>.
- 35 J. Boone, "Afghanistan and Taliban Peace Talks End with Promise to Meet Again," *The Guardian*, July 8, 2015.
- 36 J. Dobbins et al., *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007).