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Peace Negotiations on Afghanistan in the 21st Century

A Comparative Analysis of Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020

**Kieler Analysen zur Sicherheitspolitik Nr. 51
August 2021**



Table of Contents:

Abstract.....	1
1. Introduction.....	2
1.1 Literature Review.....	3
1.2 Relevance of the Study.....	4
1.3 Objective and Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Structure.....	4
2. Methodological Framework.....	5
2.1 Sources of Information.....	5
2.2 Limitations and Delimitations.....	6
2.3 Definition of Terms.....	6
3. The Conference in Bonn.....	7
3.1 Preconditions in 2001.....	7
3.2 Participants and Interests.....	9
3.3 Objectives.....	12
3.4 Outcome.....	13
4. Peace Talks in Doha.....	14
4.1 Preconditions in 2020.....	15
4.2 Participants and Interests.....	19
4.3 Objectives.....	24
4.4 Outcome.....	25
5. Discussion of the Findings.....	25
5.1 Preconditions.....	25
5.1.1 Host Countries Germany and Qatar.....	25
5.1.2 Time Frame.....	26
5.1.3 Status-Quo in 2001 and 2020.....	26
5.1.4 Power Leverage.....	27
5.1.5 Trends on International Affairs in 2001 and 2020.....	28
5.2 Agents and Interests.....	28
5.2.1 Representation at the Negotiation Table.....	28
5.2.2 Participation of the Taliban.....	29
5.2.3 The Role of the US and the Principle of a Light Footprint.....	31
5.2.4 The Role of Regional Players.....	32
5.2.5 Knowledge and Strategy.....	33

5.3	Objectives and Outcome	33
5.3.1	Objectives	33
5.3.2	Outcome.....	34
5.4	Learnings	36
6.	Conclusion	40
	Abbreviations	43
	Bibliography.....	44



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 Sitz und Registergericht: Kiel, HRB-Nr.: 16406 KI,
 Geschäftsführer: Prof. Dr. Joachim Krause und Dr. Stefan Hansen

Abstract

The current peace talks in Doha and the peace process about Afghanistan have stagnated. The state as defined in 2001 is now being challenged 20 years later. This analysis aims to compare the peace negotiations in Bonn and Doha in the period from October 2001 to February 2021. These are two historical turning points on the long road towards peace for Afghanistan and its people. For this purpose, the following research question is raised: What are the similarities and differences between the Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020 negotiations? As found by this research, the similarities between Bonn and Doha are the objective of the negotiations, the status-quo of Afghanistan, their exclusion of civil actors, and the light footprint approach. Their difference lies in the preconditions at hand, such as timeframe, place, diplomatic leverage, trends on international affairs, the agent constellations, the dominance of the US, the importance of regional actors, as well as knowledge and strategy. Secondly, the following question will be answered: What can be learned from Bonn and Doha? The discussion of the findings results in ten recommendations for a sustainable peace process in Afghanistan. It is hypothesized that there is a correlation between Bonn and Doha. Most importantly, the analysis reveals that Doha is a consequence of the failure of the peace process in Bonn.

Keywords: *Afghanistan, Peace Process, negotiations, Bonn Agreement, Doha Peace talks, State-building, Failed state, Taliban*

1. Introduction

“Every morning my first message on the phone is ‘an attack in Kabul’. For the people, there is no peace and optimism because there is no noticeable improvement. It was different in Bonn: Bonn was a phase of euphoria.”¹

~ Dr. Kirchner (line 146-148)

“It is certainly not what we all dreamed of, but now it is important to keep talking. That is why the negotiations in Doha are so important.”²

~ Manderla (line 49-50)

Bonn and Doha: Two different cities, two different times, but with one specific vision; the vision to find a peaceful outcome in the matter of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a shattered and wounded country. The country’s situation is known as a vicious cycle of war and violence and as the “graveyards of empires” (Bearden, 2001, p. 17) during an ongoing conflict. A war economy, a degraded natural environment, a traumatized war-affected population, and increasing violent attacks are all evidence of the stagnation of Afghanistan’s development.

At this point, a historical overview will be given to understand the following events and their effects on the country. Several decades of instability: the Russian invasion of 1979, the US invasions of 2001, the era of the warlords, and the

civil war afterward have left Afghanistan in turmoil for the past 40 years (Dr. Iram Khalid & Mushtaq, 2020, p. 525). In 1996, the Taliban claimed power in Afghanistan and established the Emirate of Afghanistan (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, pp. 6-7). The Taliban had close ties, hosted, and afforded protection to Al-Qaeda, which was seen responsible for the attack on the World Trade Centre in the United States (US) on September 11, 2001. “A new type of asymmetric threat (occurred) that has proliferated in the form of insurgencies and terrorism” (De los Reyes Va’zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 187). In 2001, the “George W. Bush administration (hence) decided to eliminate Taliban control of the Afghan government” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 6) (Council, 2001) (US Congress, 2001) in response to the Twin Tower attack.

After the Taliban seemed defeated militarily by the US, a conference in Bonn, Germany, was launched in 2001. A process to bargain about Afghanistan’s future, that of its people, and the stability of the entire region was initiated and ended with the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement). The Agreement had to strengthen the new elaborated democratic Afghan state and civil society. High prestige and hope for the country came along with the paper. During the process of reconstruction, more than

¹ Jeden Morgen ist meine erste Nachricht auch auf dem Telefon „ein Anschlag in Kabul“. Für die Menschen gibt es keine Friedensdividende und Optimismus, weil keine Verbesserung spürbar ist. Das war in Bonn anders: Bonn war eine Phase der Euphorie. (translation of the author)

² Es ist sicherlich nicht das, was wir uns alle erträumt haben, aber nun ist es wichtig, dass man weiterhin im Gespräch bleibt. Deshalb sind jetzt die Verhandlungen in Doha so wichtig. (translation of the author)

41 countries operated in Afghanistan. The US spent over two Trillion US dollars and has lost over 2,400 military personnel during its fight with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, making it one of the most expensive wars in history (Dr. Iram Khalid & Mushtaq, 2020, p. 532) (The New York Times, 2019). Although many actors have actively taken part in state-building measures and many sectors have developed, the future of Afghanistan remains uncertain (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 290).

In September 2020, intra-Afghan talks were held in Doha. Afghan representatives, as well as internal and external actors, were coming together to talk repeatedly about the country's future. Not many of the visions from 2001 have survived. A former agreement between the US and the Taliban (US-Taliban-Deal) resulted in the withdrawal of US security forces until May 2021. After 20 years, the peacebuilding process has taken another turn or might even be considered as failed.

1.1 Literature Review

Afghanistan is often the subject of academic debate. The country has been increasingly examined in the context of "state failure", "state-building", or "nation-building" (Kargar, 2012, p. 9). "Following the definition (...) by the Washington-based Fund for Peace, a failed state is one in which the government cannot physically control its territory (as it) has only a limited monopoly, or none at all, on the legitimate use of force, is unable to provide basic public services, and cannot represent the whole

country in the international community" (De los Reyes Va'zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 188). However, the individual studies about failure in Afghanistan differ greatly from their point of view. US studies see more success in the state- and society-building efforts than European studies, which are more critical and more balanced (Kargar, 2012, p. 9). European studies see the US withdrawal as morally irresponsible, leaving a destroyed, nondemocratic country behind with a successful outcome being far from reach. A military and political defeat is seen as unacceptable as it would harm the European Union's (EU) common foreign policy and damage its credibility (Korski, 2008). Most European countries share a common analysis of the problems: Factors such as the lack of an overall strategy, the extent of the war economy, the merging of military and civilian reconstruction components, the lack of social mobilization, and the strong military orientation of the state-building project by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are blamed for the lack of success (Kargar, 2012, pp. 9-10). Afghan political historians point to several crucial factors that complicate the current state-building process. These range from historical legacies to social fragmentation to current decisions made by national and international actors to mediate peace and rebuild the Afghan state (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 35).

Numerous studies assess statehood and performance in governance such as the Failed States Index, Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, Worldwide Governance Indicators, or the Bertelsmann Transformation Index. According

to the Failed States Index of the Fund of Peace, Afghanistan is one of the ten most failed states in the world (Fund for Peace, 2021). The Bertelsmann Transformation Index shows through the Political and Economic Transformation and Governance Index that Afghanistan is ranked 119th among 125 surveyed countries (Bertelsmann Transformation Index, 2021).

At the beginning of the transformation of the Afghan state (2001-2003), there was a limited selection of literature. In the meantime, a flood of information on this topic has emerged in the form of official papers, scholarly monographs, essays, and journalistic articles.

1.2 Relevance of the Study

The Afghan peace process was selected based on recent developments in Doha. The Bonn process has received and continues to receive relatively little critical attention in research and practice (Katzman in Kargar, 2012, p. 103). The international community and Afghanistan can learn their lessons by studying the missed opportunities at Bonn that kept them from resolving the conflict (Malkasian, 2020). This analysis extends previous studies, by drawing consequences and conclusions from former political talks. Faults of the negotiations in Bonn might be reflected and corrected in the peace talks in Doha. Accordingly, this study can add scientific value to the field of Science Diplomacy. The analysis will conclude on future approaches in diplomacy, state-building, and international support.

1.3 Objective and Research Questions

This analysis will provide a comparative study on the negotiations in Bonn and Doha within the timeframe of December 2001 through February 2021. Doha is mainly mentioned by the year 2020 because the talks were initiated in September 2020. The understanding and analysis of the diplomatic events at Bonn and Doha will be the main subject. The central research question can be divided into two main questions. Part one of the research will focus on the question:

What are the similarities and differences between the Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020 negotiations?

The comparative study attempts to emphasize fundamental problems and elaborate on “bad diplomacy” in both processes. The second main question of this paper is researching:

What can be learned from Bonn and Doha?

1.4 Structure

Following the introduction, this study’s approach and methodology are explained. In the third part, the Bonn Conference in 2001 is described. The fourth chapter offers an analysis of the Doha negotiations in 2020. The analysis includes initial conditions, agents, and different interest coalitions, objectives, and the outcome of the negotiations. Subsequently, the two events are compared in the fifth chapter. The comparative categories include the preconditions, the agents and agent interests, objectives of the negotiation, and the outcome. Their incentives are interpreted and evaluated. The

main problems of the political, military, and personnel decisions in the negotiations are critically examined and "lessons learned" are drawn from them for future negotiations. The final part contains the study's main findings and conclusion.

2. Methodological Framework

This analysis is based on a qualitative and deductive desk study. Qualitative research is "an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied" (Corte & Aspers, 2019, p. 139).

More precisely, the approach will be utilizing a comparative method. The comparative method is the systematic comparison of units of inquiry with the general goal of verification or formulation of hypotheses. It is a common tool in social science, especially in comparative politics that aims to explore politics relating to political behavior, institutions, conflicts, and the causes and consequences of economic development within or between countries. The comparison serves to formally describe structures, conditions, or occasions, to explain certain correlation and causal relationships, to conclude on possible developments, and to evaluate interpretations.

The comparative method is useful to examine similarities and differences between the two diplomatic occasions in Bonn and Doha. As a starting point, academic literature, reports, and published news on the peace process in Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020 are analyzed. The

analytical framework consists of a description of both occasions. The findings will be interpreted and evaluated in the discussion and finally compared. The comparative categories will be the preconditions in both negotiations as time frame, western influence, military advantage, status-quo, the agents and their interest, and the objectives and outcome. The main problems of this peace process will be clarified. This deductive research is based on the formulated hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between the peace talks in Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020. Relevant information is collected and analyzed to finally approve or disapprove the assumption made in the beginning.

2.1 Sources of Information

Information about the Bonn process in 2001 is gathered from journal articles such as Fields & Ahmed (2011), Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan (2020), Kargar (2012), and Dr. Suhrke (2018), databases, official documents, such as the Bonn Agreement (2001), and other reference works. This literature is used to understand the characteristic of negotiation and behavior of key agents in order to find similarities or differences to the peace talks in 2020. Findings on the ongoing peace talks in Doha have been gathered mostly from different international news media such as Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, The Voice of America, Arab News, and The New York Times.

The data and information are gathered from several articles published by both Afghanis and western authors. In this way, a more comprehensive, accurate analysis of the Afghan peace

process is enabled to avoid a Eurocentric view. The US-Afghani author Barnett Rubin worked as a special advisor to the United Nations special representative for Afghanistan. In this regard, his objectivity should be put into consideration.

Qualitative interviews were an important part of the research methodology. Qualitative interviews were conducted with experts in the field of security policy, as well as with representatives of institutions that carry out civil society development work in Afghanistan. Three of four experts had direct contact with the Afghan civil society and live or have lived in Afghanistan. The interview partners are:

- Gisela Manderla, Member of the German Parliament and correspondent for Afghanistan in the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee (interview 1);
- Dr. Ellinor Zeino, Head of the Afghanistan Office at the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (interview 2);
- Dr. Magdalena Kirchner, Country Director Afghanistan at Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (interview 3) and
- Dr. Michael Rohschürmann, expert at the Institute for Security Policy at Christian-Albrechts-University in Kiel (interview 4).

All interviews were conducted by telephone in January 2021. The interviews were based on a prepared questionnaire. The results are used qualitatively as supporting statements or quotes throughout this study.

2.2 Limitations and Delimitations

This analysis is limited to studying similarities and differences in the peace process in Bonn and Doha and to the problems determining the success or failure of the peace process. This study covers the time frame from the preparation and beginning of the Bonn Conference, in October 2001 to the end of January 2021, in Doha. Other conferences on Afghanistan, such as Berlin (2004), London (2006), Paris (2008), Kabul (2010), Bonn (2011), Chicago (2012), Tokyo (2012), London (2014), Warsaw (2016), Brussels (2016) and Geneva (2019) will not be considered (Office of the Deputy Minister for policy, 2019) because they exceed the scope of this work. As a consequence of the little information available and a deadlock in current peace talks in Doha the most recent developments cannot be taken into consideration. Therefore, this analysis ends at the beginning of February 2021. Due to the comparative approach, no theoretical framework will be used upon Afghan negotiations.

2.3 Definition of Terms

Peace is “a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). “Peace is not just a political phenomenon and does not merely imply an absence of war (negative peace). Peace spans social, cultural, legal, psychological, and economic dimensions (positive peace)” (Malley-Morrison, Mercurio, & Twose, 2013, p. 83) (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 6).

Peace negotiations or peace talks refer to discussions aimed at reaching both reconciliation and a peace agreement (Schirch, 2001, p. 6).

As a basic condition for the comparative study, it should be clarified if the consultations in Bonn can be defined as a peace negotiation. Several sources are referring to Bonn as a “peace process” (Kargar, 2012, p. 101), or a “start of Afghan peace process” (The Guardian, 2001). The Bonn Agreement was the political settlement that provided the fundament for building a new, more democratic state and a strong civil society. Nevertheless, not all conflict parties were involved; the Taliban were defeated and excluded from the discussions unlike in the Doha peace talks. That is why the Bonn process cannot be defined directly as peace talks but it might compose similar elements. Both negotiations in Bonn and Doha aim for bringing peace to Afghanistan. A comparison of two historically important events in the peace process in Afghanistan should be noted as an appropriate methodology.

3. The Conference in Bonn

The International Conference on Afghanistan, widely known as the Bonn Conference, took part from November 27 to December 5, 2001, in Bonn, Germany. The conference was attended by 28 prominent Afghans deciding on a plan for the democratization of the country. Therefore, detailed conditions and contents of the conference are described in the following.

³ Deutschland hat bewiesen, dass man ein Land wiederaufbauen kann, wenn es kaputt ist. Was wir Afghanistan 2001 gezeigt haben, war nicht

3.1 Preconditions in 2001

Several circumstances were influencing the process of negotiations on Afghanistan: **the place, time, the status-quo in 2001, the military leverage of the US, and trends in international affairs in the 2000s.**

The negotiations took **place** at the Petersberg Hotel in Bonn, a German city. The negotiations among the Afghan groups should happen in a safe environment, free of external influence or interruption (James Dobbins in Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 8), and hence did not consider the Taliban during their time in power (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 13). Germany has historically close relations with Afghanistan going “back to the first contacts between the governments of the German Reich and the Kingdom of Afghanistan in 1915” (Auswärtige Amt, 2020). Germany was also engaged in Afghanistan by initiating the Afghan Support Group in 2001 (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2001). Afghanistan saw a reliable partner in Germany because it has proven that it is possible to rebuild a country when it is broken like it was after 1945³ (interview Rohschürmann, line 273-274). Even though, following September 11, 2001, Germany was considered a close ally to the US in efforts against terrorism and combating foreign fighters (US Department of State, 2019). Germany's participation in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the US military operation against the Taliban regime and Al-Qaeda strongholds, was evidence of the strong

Deutschland 1945, sondern Deutschland 2001. (translation of the author)

German-American political relations in 2001. Germany was represented by Chancellor Schröder and Federal Foreign Minister Fischer who remained silent observers during the conference (Deutsche Welle, 2020) (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2019). The German host claimed its impartial role vis-à-vis to all parties.

While conference participants gathered, “events rapidly unfolded on the battlefield in favor” of the US and its partners (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 7). The military advantage gained by the US and its Afghan partners pressured the participating parties at the conference to “seek a **timely political solution**” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 7). As the situation on the battlefield quickly evolved there was a broad desire not to repeat the power vacuum and civil war of the 1990s (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 22). The negotiators were moving with urgency and directed a speedy resolution rather than drawn-out conclusive talks (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 8). Besides the speed of the negotiations at Bonn, held over nine days, a lot of additional pre-negotiation was done by US Envoy Dobbins, who was assigned in October 2001. Within a month of assuming his duties, he achieved to talk to all key agents and found international support for an Interim Government which was essential to overcome obstacles during the conference (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 14).

With more than two decades of crisis, due to the internal conflicts and the invasion of the Soviet army, most of the country's subsystems, as state, economy, culture, law, had to be accounted for being destroyed (Kargar, 2012, pp. 77-8). According to a strictly scientific understanding,

the Afghan state of 2001 existed only in an abstract way (ibid) meaning the post-Taliban state did not fulfill the elements of a state, the state territory, state population, and state power (Jellinek, 1914, pp. 394–434). The diplomatic urgency in Bonn was to find a solution for the remaining society and institutions in Afghanistan and the stability of the region.

As mentioned before, the US-led mission OEF gained **significant leverage on the battlefield**. The intervention was triggered by the attacks of 11 September 2001. Since the announcement of US President Bush (October 7, 2001) the US, their allied NATO forces, and Afghan partners Northern Alliance fought the international terrorist network Al-Qaeda and removed the Taliban regime that had given support to that network (Malkasian, 2020) (Cottey, 2003, p. 166). The US operation focused on airstrikes while the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives were working on the ground (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 7). The Taliban were unable to sustain their control over Afghanistan as the Northern Alliance dominated on the battlefield in late November (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 6) and finally captured Kabul in December 2001 (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, pp. 56-57).

“Most of the Northern Alliance’s recent battlefield success was the result of US military power” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 8). The **military advantage** of the US-led to a general US dominance in the talks in Bonn. Eliminating the Taliban’s power placed the US in a position to leverage influence (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 8).

With the end of the Cold War, there was a significant longer-term trend in international politics concerning intervention as a tool to protect human rights (Cottey, 2003, p. 166). Classic examples of humanitarian interventions by major powers are the interventions in Iraq (1991), Somalia (1992), and Haiti (1994), which were approved by the United Nations Security Council (Humanrights.ch, 2015). Since September 11, 2001, the international community has been increasingly concerned with counterterrorist war operations. “It was the **height of international interventionism**: large empires, especially the US as the last remaining superpower, believed that they were able to spread and enforce a certain culture, ideology, and worldview”⁴ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 65-69). The international intervention in Afghanistan has been characterized by the interrelated combination of counterterrorist and peace-building operations (Cottey, 2003, p. 167).

3.2 Participants and Interests

Four delegations from various Afghan factions with a total of 28 delegates came together to discuss the future of Afghanistan. The negotiations took place in a sequence of plenary sessions and direct talks among the involved parties. The negotiations were based on the Afghan lead approach under United Nations (UN) auspices. “Official representatives of other nations were

only observers at the conference” (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 22).

Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Atta Annan, and UN special representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, were mediators in this process. **Brahimi** was entrusted with scripting and directing the talks for the UN (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 12). He played a central role in designing the solution “for progressively wider elections and mechanisms to establish representative institutions” (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 22). He created a separate space for the Afghan lead process by formally dividing them from foreign state delegates. Even though “Afghans and international observers (socialized) freely and frequently in the corridors” (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 23), the regional and international context had become limited. His strategy was to facilitate the development of consensus among non-Taliban Afghan factions; call in external state support among Afghanistan’s neighbors and the major powers called the 6+2 group⁵, and reconcile the political and military developments (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 23).

Since October 2001, **Dobbins** worked as US Envoy to the Afghan Opposition. He was well experienced due to negotiations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo but he had no previous experience in the Central Asia region (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 9). His approach was based on personal contact with key interagency

⁴ Man kann sagen, dass das die Hochzeit war des internationalen Interventionismus. Das heißt große Imperien, vor allem die USA als letzte verbliebene Supermacht, waren der Meinung, dass sie in der Lage sind, eine bestimmte Kultur, Ideologie und

Weltanschauung in der Welt verbreiten zu können und das auch durchzusetzen. (translation of the author)

⁵ China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, plus the US and Russia

players, exchanging ideas, and negotiating from a variety of angles. He figured out objectives and negotiated limits for the road ahead and implemented his informal coordination into official US policy (ibid). “(...) His previous experience, leadership ability, and willingness to consider the (advice) of his professional associates would prove essential to overcome obstacles during the conference” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 12).

Other key contributors to the US-Afghanistan policy were Zalmay Khalilzad, serving as Bush's Special Presidential Envoy for Afghanistan, and Barnett Rubin, working as a special advisor to the UN special representative for Afghanistan Brahimi (Rubin B. , 2002).

The following Afghan factions negotiated at the conference: The Northern Alliance, the Rome Group, the Cyprus Group, and the Peshawar Group (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 22).

The Northern Alliance provided eleven delegates mostly from ethnic groups like Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazara, and were representing the resistance forces to the Taliban regime. The group was a close US ally and operated directly on the ground with them (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 7). Since their victory and capture of Kabul in December 2001, the Alliance had been the de-facto-ruler in Afghanistan. Therefore, the Northern Alliance played a key role in the distribution of power positions and represented by far the most powerful Afghan delegation in Bonn (Kargar, 2012, p. 101). They have been supported by India, Iran, and Russia (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). Their main interests were shared

power in the newly formed institution and the prevention of a resurgence of the Taliban.

The Pashtun-influenced **Rome Group** consisted of exiled supporters of former King Mohammed Zahir Shah who lived mainly in Rome (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 8). Before the Bonn Process Dobbins met with King Zahir and his supporters in Italy (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 13). The eleven delegates were considered, along with the Northern Alliance, as the second most important faction at the conference (Kargar, 2012, p. 101), although the pro-Western group remained mostly spectators during the division of power.

The Peshawar Group, represented by five delegates, was a broad alliance of mostly traditional Pashtuns and former Afghan leaders in Pakistan. They supported the inclusion of moderate jihadists in a new government (Kargar, 2012, p. 101).

The Cyprus Group, also represented by five exiled Hazara delegates, with ties to Iran and the ultra-Islamist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, played only a marginal role at the conference (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 22) (Kargar, 2012, p. 101).

Interests of **regional and international agents** were considered even though they were excluded from the formal sessions (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 22). By the eve of the conference, Dobbins had met with the Indian, Russian, and Iranian delegations, as well as key civilian and military leaders of Pakistan, Turkey, and Germany (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 14). Afghanistan's border nations, like Pakistan, Iran, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, and

India, entered the negotiations with their own power and political interests. Those regional stakeholders helped shape the state-building process in Bonn (Kargar, 2012, p. 108) (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 7). “(...) No government in the region around Afghanistan supported a long-term (US) or NATO presence” (Rubin & Rashid, 2008), so the presence and leverage of the US were carefully observed.

In 2001, the **US strategic objective** for Afghanistan was to make sure that Al-Qaeda will neither regroup, nor that Afghanistan will provide a haven to terrorist networks (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). After 9/11 and after the declaration of the “Global War on Terror” the Bush administration saw Afghanistan's weakness and the regional instability as security threats for US interests and the entire Western civilization (Rubin & Rashid, 2008) (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 21). The formal legal basis for the US-led intervention was self-defense (Cottey, 2003, pp. 166-167). The US desired to “install a government that would be friendly to the US (and would refrain) from harboring any terrorists on its soil” (Katzman in Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 56) (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 17). Through its military success and leverage on the Bonn Process, the US maintained by far the most important asset (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, pp. 22-23).

Different was the official approach the US purchased in Bonn. A “**light footprint**” of international players in Afghanistan had to be implemented. US envoy Dobbins tried to minimize US influence and supported Afghan ownership in the negotiations (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p.

18). Given “Afghanistan’s history of resistance to foreign occupation and influence” (ibid, p. 10), this was an attempt not to intervene in Afghan concerns. The international stakeholders were to invest in aid projects to enable the establishment of stable and representative institutions which provided legitimacy, responsibility, and sustainability (Hamidzada & Rubin, 2007, p. 22) (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 30). The role of the UN was limited to monitoring the implementation of the Bonn Agreement (Bonn Agreement, 2001, p. 6). Through the light footprint approach short-term interests of individual states or international organizations should be avoided (Wilke, 2004, p. 23).

In September 2001, **Pakistan** announced to support the US-led intervention against the Taliban in Afghanistan to prevent the US from allying with India (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). Pakistan made it clear that they would be hostile to a “Northern Alliance–run Afghanistan (that would (strengthen) Indian interests and threaten Pakistan” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 10). Because of the Taliban government until 2001 and their brutal persecution of ethnic minorities, such as Hazara Afghans, many Afghans migrated to Pakistan and Iran (bpb, 2019).

Iran sought cooperation with the US against Al-Qaeda and the Sunni-based Taliban. However, its relation to the US remained difficult (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). This “opened the opportunity for Dobbins to engage the Iranians directly in negotiations” (Dobbins in Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 13). The Iran delegation’s suggestion to hold democratic elections ultimately

appeared in the Bonn Agreement (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 15).

Russia and India, both supporting the Northern Alliance, had reservations that the US and NATO were seeking a permanent military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia (Rubin & Rashid, 2008).

China had major interests in a peaceful environment to advance further trade in the region (Rubin & Rashid, 2008).

Although so many different stakeholders were present, the main opposition war party was excluded in Bonn. **The Taliban**, officially ruling as an Islamic Emirate from 1996 to 2001, were assumed not to come back after their military defeat (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 18). Taliban's support to the terrorist group Al-Qaeda cost them their role as a legitimate party in the negotiations (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 54). Senior Taliban leaders were interested in reducing future violence and tried to "negotiate a peace deal (...) in December 2001: They were willing to lay down their arms and recognize the (new) country's legitimate leader" (Malkasian, 2020). But the "implicit US condition was that (the) Taliban would not participate in the talks" (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 21). US military campaigns continued with an intensity well into 2002 (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 21). The Taliban were classified as a terrorist group and fought accordingly. Anyone who was formerly involved with the Taliban has either been arrested or persecuted (Rubin B. , 2002). No protection

was provided for surrendering Taliban leaders (ibid). The Taliban were not allowed "to live in peace after the fall of their regime" (Clark, 2013).

3.3 Objectives

The various parties had different interests but shared a common concern that, if an arrangement was not made, Afghanistan would fall back into civil war and instability (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 7). Finding a consensus between a diverse group of Afghans and a large number of international diplomats was essential (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 190). The effort of this joint post-war statement was to open the way for the political reconstruction process and "help the country seek a better future for its citizens" (De los Reyes Va'zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 189).

Especially US interest in stabilizing Afghanistan and the region was reflected in the main objectives at the Bonn Conference. The goal of the Bonn Process of 2001 was state-building or nation-building to build an Afghanistan that will contribute to, rather than threaten, global security (Rubin B. , 2002) (Dr. Iram Khalid & Mushtaq, 2020, p. 526). Condoleezza Rice, the former US National Security Advisor, made use of the domino theory and reversed it. It was assumed that stable states were mostly democratic countries. If Western democracies can be installed in Afghanistan and Iraq, all surrounding countries will gradually become democracies⁶

⁶ Condoleezza Rice, die ehemalige US-Sicherheitsberaterin, hat die Domino-Theorie umgedreht, die

besagt, dass wenn ein Staat kommunistisch wird, die umliegenden Staaten auch kommunistisch werden.

(interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 80-83). For international security policy, Afghanistan was chosen to become a model of state-building that would serve as a benchmark for other cases of failed statehood (Kargar, 2012, p. 86). Principles like Islam, democracy, pluralism, and social justice should be brought in accordance (Bonn Agreement, 2001).

3.4 Outcome

The Bonn or Petersberg Agreement formed the central final Agreement document. It was regarded as the starting point and political framework for the transformation phase (Maaß in Kargar, 2012, p. 102). The final agreement was drafted by all leaders at Bonn but signed only by Afghans, and witnessed by Brahimi on December 5, 2001 (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 22) (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 18). A preliminary step towards a post-war order was to agree on the structures of state and broad political and social norms (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 23). Four key achievements of the peace process can be identified: **power-sharing through a democratically legitimized government, approval of the newly elaborated Constitution, demobilization of militias, and gaining international support** (Bonn Agreement, 2001). The Bonn objectives will be further elaborated on later.

The issue of the leader of the emergency Interim Government was deeply debated among international representatives. Under consensus among Afghans and the international

community, especially Pakistan, Hamid Karzai was selected on 22 December 2001 to serve a six-month term as chairman of the Interim Administration (Dr. Iram Khalid & Mushtaq, 2020, p. 13) (Hamidzada & Rubin, 2007, p. 8). His governance was confirmed in fair and free presidential elections in 2004, aiming to legitimize political leadership (Kargar, 2012, p. 102) (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020, p. 240). “The establishment of a **broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic, and fully representative government**” (Bonn Agreement, 2001, p. 1) was one key achievement of Bonn. In terms of balanced political power, it could not be dispersed to the Northern Alliance only and Pashtun leaders not associated with the Taliban had to be included (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 11). Balancing control of central government offices among ethnic minorities and persuading the victorious Northern Alliance to share power was important at Bonn (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 20).

A Loya Jirga, a Constitutional Council, and their commissions were charged with drafting and adopting a **new constitution for Afghanistan** in eighteen months, which would provide the legal basis for further work during the transformation phase (Kargar, 2012, p. 102). In January 2004, the Afghan Loya Jirga approved a new constitution containing a central government with a strong president (Malkasian, 2020), the formation of political parties, and a multi-party system (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 60).

Sie nahm an, dass wenn man es schafft, in Afghanistan und im Irak westliche Demokratien zu installieren, werden alle umliegenden Länder auch nach und

nach zu Demokratien werden. (translation of the author)

A **new Afghan security force** was required after the fall of the Taliban regime. A government's monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force is an essential requirement for a functional state (De los Reyes Va'zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 188). After the Bonn negotiations, efforts were made to reform the security sector including forming a new army in 2002. The "warlords who led the Northern Alliance to success on the battlefield controlled roughly 75 percent of Afghanistan" (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 19). That is why "all armed forces and groups (were) placed under the command of the Interim Afghan Authority" (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 21). Regional political-military groupings were kept intact and the privately-acting rulers shared the power in the country (Suhrke, Strand, & Berg Harpviken, 2002, p. 885) (Kargar, 2012, p. 534).

International support was expressed by launching two international military missions after Bonn: the US-led Coalition OEF (2001-2014) with the mission of counter-terrorism and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF, 2001-2014), helping the Afghan authorities to provide security according to the Bonn Agreement. International assistance was maintaining security in Kabul and other urban areas, training the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA), and supporting general infrastructure repair and improvement efforts (Bonn Agreement, 2001, Annex). In early 2002, Provincial

Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were introduced by the US military officers, diplomats, and other experts. They worked on the empowerment of local governments (Hamidzada & Rubin, 2007, p. 12) (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2008). The UN also maintained a mission in the country, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The effective US military power prepared the ground for a politically internationally recognized, western-orientated outcome in Bonn. Western influence was expressed in liberal state-building. The basic goal was to create a copy of Western democracy, not just a state with structures, but a state that is largely identical to the US administrative system⁷ (interview Dr. Michael Rohschürmann, line 76-79). To obtain control and leverage in Afghanistan the international community, especially the US, provided donations to the reconstruction process.

This has given only an overview of the key goals of the Bonn Agreement, which were officially defined on the paper. On the four key achievements in Bonn, their success or failure will be further elaborated in chapter 5.3.2. Outcome.

4. Peace Talks in Doha

The international military support and humanitarian reconstruction help did not lead to the promised results: The Afghan Republic is still unstable, corruption is commonplace, and the population suffers from an ongoing war with a

⁷ Das grundlegende Ziel war eine Kopie einer westlichen Demokratie zu schaffen. Also nicht nur ein Staat mit Strukturen, sondern es sollte schon ein

Staat sein, der weitgehend identisch mit dem US-amerikanischen administrativen System ist. (translation of the author)

huge psychological impact on the Afghan people. Afghanistan needs lasting peace. 19 years from 2001, the path of peace took a new turn. Since September 12, 2020 representatives of the Islamic Republic and senior speakers of the Taliban have come together in Doha, Qatar, to hold negotiations (Auswärtige Amt, 2020). After an agreement between former hostile factions, the US and the Taliban, and the foreseeable withdrawal of probably all international military forces the future of Afghanistan stands at a crossroad. They are negotiating “a lasting agreement that puts an end to the violence (and) sketches out the future political and social order” (Auswärtige Amt, 2020) determining a new post-settlement Afghan Islamic government. The peace talks are happening under the strict supervision of international players and participants.

4.1 Preconditions in 2020

Circumstances in 2020/21 that are currently affecting the peace negotiation in Doha are the following: **place and time, the status-quo of the state, the power leverage, the US-Taliban-Agreement, and trends on international affairs in 2020.**

Qatar is the current **host country** for the peace talks. Sheraton Hotel in Doha had become a frequent center for Qatar’s mediation efforts, which is purchasing its role since the early 1990s. For centuries, the country has hosted exiles from the Arabic world, including senior Taliban leaders. The Taliban has been informally operating in the office in Doha since 2013 although it opened and closed over subsequent

years (The Voice of America, 2019). The Taliban’s presence and the opening of an office was a confidence-building measure, protecting those Taliban leaders participating in peace talks (BBC, 2013). It was in the very interest of the US and the Afghan High Peace Council to facilitate political reconciliation. The Taliban office was opened in a neutral location. Qatar “has balanced relations with all sides and has a prestigious status in the Islamic world” (BBC, 2013). In the past, Qatar was involved in several “international crises as a mediator including the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region” (BBC, 2013), Israeli-Palestinian affairs, and the Arab Spring uprisings (AGSIW, 2020). Today, Qatar is supporting the Taliban and helped them to arrange a meeting with the Doha-based cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the Taliban. He should help the Taliban incorporate their Islamic ideology in the future institutional makeup (AGSIW, 2020).

At first, the Trump administration pushed for a **quick solution** to the Afghan problem. The US-Taliban deal committed the US to leave Afghanistan until April 2021 and pushed the Taliban to enter talks with the Afghan government by March 10, 2020 (Thomas, 2020, p. 7). After spending 19 years in Afghanistan, the pull-out of the international coalition happens too quickly and could be partially responsible for increased insurgency as critics pointed out (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 58). Dr. Zeino agreed on this point and added that “the agreement came rapidly at the beginning

because the US pushed (for it)⁸ which highlighted the very dynamic proactive US attitude (interview Dr. Zeino line 119-120).

The negotiations in Doha remained unscheduled for months “due to the disputed September 2019 presidential election, delays to a prisoner exchange between Taliban and the Afghan government, and (the) ongoing violence” (Thomas, 2020, p. 5) (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 291) (Al Jazeera, 2021). After the prisoner exchange was completed the peace talks have started on September 12, 2020, and ended on 27 December 2020 for a three-week pause until 5 January 2021 (Deutsche Welle, 2021). The pace of progress has slowed (Al Jazeera, 2021).

The status-quo of Afghanistan in 2020/2021 has shown that substantial improvements were achieved “in Afghanistan since 2001, particularly in expanded access to water, sanitation and electricity, education, health services”, and infrastructure (The World Bank, 2020). But after 20 years of reconstruction help, Afghanistan continues to experience insecurity and political uncertainty (ibid). Opium cultivation is Afghanistan’s biggest economic activity by supplying 80 percent of global illicit opium production (The New York Times, 2019). The economic and intensified security situation resulted in about half a million Afghans being internationally displaced persons (The World Bank, 2020).

Recently the country is overshadowed, and the economy has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused a lockdown in the country and temporarily both parties were unable to further their dialogue (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 291). Afghanistan is one of the countries most affected by the spread of the virus: there have been 55.384 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 2.414 deaths (09.02.2021; WHO, 2021) though the cases may be higher than this figure due to the limited range of testing capabilities. According to the World Food Program (WFP), 54% of the population lives in poverty and in unsustainable livelihoods that will be further disrupted by the shocks due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (WFP, 2021).

The military advantage was claimed by the **Taliban** by the end of 2020. The Taliban is an insurgency group, who seeks to “overthrow a government or secede from a country” (CIA in Dr. Khalid & Mushtaq, 2020, p. 529) using conventional and sometimes unconventional military strategies or tactics. By the time the Bush Administration shifted its focus from Afghanistan to the Iraq war, the Taliban reorganized and made a comeback in 2006 (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 57). “(...) By many measures, the Taliban are in a stronger military position now than at any point since 2001” (Thomas, 2020, p. 1). The Taliban's strength is estimated to be at 60,000 full-time fighters (Thomas,

⁸ Die Einigung kam rasant am Anfang, weil die gepusht haben, und im Nachhinein muss man dies ausbügeln. (translation of the author)

2020, p. 11). "(...) According to a BBC (study), the Taliban are openly active in 70 percent of Afghanistan's districts, fully controlling four percent of the country and demonstrating an open physical presence in another 66 percent" (Reuters, 2018). According to Malkasian (2020), the government has little or no presence, while the Taliban were able to establish shadow governments in 32 of 34 provinces (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020, p. 238). Their shadow government consists of their own Taliban institutions that are following the Sharia law. In rural areas, the Taliban could rely on loyalties or imposed themselves by force in many districts⁹ (interview Dr. Ellinor Zeino, line 272-273). By engaging with tribal structures, the Taliban were able to restore order in a more compromised way and revealed the lack of legitimacy, inefficiencies, and perceived corruption of the Afghan government to the local population (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 58) (De los Reyes Va'zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 191). The "local grievances against the existing political system and the desire for stability" (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 58) have put the Taliban in a favorable position. The Taliban mounted a series of well-planned offensives and defeated the ANA and ANP several times (Malkasian, 2020).

A drastic increase in violence caused by the Taliban, the rise of the Islamic State, and high-profile terrorist attacks in Europe and the US since 2015 (Malkasian, 2020) increased the number

of arriving international troops. **Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP)**, another radical actor, established its power in Afghanistan over the years. The ISKP's ideology is to formulate a global caliphate while the Taliban are only focused on Afghanistan. They counted 2,000 to 4,000 ISKP-fighters (update: 2019, Thomas, 2020, p. 12). Until 2010, their violence and influence increased every year (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020, p. 237). According to Ullah, Ahmad, and Khan (2020, p. 59), the ISKP caused 22 percent of civilian deaths in Afghanistan in 2017. Pointing to several high-profile attacks in Afghanistan and internationally, the ISKP remains a threat to the entire region. Military operations as the OEF, later Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS, 2015 - today), ISAF, later Resolute Support Mission (RSM, 2015 - today) were not able to stop the rising violence and have not reached "a victory for the forces of liberty" (Malkasian, 2020).

Because of the rising violence and influence of the Taliban and the ISKP in Afghanistan, the US and the Taliban signed a joint agreement, *Bringing Peace to Afghanistan*, on 29 February 2020, after more than a year of official negotiations (Doha News, 2016). The so-called **US-Taliban Deal** laid the groundwork for the current intra-Afghan peace negotiations in Doha and set out conditions for a complete withdrawal of international troops within 14 months from Afghanistan including an exchange of prisoners, removing US sanctions on Taliban

⁹ Die Taliban konnten sich in vielen Distrikten auf Loyalitäten verlassen oder setzten sich mit Gewalt durch. (translation of the author)

members, and “a commitment by the Taliban to distance itself from terrorist groups” (Auswärtige Amt, 2020) (Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, 2020, pp. 1-4). Some parts of the agreement are confidential and have not been made public (Dozier in Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 29). The US-Taliban-Agreement sets a landmark in international politics and the long road of the Afghan peace process (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 293) although the Afghan government was not part of the deal. The Afghan representatives are blaming the US for non-transparency and lack of coordination (The Voice of America, 2019). “The US has negotiated the release of prisoners it does not even own”¹⁰ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 116-117). Dr. Zeino confirmed: “(...) the US has promised a lot, but without coordinating it with the Afghan government”¹¹ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 101-103). Even on the day of the signature of the deal, the US Secretary of Defense met with the Afghan President to reaffirm US support for the Afghan government (Thomas, 2020, p. 4), but the agreement has widened “a rift between Washington and Kabul. The most pointed criticism has come from Afghan National Security Adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, who” (The Voice of America, 2019) slammed the US strategy as a glorified surrender and accused US-Afghan

representative Khalilzad of behaving like a “viceroy”¹² (Al Jazeera, 2019). Consequently, Mohib became persona-non-grata in the US and had to leave the country (The National Interest, 2019).

The US-Taliban Deal expresses the importance and influence of the US on the Afghan peace process. The intra-Afghan talks were only possible because the US agreed to withdraw troops.

As previously analyzed, the US no longer has a military advantage over the Taliban, which resulted in the US-Taliban Deal. However, the US and the international community kept the significant **leverage of financial international support**. The stabilization of the Afghan central government and the national budget is highly dependent on foreign civilian and military aid, and international financial commitments (Cordesman, 2020, p. 166) (Auswärtige Amt, 2020). The major part was contributed by the US with a spending of over 2 Trillion US dollars since 2002 (The New York Times, 2019) in reconstruction assistance, while about 61% was invested in security and 26% in development and humanitarian aid according to the SIGAR Report (2020). The World Bank estimated that “Afghanistan’s gross domestic product (GDP) has grown an average of 7% per year since 2003” (Thomas, 2020, p. 15), but this increase was not enough to offset negative trends (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020, p. 236). To conclude, “Afghanistan is one

¹⁰ Die USA hat, die die Freilassung von Gefangenen verhandelt, die Gefangenen die sie gar nicht besitzen. (translation of the author)

¹¹ Wir sind nur so weit gekommen, weil die USA sehr viel versprochen haben, allerdings ohne das mit

der afghanischen Regierung abzusprechen. (translation of the author)

¹² “Viceroy is a politically loaded term in South Asia as it was the title of the colonial administrator of British-ruled India.” (Al Jazeera, 2019).

of the most aid-dependent countries in the world” (Weijer, 2013, p. 6).

To understand the **current trends in international affairs**, the theme of President Trump's administration “America first” should be considered. From then on, the US “foreign policy focused on American interests and American national security” (The White House, 2016, p. 5). This nationalist, anti-interventionist approach led to the US withdrawal from international treaties and organizations and formalizing international isolation (The Atlantic, 2020). Trump considered “caution and restraint” as signs of strength (The Washington Post, 2016). He criticized attempts at “nation-building” abroad and concluded that bringing democracy to the Middle Eastern region has only caused chaos (The Washington Post, 2016). Another high priority was defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and other radical Islamic terror groups (ibid). To follow the new nationalism, diplomacy should be an important asset to Trump by making peace with old enemies as was the case within the US-Taliban Deal (The White House, 2016, p. 5). This happens to the disadvantage of the US allies like the Afghan government. “(...) the US must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves,” said Trump (BBC News, 2016). The Afghan government must protect itself in the future from Taliban attacks without international support. President Biden, the winner of the 2020 US presidential election, continued many of President Donald Trump's “America First” policies related to Afghanistan.

4.2 Participants and Interests

21 envoys from the two main negotiating teams of each side, the Afghan government, and the Taliban are taking part in the face-to-face peace talks. Several regional players are present as observers of the progress while the US-team is talking separately to both negotiating delegations (Al Jazeera, 2021). The peace talks are claimed to be an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned way. At the beginning of negotiations, the US Secretary of State announced that it will mark “a historic opportunity for Afghanistan to bring an end to four decades of war and bloodshed” (Al Jazeera, 2020).

US Special envoy to Afghanistan **Zalmay Khalilzad** once again, like in 2001, joined the negotiations. He was a major contributor to the development of the US Taliban Deal (Malkasian, 2020). For over a year, numerous meetings between Khalilzad, the Taliban representatives, and long consultations with the Pakistani, and other regional governments occurred (Thomas, 2020, p. 4). In advance, he tried to achieve international support for the Afghan peace process and push Afghan parties towards dialogue and negotiations (Reuters, 2019).

The Afghan government represented by a “21-member negotiating team, is led by former Afghan intelligence agency head” (Thomas, 2020, p. 5) and Advisor to the President on Internal Security, Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai. The governmental delegation includes members of major ethnic groups in Afghanistan and four women (The Guardian, 2020) (Thomas, 2020, p. 5). The team's work is overseen by Abdullah

Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). This council was established to resolve a political deadlock on elections and put an end to an election rivalry in Afghanistan between Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and President Ashraf Ghani that lasted for five months (Salihi & Rasikh, 2020). Less coherence, divided positions on the stateside, and complication of the negotiations are the results of the struggle among Afghan elites (Thomas, 2020, p. 6). Furthermore, Afghan president Ghani resisted the call for an Interim government that would certainly remove him as president (The New York Times, 2021) therefore the relations between him and Khalilzad broke down (The Hindu, 2021). Afghan leaders expressed their will of preserving Afghanistan's democratic political system (Thomas, 2020, p. 7). They called for an immediate ceasefire (The Guardian, 2020) and strongly condemned the violence and war tactics of the Taliban.

The planned withdrawal in April 2021 put the government side in an unfavorable negotiating position (interview Dr. Zeino, line 111-116). Members of the government noted that the US withdrawal without Kabul's inclusion could lead to a prewar-situation as in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet-backed government (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 64). Afghan officials are unsure if their troops are capable to hold resistance on the ground without

American support (The New York Times, 2021).

The Taliban's 21 all-male group of representatives is headed by "lead-negotiator Mawlawi Abdul Hakim Haqqani, a senior hardline cleric who is head of the Taliban's judiciary body" (Al Jazeera, 2020) (Thomas, 2020, p. 6). The Taliban have not made their members list public, but they are mostly comprised of members of the Rehbari Shoura, the Taliban leadership council (Arab News, 2020). The negotiation team is overseen by co-founder and Doha-based Taliban deputy political head Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, whom analysts view as more moderate (Thomas, 2020, p. 6). At his opening speech, he encouraged "an Afghanistan that is independent, sovereign, united, developed and free — an Afghanistan with an Islamic system in which all people of the nation can participate without discrimination" (The Voice of America, 2020). "The Taliban of today are not the Taliban of the past. Most of the old Taliban are dead. The Taliban have taken a big step, which means they are more moderate"¹³ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 229-231).

Their first demand is the withdrawal of all foreign forces. The leadership of the Taliban clarified that they want peace¹⁴ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 89). Haqqani promised to work on an inclusive political system in which all Afghans have equal rights and in which the rights of women, that are granted by Islam, are protected

¹³ Die Taliban von heute sind nicht mehr die Taliban von damals. Die meisten der alten Taliban sind tot. Die Taliban haben einen großen Schritt gemacht, das

heißt sie sind durchaus moderater. (translation of the author)

¹⁴ Sie wollen Frieden. Das sagt die Führung klar: Sie wollen einen Frieden. (translation of the author)

(Haqqani, 2020). They want to cooperate in respect with international partners “to make sure the new Afghanistan is a bastion of stability” (ibid). The Taliban expect the US to honor its commitments as well.

The main negotiation position of the Taliban is to reimpose its version of Islamic law as the ruling system of governance. The Taliban refused to talk with the “puppet regime”, the Afghan government, in the first instance but the US-Taliban Deal changed that. However, there is no evidence that the Taliban would have any interest in sharing power (Cordesman, 2020, p. 164). The Taliban are strengthening the attacks on the government forces. They are following a “fight-and-talk-strategy” (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 111). Their level of violence is seen as a direct response to airstrikes by the US, or to military and ill-received diplomatic moves by the Afghan government (The New York Times, 2021). Around 429 pro-government forces in September 2020 and at least 212 civilians were killed presumably by the Taliban in October 2020 (The New York Times, 2021). Target killings mostly affected officials, activists, and journalists (Al Jazeera, 2021) (Deutsche Welle, 2021). “There are about five to ten explosions a day in Kabul. Every day at least 10 civilians are killed; people are shot on their doorstep”¹⁵ (interview Rohschürmann, line 101-103). “(...) The Taliban have resisted calls for a broader halt” of the fighting because they are taking

advantage of the fact that causing bloodshed pressures their enemies at the negotiating table (The Guardian, 2020). It is assumed that the Taliban still maintain close ties with Al-Qaeda inside Afghanistan (Stanford Law, 2020) (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 294). In 2020 a very senior Al-Qaeda leader was (...) killed by Afghan security forces in a Taliban-controlled district in Eastern Afghanistan” (Stanford Law, 2020).

The Taliban operate as a coherent and effective unit, even though more divisions will reveal themselves soon and it becomes more difficult to operate and communicate coherently in the future¹⁶ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 38-40). They are divided into hardline commanders on one side and diplomatic negotiators on the other. Some Taliban factions even believe in the continuation of fighting to defeat the Americans and the Afghan government (The New York Times, 2021).

The US claims to be willing to support the Afghan government during the summit in Doha but due to the US-Taliban deal, they made their interest clear: they will not accept a further security threat to the US and coalition troops. American troop numbers have decreased from about 12,000 military personnel (February 2020) to 2,500 (January 2021) with a complete withdrawal planned by May 2021 (The New York Times, 2021). The Trump administration

¹⁵ (...) es gibt momentan in Kabul so fünf bis zehn Explosionen pro Tag. Jeden Tag werden mindestens zehn Zivilisten getötet, die Menschen werden vor der Haustür erschossen. (translation of the author)

¹⁶ Auch in der Bewegung werden sich, denke ich, demnächst mehr Spaltungen offenbaren. Man versucht kohärent aufzutreten, aber das wird in Zukunft auch schwieriger werden. (translation of the author)

has made it clear that they will stick to the timetable regardless of progress in the intra-Afghan negotiations (Gießmann, 2020, p. 60). In response to several military strikes of the Taliban on ANA bases, the US has launched airstrikes again since September 2020 (The New York Times, 2021).

US officials and members of Congress are closely following the progress of the negotiations and their impact on “US interests such as human rights and counterterrorism” (Thomas, 2020, p. 15). Some members suggested increasing pressure on the Afghan allies by limiting aids unless the administration certifies that withdrawals will not harm social and political gains made since 2001 (Thomas, 2020, p. 10). President Joe Biden has committed himself to the US troops withdrawal because pursuing “goals in Afghanistan, other than counterterrorism, is not in the US’ vital interests” (CBS News, 2020).

The long-standing US position is prioritizing an **“Afghan-led, Afghan-owned reconciliation process”** (Thomas, 2020, p. 4). US secretary of state Pompeo stated that America would not try to control the talks and handed over the responsibility to the Afghan factions with the words: “Your choices and conduct will affect both the size and scope of future US assistance” (The Guardian, 2020). Pompeo limited the US influence by letting the choice of the political system be in the hands of the Afghans and emphasized

that “the United States doesn’t seek to impose its system onto others” (Thomas, 2020, p. 7).

While the US is the most prominent actor in Afghanistan’s peace process, **regional countries** are being involved in bringing along their interests. The external parties are willing to “play an outsized role in ensuring that negotiations result in a stable, comprehensive deal that reflects the priorities of all parties to the intra-Afghan talks” (Center for Preventive Action, 2020). The threatening presence of ISKP has forced regional stakeholders to put forth “efforts to enable a favorable environment for peace negotiations” (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, pp. 59-60) and even to view the Taliban as a legitimate party to the Afghan conflict. The international relations of Afghanistan are viewed as strategically important by agents from Russia, Pakistan, China, and India.

Pakistan has always played a central role in the affairs of the Afghan government. Islamabad had a key role as a consultative partner and “mediator in the peace talks between the US and the Taliban” (Boni, 2020, p. 446). Pakistan is considered a valuable ally to the US because the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has maintained some degree of control over the Taliban for years (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). After the US invasion, Pakistan granted the Taliban safe havens while maintaining close ties to the Haqqani network¹⁷ (Rubin & Rashid, 2008) (Thomas, 2020, p. 13). Nevertheless, instability in Afghanistan would have a great impact on the

¹⁷ “The Haqqani network is a militant group that continues to fight Afghan and U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Afghan officials and international terrorism

authorities consider it the most lethal terrorist group in Afghanistan.” (The Voice of America, 2017)

security paradigm of Pakistan (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 293) (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 65). Pakistan sees Afghanistan as its backyard; they neither want the state to properly function nor fail¹⁸ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 297-298). Pakistan fears encirclement by India and views “the Afghan Taliban as a relatively friendly and reliable anti-India element” (Thomas, 2020, p. 13). The relations between Islamabad and Kabul are characterized by tensions (Reuters, 2019), nevertheless, the governments recently agreed on future cooperation (Boni, 2020, p. 445). Pakistan is committed to a positive role in helping Afghans to find a solution through talks and opened a channel for US negotiators to initially reach the Taliban (Al Jazeera, 2021).

India's strategic interest in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region originates from its border rivalry with Pakistan (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 293). New Delhi is focusing on maintaining relations with the elected government (Boni, 2020, p. 444). It “has been the largest regional contributor to (the) Afghan reconstruction” (Thomas, 2020, p. 13) so far, with an investment of 2 billion US dollars. India became the first nation to send 500,000 vaccines to Afghanistan to fight COVID-19 (Al Jazeera, 2021). A series of new development initiatives confirmed a solid strategic partnership between New Dehli and Kabul (Arab News, 2021).

India’s “main goals are to minimize Pakistan’s influence and to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a haven for anti-India militants” (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020) (Boni, 2020, p. 444). The Indian government disapproves of the US-Taliban Deal and has not legitimized the group as a political actor (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

China is a serious investor in Afghanistan, an ally of Pakistan, and a former supporter of the Taliban (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). Due to Afghanistan’s strategically favorable position in Asia, China is keen to play a mediating role in enabling a stabilized Afghanistan (Ullah, Dr. Ahmad, & Khan, 2020, p. 69) (Boni, 2020, p. 447). China wants to facilitate the growth of the Belt and Road Initiative, invest in Afghanistan’s natural resources, and prevent terrorist spillover into its western provinces (Center for Preventive Action, 2020). In previous years, China arranged various meetings with high-level “Taliban representatives to discuss the peace process in Afghanistan” (Financial Times, 2018). China held a conference for Afghan and Taliban officials in Beijing in October 2019 and supported the US-Taliban agreement (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

Russia has been improving its ties with the Taliban since 2016. In February 2019, the Taliban and senior Afghan politicians attended the multilateral Moscow peace talks (The New York Times, 2019). The US-backed President Ghani, who was excluded from the talks, criticized that

¹⁸ Afghanistan ist ihr Hinterhof, da wollen sie keinen richtig funktionierenden Staat, aber sie wollen auch keinen Failed State. (translation of the author)

the “gathering was aimed at undermining the legitimacy of the government in Kabul” (Boni, 2020, p. 444) “and an attempt by his political opponents to gain power” (Voice of America, 2019). The summit was not officially organized by the Russian government but by the Afghan diaspora in Russia. Russia has no interest in getting involved militarily in the conflict again and described extremist Islamist groups in Afghanistan as a threat to Russia’s security (The New York Times, 2019). The US sees the Russian intentions as a power broker to interfere with the US-backed peace process (Reuters, 2019).

Shiite-majority **Iran** has supported the Afghan government since 2001. The Taliban have been long viewed as an enemy with ties to Iranian rivals Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Previously, the Iranian government acknowledged the importance of the Taliban in the peace process. Hence, they have started working to improve their ties (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). “This is the very first time Iran has granted legitimacy to the Taliban”¹⁹ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 301).

European countries such as Germany, the second-largest bilateral donor, support the intra-Afghan peace process and the progress of women’s and human rights made in recent years (Auswärtige Amt, 2020). Maintaining this development towards a secure and stable Afghanistan and moving quickly towards a settlement are urgent concerns to the EU and NATO

(Deutsche Welle, 2021) (Center for Preventive Action, 2020).

4.3 Objectives

Former US President Trump wanted to end America's longest war and withdraw from a country that produced high costs and cannot be controlled militarily in the end. Afghan officials are worried that the withdraw happens at Kabul’s expense (Al Jazeera, 2019). The US withdrawal is covering their security concern. “It's time after all these years to bring our people back home,” former US president Trump said (BBC News, 2020). In return, the Taliban committed them to not allow the occurrence of a security threat to the US and its NATO partners on Afghan soil (Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, 2020, pp. 1-4). This constituted framework is an attempt to initiate a peace process in Doha. The goal of the negotiations is the creation of a political road map for a future government and create a new post-settlement Afghan Islamic government representing all Afghans (The New York Times, 2021) (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 290). The US and the international community are concerned with bringing political stability and peace to Afghanistan after they leave the country (Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, & Dr. Muhammad Tariq, 2020, p. 290). The US stated its willingness to maintain positive relations with the new government and to seek

¹⁹ Das ist das allererste Mal, dass der Iran den Taliban eine Legitimität zuspricht. (translation of the author)

economic cooperation for reconstruction, but no longer intervene in Afghan internal affairs (Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, 2020, p. 4). Negotiating a comprehensive cease-fire is part of the US-Taliban agreement and a pressing agenda to the Afghan officials who came under attacks of the Taliban (Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, 2020, p. 1).

4.4 Outcome

Afghanistan's future has not yet been decided and the outcome is uncertain while the peace talks in Doha are ongoing. In December 2020, after ending the first round of intra-Afghan talks, both sides have agreed on a set of rules and procedures (Stanford Law, 2020). The second round started on January 5, 2021, with limited meetings in Doha between smaller teams, called contact groups. Delays due to not arrived diplomats reflect the existing lack of dynamics in the negotiations (Reuters, 2021). Since January, the two opposing parties remained in a deadlock on the meaning of “cease-fire” and “Islamic” (The New York Times, 2021; update: 31.01.2021). The stagnation of progress could also be attributed to the change in the US administration in January 2021 (Reuters, 2021). President Biden supports diplomacy in the previous deal with the Taliban but wants to verify “whether the Taliban are fulfilling their commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, reduce violence in Afghanistan,” (Al Jazeera, 2021), and have serious intentions within the peace talks (Deutsche Welle, 2021). Future developments must be observed, however that goes beyond the scope of this study. Some

analysts predict that without a settlement Afghanistan is heading towards a civil war (The New York Times, 2021).

5. Discussion of the Findings

In this chapter, the two important diplomatic summits on Afghanistan in Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020 are compared. The comparison is based on the following categories: preconditions (the role of the host country, time frame, status-quo, leverage, trends on international affairs), the agents and their interests, the objectives, and outcome. The comparative categories are interpreted and evaluated beforehand. The comparison is summarized in a table (appendix). On the findings, it will be concluded on suggestions for future diplomatic actions in Afghanistan.

5.1 Preconditions

5.1.1 Host Countries Germany and Qatar

Both countries, Germany and Qatar, have played significant roles in the peace process. Germany is still considered one of the most important donors for Afghanistan and has participated in military missions in the country since 2002. Approximately 1,300 German soldiers are currently deployed and train, advise, and assist the ANA and ANP (Bundeswehr, 2021). Moreover, the German state provided a high amount of reconstruction aid through the years. During the Bonn Conference, Germany remained neutral in the background but supported the US attempt to promote liberal democratic values.

Qatar, however, is neither militarily nor financially involved with the Afghan war. Qatar sees “itself as the main mediator in a prolonged conflict” (BBC, 2013). Qatar has close ties with the Taliban and uses them to further their agenda. It is crucial to Qatar to promote a formal mixing of religion and politics, an Islamist-orientated worldview. Even though both countries similarly claim a neutral role, they have subjective interests in Afghanistan. Both stress their alliance with the US.

5.1.2 Time Frame

Both negotiations were and are held under time pressure. In Bonn, the future of Afghanistan was decided within nine days by agreeing on the establishment of an Interim Government, while the implementation of the objectives endured until 2002. The aim was to prevent the emergence of a power vacuum in Kabul after overthrowing the Taliban regime. Hence, the Bonn Agreement was worked out in a short time frame.

In Doha, the Trump administration pushed forward the US-Taliban Deal in February 2020 with a timeframe of two years. After delays, the Doha Conference started in September 2020 and is currently slowly ongoing which is a concern to the Biden administration (The Hindu, 2021). Some experts suspect that the Taliban want to gain time until April 2021, when American troops are expected to finally leave Afghan ground. Therefore, the Afghan representatives are under time pressure while their government is being attacked. The COVID-19 pandemic is also affecting the efficiency of the Doha talks.

While the negotiations in Bonn were a speedy process, in Doha they are stretched out or even stagnating.

5.1.3 Status-Quo in 2001 and 2020

The status-quo in 2001 and 2021 in Afghanistan is not fundamentally different. In 2001, the Taliban government was deposed, the economy down and the population exhausted by war. Especially Afghan women were disadvantaged and excluded from education in the previous Taliban system. In 2001, a new state was raised from a blank space that was left after the overthrow of the Taliban.

In 2020, after years of effort and investment in the Afghan economy and development, the situation was improved by significant achievements. There is increased access to services and infrastructure even though the progress has been uneven. New problems of a functional state have arisen in 2020: The Afghan republic made in 2001 is corrupt, the economy is based on drug production, and its government cannot provide overall influence and security in all country regions. The situation for women improved even some testimonies of women from provinces state “that their lives did not change with the Emirate and after the Emirate” (interview Dr. Zeino, line 56-58). The current Afghan government has not yet been overthrown but its functional ability is weak. A power vacuum could easily arise as was almost the case in 2001. Even though the Afghanistan of 2020 is different from Afghanistan of 2001, with 20 years in between, the peace talks are based on a comparable status-quo.

5.1.4 Power Leverage

In Bonn, the victory of the US coalition was emphasized. After 9/11, the US declared war on terrorist organizations and all those who supported them. Exercising its right of self-defense, the US and NATO forces intervened in Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime. The Western powers declared themselves the victors and the Taliban the defeated, who subsequently were not allowed to participate in the negotiations in Bonn. Under those circumstances, the US played an outsized role during the negotiations in 2001. The US invasion left little space for a sustainable framework, peace negotiations, and a political settlement between both protagonists of the conflict (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 20). Bonn's "success was the result of a clear military advantage" (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 29), limited objectives, and an empowered US negotiating team. US Envoy Dobbins played a key role in achieving a consensus on the Bonn Agreement.

Doha reflects quite the opposite. The Taliban perceive themselves as the victors of an ideological conflict (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 33-37, 230-232). Subsequent US administrations kept the forces of the ANA and the ANP too small to guarantee an effective defense (Malkasian, 2020). This led to the rise and return of the Taliban in 2006. As mentioned earlier, the Taliban influence 70 percent of the country (Reuters, 2018). That put the Taliban in an advantageous position which led to talks with the US. Trump was willing to ignore the conditions that the Taliban were partly responsible for 9/11 and that the Taliban disrespected

the allied Afghan government (The Atlantic, 2020). With the US-Taliban-Agreement the Taliban felt encouraged and confirmed in their tactics.

The military advantage no longer lies with the US and its allies, but they have created a financial dependency for Afghanistan. Afghanistan is as dependent on international aid in 2021 as it was in 2001. Today over 80 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product comes from abroad (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 257). US withdrawal and those of other international forces will affect the economic situation in Afghanistan. The future level and type of financial assistance are unsure: The last International donor conference for Afghanistan in Geneva on 23 and 24 November 2020, showed that the US withdrawal means even less investment in reconstruction and state-building measures. The international community, especially the US, donated less for civilian assistance needs in 2021 than the years before even though the country is weakened by the COVID-pandemic, the increasing violence, and the costly peace negotiations in Doha. Donors pledged 12 billion US dollars in civilian aid to Afghanistan till 2024 "but many made it conditional on protecting human rights and making progress on peace talks" (Reuters, 2020). Future international engagement in Afghanistan is putting the delegation of the Afghan government and their negotiation position under pressure (Thomas, 2020, p. 15). Due to their dependence, they do not want to lose their long-term ally US and the interest of other western donors. The international community is not neutral and is not perceived as

neutral by the Afghans²⁰ (interview Dr. Kirchner, line 151-153).

Also, the Taliban understand the importance of economics. The international community is the only faction that has meaningful leverage over them by negotiating for further development cooperation. International stakeholders continue to give aid on the condition that the implemented system and political aspects are developing according to their interests²¹ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 236-238). The leverage of the international players in 2021 is not predominantly military superiority but creating economic incentives and sanctions. The leverage of the US in 2001 was the military victory.

5.1.5 Trends on International Affairs in 2001 and 2020

2001 was the time of humanitarian interventionism when the interference rule was ignored to protect the population and universal human rights. The security interest after the attack on the Twin Towers in the US was the first reason for intervening in Afghanistan but the US and NATO countries declared their stay in Afghanistan as a humanitarian and democratic endeavor.

In 2021, the Trump administration focused on a national approach, with a clear interest in the security of its nation and its control over its foreign affairs. “We will no longer surrender this country or its people to the false song of

globalism”, was at the heart of Trump's message (The Washington Post, 2016). Within 20 years, an altruistic worldview turned into a new nationalism and determined the US approach in Afghanistan. Diplomacy has a more important role in foreign policies in 2021.

5.2 Agents and Interests

5.2.1 Representation at the Negotiation Table

In Bonn and Doha, the vision of a fair representation of the Afghan population was purchased. In Bonn, four political groups claim to represent the Afghan population. But they were temporary alliances and pursued their own goals, even if they pretended to speak in the interest of the common good (Kargar, 2012, p. 100) (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 8). For instance, the Northern Alliance was a military alliance with the purpose to destroy the Taliban governance. The population did not believe in peace because actors in the Bonn process were guilty of serious human rights violations (Kargar, 2012, p. 111). The Bonn Conference legitimized these actors, and the population did not feel represented by them.

Civil actors, especially female civil actors, had been excluded from the Bonn conference and had no formal access to the principal meeting (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2011). They created their parallel event in Königswinter from 29 November till 02 December 2001 (Dr. Suhrke,

²⁰ Wir als Staatengemeinschaft sind nicht neutral und auch wir werden nicht als neutral von den Afghanen wahrgenommen. (translation of the author)

²¹ Wir unterstützen euch weiter, auch wenn wir grundsätzlich nicht ganz zufrieden mit eurem

System sind, solange zumindest bestimmte Aspekte davon in die richtige Richtung gehen. (translation of the author)

2018, p. 22) (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2011). “To portray an integrated picture of the Afghan population, not only the western, more moderate or liberal capital residents should have been included, but also traditional clans in the countryside, the conservative religious population, the Taliban and the minorities”²² (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 134-137).

The same happened in Doha: The Afghan people do not feel represented by the current elected government. The executive and legislative branches are characterized by corruption and mistrust. Most of the parliamentary and political offices are awarded through corruption or patronage. “This is poison for a democracy if people do not believe that their political leadership deserves it”²³ (interview Dr. Kirchner, line 89-92). At the same time, Afghan people blame the government for not being able to protect them from attacks and increasing violence in the streets. There is an existing lack of public confidence in the political environment (Pamela Constable in Boni, 2020, p. 449).

Civilian representatives, especially Afghan women and ethnic minority groups, are hardly present in the Doha peace talks (Stanford Law, 2020). The ownership of the peace talks is

dedicated to the Afghans but the important agents from civil society are missing. For instance, women's rights activists are missing and only four Afghan women are present in the factions of the government. “This means that any arrangement made in Doha will be perceived as foreign by larger segments of the population”²⁴ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 149-150). The US-Taliban agreement was an essential precondition for the current peace talks. But it is not a comprehensive peace agreement among Afghans, rather a deal between the US and the Taliban excluding the Afghan government (Thomas, 2020, p. 5). “In 2001, the Taliban were excluded. Now the civilian population is excluded, and the negotiations in Doha, the US negotiating with the Taliban. By that the US excluded all of Afghanistan.”²⁵ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 124-126).

In both the 2001 and 2020 negotiations, an inclusive system of government is envisioned in both negotiations and promised to the population. The participation of civil society and civil stakeholders is very low in Bonn and Doha.

5.2.2 Participation of the Taliban

“Brahimi refers to the absence of the Taliban as Bonn’s original sin” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p.

²² Nicht nur die westlich angesehenen, eher moderaten oder liberalen Großstädter, sondern auch traditionelle Clans auf dem Land, die konservativ religiöse Bevölkerung, auch die Taliban und die Minderheiten sollten einbezogen werden. (translation of author)

²³ Bei jedem Parlamentarier wird grundsätzlich davon ausgegangen, dass dieser nur durch Korruption und anderen Betrug an die Macht gekommen ist. Jedes Amt wird entweder tatsächlich durch Korruption oder Klientelismus vergeben oder es besteht immer der Verdacht. Das ist Gift für eine Demokratie, wenn die Menschen nicht daran glauben, dass ihre

politische Führung es verdient hat. (translation of the author)

²⁴ Das heißt, jede Regelung, die in Doha getroffen wird, wird von größeren Teilen der Bevölkerung als fremd empfunden. (translation of author)

²⁵ 2001 hat man die Taliban ausgeschlossen. Jetzt schließt man die Zivilbevölkerung aus bzw. die Verhandlungen in Doha haben damit angefangen, dass die USA mit den Taliban verhandelt haben. Damit haben die USA ganz Afghanistan ausgeschlossen. (translation of author)

19). In Bonn, the Taliban's legitimacy was denied because they were considered supporters of terrorists and had just been defeated. The exclusion of the Taliban decreased the possibility of a sustainable peace process. Senior Taliban leaders tried to participate but were heavily fought by the OEF-coalition and the Northern Alliance (Malkasian, 2020). There were no negotiations, no ex-Taliban armies to be demobilized, and no structure of integration for Taliban supporters in the postwar order (Suhrke, Strand, & Berg Harpviken, 2002). "The role of the Taliban was accordingly underestimated. This was an absolute miscalculation in military terms and a problem for the peace process. If that had not happened, we might have saved ourselves the last 20 years of peace process"²⁶ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 142-145). "Not being treated as a legitimate party and hunted by (the US) and their Afghan allies, the Taliban had few options" (Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018, p. 23): They chose to organize resistance and empowerment from 2006 on.

In Doha, it was tried to compensate for the previous labeling and misjudgment of the Taliban and their support in the local society (interview Dr. Zeino, line 166-175). In Doha, the Taliban had a different power position by controlling most of the Afghan territory. Daily attacks on the ruling party and high profiling attacks on the civil society were results of the military units of

the Taliban. The Taliban have not achieved total military victory, nor have they been defeated. The Taliban perceive themselves as the victors of the war because the West has lost this conflict ideologically (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 33-37, 230-232).

In February 2020, the bilateral negotiation between the US and the Taliban has met the main demand of the Taliban: the withdrawal of foreign forces. The diplomatic acceptance of the Taliban was counted as a symbolic victory for Islamic extremism (Cordesman, 2020, p. 169). The conference is taking place between equal parties, not between a recognized government and an insurgent group. The intra-Afghan dialogue symbolizes an equivalence of the parties²⁷ (interview Dr. Kirchner, line 134-135). This equivalent power position grants legitimacy to the Taliban.

The most striking difference between Bonn and Doha lies in the participation of the Taliban in the talks: The Taliban have a different power position in Doha. They are accepted and legitimized as equal negotiation parties and might see themselves as ideological victors. Today they can represent their interests and might dissolve democratic structures made in 2001.

²⁶ (...) und ihre Rolle entsprechend unterschätzt wurde. Das war militärisch eine absolute Fehleinschätzung und auch für den Friedensprozess ein Problem. Wenn das nicht passiert wäre, hätten wir uns vielleicht die letzten 20 Jahre Friedensprozess sparen können. (translation of the author)

²⁷ Allein die Bezeichnung „inner-afghanischer-Dialog“ symbolisiert eine Gleichwertigkeit der Parteien und nicht mehr eine anerkannte Regierung und eine Aufstandsbewegung. (translation of the author)

5.2.3 The Role of the US and the Principle of a Light Footprint

US influence on the negotiations differs in Bonn and Doha. In 2001, the US had many officials at the conference to ensure the US interests would be met; but officially the negotiation was led by the UN to avoid a visible “made in America stamp” (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 21). Dobbins, representing the US, had more than a mediating role because he was bringing forward a joint agreement between the Afghan factions and the regional players. In 2020 the US initiated the peace talks but like all other international representatives, they are observers.

Similar to this was the official US approach to the Bonn dialogues: A light footprint of the US on the negotiations was portrayed and officially communicated outwards. In the Bonn Agreement, little influence, and the presence of international forces in Afghanistan were promised (Bonn Agreement, 2001). This approach was in the paradox contradiction with the intrinsic US interest, a western orientated outcome (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 37). The US was encouraging the establishment of a republic with democratic elements. “A copy of the American system has been installed”²⁸ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 178-179). In 2020, the Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace talk was inspired by the same approach. The US committed itself to no longer interfere and politically intervene in Afghan issues. The US-Taliban agreement stands in opposition to that fact.

The objectives and strategy of the US have changed over the past 20 years. In 2001, the American leadership was more supportive of the political and social outcome than in 2021. In 2021, democratic goals seem to be abandoned and the US has politically distanced itself from the outcome of the negotiations. With the US-Taliban Deal, the US has declared security and the safety of US citizens alone as the new priority. Through the deal, the negotiating position of the Afghan government has been weakened. The Trump administration has initiated diplomatic actions without considering losses to its Afghan allies. The agreement also showed that the US is prioritizing “a military withdrawal over a complex political settlement that preserves some of the social, political, and humanitarian gains made since 2001” (Thomas, 2020, p. 1).

In Doha, the US is no longer the winner and occupying power of the Afghan war. However, the US still has the option to take influence on the peace outcome through their economic impact on Afghanistan. Afghanistan will continue to be dependent on international support in the coming decades (Cordesman, 2020, p. 167). Its economic dependence furthermore results in political dependence. The lack of local Afghan institutions has led to a leading position of international organizations and NGOs. By providing goods and basic public services, these organizations substitute the Afghan state (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 36). At the same time, government and state officials were hardly making decisions

²⁸ Man hat eine Kopie des amerikanischen Systems installiert. (translation of the author)

independently or were involved in the funding strategies (Fleschenberg, 2010, pp. 70-71). “(...) Ideas of an open-market economy, private sector development, and commercialization were often promoted by (foreign) consultants, and often not shared by the Afghan ministry staff” (Weijer, 2013, p. 5). This donor dependence has undercut the accountability and legitimacy of the Afghan administration at the negotiation table.

In both Bonn and Doha, the US is a key driver in the peace process but there are significant differences in the influence, the leverage of the US in 2001 and 2020. In each peace talk, light western influence and Afghan ownership were foreseen but could not be implemented because the US followed secretly a counterterrorism-interest in Afghanistan.

5.2.4 The Role of Regional Players

In Bonn as well as in Doha, the role of the regional delegations is reduced to an observing role. However, Afghanistan has a key strategic position and must therefore always be seen in the context of its neighboring countries²⁹ (interview Manderla, line 75-76).

In Bonn, Brahimi and Dobbins consulted the regional governments, but neighboring states stayed largely excluded from the outcome. The

declaration on good neighborly relations (Bonn Agreement, 2001, p. 5) was not sufficient to overcome the instability of the central government in Afghanistan. A secure regional environment and the committed support from the countries of the region must be understood as a contribution to the stabilization of statehood (Wilke, 2004, p. 26).

That is also the case in 2020: neighboring countries are taking on more responsibility and Afghanistan’s situation is also being viewed from a more regional perspective. The American superpower played a dominating role in Bonn. In Doha, the US still determines the dynamics, but also passes on its responsibility³⁰ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 203-206). “The international community is moving to the center positioning itself as a neutral mediator”³¹ (interview Dr. Kirchner, line 124-125). There is a stronger interest of regional states to participate in shaping the process. There are many observers, but there have also been many dialogues in advance of the negotiations³² (interview Dr. Zeino, line 219). Even if the regional states officially take an observing role in both negotiations, it was learned that regional powers are more important to achieve sustainable peace.

²⁹ Afghanistan muss man immer im Zusammenhang mit seinen Nachbarländern sehen. (translation of the author)

³⁰ Das sehe ich auch als positiv, weil die Nachbarländer viel mehr in der Verantwortung auch sein wollen. Die Situation wird sich regionalisieren. Man muss aber auch schauen, dass Afghanistan nicht wieder zum Spielfeld wird, beispielsweise im indisch-pakistanischen Konflikt. Damals haben die USA klar

in Bonn dominiert und jetzt ist es so, dass die USA immer noch die Dynamik bestimmen, aber ihre Verantwortung auch abgeben. (translation of author)

³¹ Heute rückt die internationale Gemeinschaft in die Mitte und positioniert sich als neutraler Vermittler. (translation of the author)

³² Es gibt viele Beobachter, aber es gab auch viele Dialoge im Vorfeld der Verhandlungen. (translation of the author)

5.2.5 Knowledge and Strategy

Negotiators in Bonn had little experience with the complexity of the conflict in Afghanistan. Dobbins was an experienced diplomat and had skilled Afghan analysts and operators in his team (Dr. Iram Khalid & Mushtaq, 2020, p. 11) but he was also new to the region. Diplomacy at Bonn was characterized by western overconfidence following the US military victories (Malkasian, 2020). For the involved majority at Bonn, it was unfamiliar terrain. These were people who had a lot of experience waging war against each other, but no experience governing together. Dr. Rohschürmann confirmed this by saying “In 2001, moreover, no one knew anything about Afghanistan. You had a lot of authentic advisors because they were Afghans or at least had Afghan roots. They were people who had lived in the West for a long time, possibly many second-generation Afghans in exile. They were not representative of the conservative rural population”³³ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 140-143). It was assumed that a political settlement would be enough but the main part in the peace process laid ahead, which was underestimated³⁴ (interview Dr. Kirchner, line 100-103). “(...) Incorrect identification of actors, limited vision in the decision-making process and strategy implementation, and lack of knowledge of the country (and) its

culture” (De los Reyes Vázquez Del Pino, 2001, p. 189) were missed opportunities in 2001.

In Doha, the US “has a much better understanding of the different Afghan factions and their interests” (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 29). Not Afghans from exile, but the elected Afghan government and the Taliban are negotiating. However, it is questionable whether the Afghan government is representative of the interest of Afghanistan and the Afghan society and has enough knowledge about a suitable way of governing. The same applies to the Taliban.

5.3 Objectives and Outcome

5.3.1 Objectives

The event in Bonn and Doha were held to redefine the future of Afghanistan after a decisive development. In 2001, the Taliban government was deposed; in 2020, the US occupation forces wanted to withdraw.

In 2001, the justification of the US and the international community to intervene was to help weak states like Afghanistan to gain sovereignty (Rubin B. , 2006, p. 176). The idea was the pursuit of human security by implanting liberal values like freedom and human rights through processes of global governance (Kargar, 2012, p. 86). At the center of the global security agenda state-building, and multilateral state-building was placed (Rubin B. , 2006, p.

³³ 2001 hatte außerdem keiner Ahnung von Afghanistan. Man hat sehr viele authentische Berater gehabt, weil sie Afghanen waren oder zumindest afghanische Wurzeln hatten. Das waren Menschen, die lange im Westen gelebt haben, möglicherweise auch viele Exil-Afghanen der zweiten Generation. Die

waren nicht repräsentativ für die konservative Landbevölkerung. (translation of the author)

³⁴ Ein großer Fehler von Bonn ist, dass man gedacht hat, mit diesen Hand-Shake-Bildern und „wir schreiben hier jetzt etwas auf“, wäre der Hauptteil schon getan. Die wirkliche Arbeit hat erst danach angefangen. (translation of the author)

185). Politically functioning state institutions were to ensure that peace from war can be translated into a lasting peace³⁵ (interview Dr. Kirchner, line 75-77) (Suhrke, Strand, & Berg Harpviken, 2002, p. 877). An effective, legitimate, and resilient state was planned to be created which can maintain sufficient control over its territory. State-building was only a cover for American interests and counterterrorism can be identified as the real target in 2001. The main objective of Washington was counterterrorism while the Bonn conference was an instrument in a globalized war (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 21). It was not planned to stay with the US military for decades in Afghanistan to maintain security but to train and teach the local forces to take care of possible security threats by themselves (Rubin B., 2002). The US was only interested in counterterrorism and not interested in state-building at all³⁶ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 133-134).

In Doha, an agreement was negotiated in February 2020 that stated this time clearly and officially the US security interest: The international society should no longer be exposed to threats from Afghanistan (Bonn Agreement, 2001, p. 1). The peace negotiations are politically covering the American counterterrorism objectives because the Trump administration promised its voters to end America's longest war. It is secondary to the US, if removing international

troops may lead to a crisis for the Afghan people.

The main objective of the US in the negotiations in 2001 and 2020 is fundamentally the same: security from terrorism on Afghan soil. Officially the humanitarian objective of staying in Afghanistan to build a stable peaceful state for the Afghan people was emphasized by the US in 2001. Today this approach turned into a rational objective including the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

5.3.2 Outcome

The results of Bonn 2001 and Doha 2020 cannot be compared, as the negotiations have not yet been finalized with a political document or agreement. Consequently, only the outcome of Bonn 2001 will be analyzed and evaluated.

The Bonn Agreement contains the final objectives: **establishment of a democratically legitimized government and a new Afghan Constitution, demobilization of militias, and gaining international support for Afghanistan** (Bonn Agreement, 2001).

Karzai, a moderate Pashtun president with CIA history, became head of Afghanistan in 2004 (De los Reyes Va'zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 534). **Karzai's government** consisted of Afghans from US American exile, called the "American Team" (Spanta in Kargar, 2012, p. 110). The weak central government was not able to

³⁵ Ich glaube die Aufgabe des Bonner Prozesses war der militärischen Intervention einen State-building-Prozess hinterher zu setzen, das heißt einen politischen Prozess auf den Weg zu bringen, an dessen Ende politisch funktionsfähige staatliche Institutionen stehen, die dafür sorgen, dass von einem

Kriegsfrieden in einen dauerhaften Frieden übersetzt werden kann. (translation of the author)

³⁶ Die USA waren eigentlich nur an Counter-Terrorism interessiert und eigentlich gar nicht an State-Building. (translation of the author)

stabilize through the decades as it was struggling with political and humanitarian challenges. One mistake of Bonn was creating a central state with a strong presidential system. “The resulting president is not strong enough to control the state”³⁷ (interview Manderla, line 64-65). History showed that a centralized Afghanistan can only be governed with brute force³⁸ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 172-174).

Conducting **democratic elections for a government** chosen by the Afghan population was a major achievement in the Bonn agreement. This is a necessary condition for the cooperation of the state and society. The election in September 2019 had the opposite result: The division among the political elites in Afghanistan has been emphasized due to the dispute between the two candidates. The turnout was very low, as only 20 percent of the registered voters (1.8 from 9 million) voted, raising doubts about the legitimacy of the government (Boni, 2020, p. 436). Not only the election in 2019 was shaped by corruption and lack of transparency (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020, p. 240): “Almost all high-ranking political offices are noted with a certain amount of money”³⁹ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 187-188). Public trust in constitutional, democratic

processes and the elected representatives have been eroded (Boni, 2020, p. 438).

A very modern **Afghan constitution** was created in 2004, but it could not be implemented in the foreseen way⁴⁰ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 184-188). It has been criticized for a lack of actual participation by the Afghan people and for not providing political education to the Afghan population, where many people were unable to read and understand the constitution properly (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 40). The Afghan parliament which is supposed to represent the Afghan society is a fragmented legislature, consisting of few organized and informal parliamentary groups, with very few jointly designed political programs and strategies and no effective control over the government (Fleschenberg, 2010, p. 25).

The **security reform** failed to address the question of disarming and demobilizing Northern Alliance militias (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 21). The state-building process was undermined by bringing warlords, commanders of the Northern Alliance, and opium suppliers into ministry offices (Auswärtige Amt, 2020, p. 115). The provinces of post-Afghanistan were ruled by powerful warlords who headed regional militia groups (Suhrke, Strand, & Berg Harpviken, 2002, pp. 879-889). Unbalanced positions of power of militarized US allies led to a lack of proper

³⁷ Aber der daraus resultierende Präsident ist nicht stark genug, um einen vernünftigen Staat zu bilden. (translation of the author)

³⁸ Der Fehler in Bonn ist meiner Meinung nach gewesen, dass man einen Zentralstaat geschaffen hat. Afghanistan lässt sich zentral-staatlich nur mit brutaler Gewalt regieren. (translation of the author)

³⁹ Fast alle hochrangigen politischen Ämter sind mit einer bestimmten Geldsumme notiert. (translation of the author)

⁴⁰ Wir haben die sehr moderne afghanische Verfassung von 2004, aber sie konnte bisher nicht so umgesetzt werden. (translation of the author)

investigation of war crimes and human rights abuses in post-war Afghanistan (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 21). The privatization and fragmentation of security and justice posed a permanent threat to the central government and state institutions that emerged after 2001.

International support, one of the Bonn objectives, had an impact on Afghanistan as well. The presence of international troops was supposed to build effective, sustainable military and police forces bound by the rule of law. The ANA and ANP were supposed to be able to carry full responsibility for the security within Afghanistan but this condition was never reached. Even today, major units of the ANA will not be able to secure the country without direct US combat support for years to come (Cordesman, 2020, pp. 161-162). According to the SIGAR report, the ANP has experienced a decrease in personnel in 2019 (ibid). The international presence amplified a sense of oppression among Afghans and triggered deep-rooted resistance to the foreign occupation (Malkasian, 2020).

Besides military support, the US pushed forward a **western-orientated political system**. Western social and political discourses were exported: In Bonn fiber-optic Internet, women's rights, rule of law, social participation, and civic engagement were discussed⁴¹ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 244-246). The whole state

model of the West is built on a post-enlightenment theory of individualism. This individualistic model of life exists in Afghan academic circles, but not in the countryside⁴² (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 199-202). Democracy did not work in Afghanistan and lost its credibility⁴³ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 184-188).

It becomes quite clear that the implementation of the Bonn Agreement did not work out as planned and has to be viewed critically. The state as it was planned in 2001 can be described as weak in 2021. This may indicate that 20 years later a similarly decisive negotiation will be held in Doha. The failed implementations of Bonn's objectives led to a weak, not self-supporting state, the rise of the Taliban, and finally results in new negotiations in Doha.

5.4 Learnings

This chapter is devoted to the question: What can be learned from Bonn and Doha? The main problems are summarized in so-called learnings. A learning is a combination of gaining knowledge acquired by instruction, study, or experience (Meriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021). In this case, the negotiators in Doha can learn from the experiences of the Bonn process. These learnings may be helpful for the continuation of diplomatic negotiations and in general for diplomacy in international affairs.

⁴¹ Wir haben unsere gesellschaftlichen und politischen Diskurse exportiert. Wir haben diskutiert über Glasfaserinternet, Frauenrechte, Rule of Law, gesellschaftliche Beteiligung, zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement. (translation of the author)

⁴² Das ganze Staatsmodell des Westens ist auf einer post-aufklärerischen Individualismus-Theorie aufgebaut. Dieses individualistische Lebensmodell gibt

es in den afghanischen Akademikerkreisen, aber nicht auf dem Land. (translation of the author)

⁴³ Man sieht jetzt, wir haben keine liberaldemokratische Alternative, denn die Demokratie hat so in Afghanistan nicht funktioniert. Die Idee einer Demokratie hat an Glaubwürdigkeit verloren, (...). (translation of the author)

1. There cannot be a military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

History has shown that Afghan insurgents cannot be defeated militarily; neither the Taliban were ultimately defeated in 2002 nor today. In 2001, the US relied on a military victory, but in 2020 they signed a diplomatic agreement with their former enemies. Diplomacy and the importance of a profound political settlement are more appreciated in a sustainable peace process today. Besides, the threat from terrorist organizations such as ISKP is on the rise again, which makes negotiations necessary.

2. To reach a sustainable solution to a conflict, all decisive parties to the conflict must be involved in the peace negotiations.

The most important lesson learned from Bonn is not to expel the other belligerent group from the negotiation table. The Bonn Agreement was not an agreement between belligerents, but merely a statement of general goals. The Taliban were not allowed to participate. In Doha, the Taliban hold an equal position with the representatives of the Afghan government.

Both Bonn and Doha failed to include the civil society. A major part of the Afghan population felt unrepresented in both negotiations. One reason why the Bonn Process failed was that too few people supported the national peace process. Top-down negotiations are insufficient for resolving the Afghan complex. Building a national consensus to transition from war to peace requires participation by diverse stakeholders at all levels of the Afghan society. The Afghan society in 2021 is stronger than ever, hence a

transparent, impartial, and inclusive public dialogue is crucial (Rubin & Rashid, 2008).

3. The interests of any participants in the negotiation should be openly expressed and be balanced in their dynamic.

In 2021, the US understood that it was important to communicate more clearly about its real interests, namely counter-terrorism, and its security. Nationalism as an objective is being exposed this time, not hidden behind a glorious image as a savior of human rights as it was promoted in 2001. The Taliban should also position themselves more clearly in terms of their goals and willingness to compromise. A fight-and-talk strategy is an obstacle to an honest peace process, as the violence overshadowed the country. There can be no peace if one party holds on to hostile warfare. A ceasefire is crucial.

The imbalance of power was one reason why Bonn failed. The imbalance of power and interests is reflected by the internal negotiating groups. In Doha, the Afghan government is divided internally as a result of the failed 2019 elections. Besides, the dividing ethnic composition of Afghan factions in Bonn and Doha the success of the negotiations was disrupted by the dominance of the Northern Alliance and on the one hand, and by the influence of external actors on the other hand. The dominant representation of especially the US implies an imbalance of the acting and determining forces in the process. To ensure a fair process a balance of power can be helpful between the negotiating parties and their mediator.

4. The role of regional stakeholders should be given greater consideration in the negotiation processes.

The interests of regional powers should be openly addressed in the negotiations, but no one country should be guaranteed more of its interests than others. The “potential effectiveness of the cooperation and support of Afghanistan’s nearest neighbor” (De los Reyes Va’zquez del Pino, 2001, p. 193) should not be underestimated. In times of globalization, the neighboring countries play a more adjudicating role⁴⁴ (interview Manderla, line 83-85). For the long-term rehabilitation of Afghanistan and the region, the involvement of all regional stakeholders is important (Rubin & Rashid, 2008).

5. The interests of Afghanistan come before all singular interests of other stakeholders.

The issues discussed should not be determined to address only extremism, terrorism “but also economic development, job creation, the drug trade, and border disputes” (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). “At a minimum, the key objective must be to end the armed conflict and construct a framework that will encourage the Afghans and their foreign supporters to pursue their interests through means other than collective political violence” (Dr. Suhrke, 2018, p. 24). Prioritizing Afghanistan over external interests is key to a peaceful and sustainable future (ibid, p. 20).

6. The strategy of promoting good governance and one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable for the stabilization of Afghanistan.

In 2001, the state was built under the assumption of using the right approach for all failing states worldwide. The liberal superpower US took its political system as a universal template⁴⁵ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 72-73), therefore a centralized democratic state was established (Kurtenbach, 2017). In 2021, one refrains from presuming to implement one’s own over foreign systems and expect a positive outcome. It was learned that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot provide solutions for the complexities on the ground. For example, a government ruling from Kabul did not sit well with the rural population and led to the establishment of shadow governments of warlords or the Taliban in the countryside. State-building projects proceed in very different ways, so it is important to look at each one individually (Kargar, 2012, pp. 9-10).

7. Achieving a sustainable solution requires realistic timeframes for the negotiations rather than the application of short-term negotiated measures.

The Bonn Agreement was accomplished in a very short time and implemented throughout the subsequent years. In Doha, both negotiation parties are taking more patience and consideration. A quick and tight negotiation process is

⁴⁴ Was noch ein wichtiger Punkt ist - das war damals so und das ist hier jetzt noch wichtiger, weil in 20 Jahren sich die Welt komplett geändert hat und die Globalisierung uns so eng aneinanderbindet - dass man die Nachbarländer mit in Betracht zieht. (translation of the author)

⁴⁵ Man war der Meinung, dass es möglich ist, aus Afghanistan eine Kopie der USA im Jahr 2001 zu machen und dass idealerweise in relativ kurzer Zeit. (translation of the author)

illusory. Building institutions takes time: Realistic timeframes for the negotiations and the efforts to establish capable institutions are essential. "(...) Changing existing institutions is even more difficult than building new ones" (Weijer, 2013, p. 15). Even after the military withdrawal of the US, they should demonstrate a long-term commitment to Afghanistan to further stabilize it.

8. Extensive diplomatic efforts and skillful mediation are essential for peace negotiation in Afghanistan.

Through bilateral preparation and consultations with international actors, Brahimi and Dobbins paved the way in Bonn 2001. Preparation and pre-negotiation were essential to find a compromise between external and internal actors as well as major powers and regional players. Trust, confidence, and support are promoted by personal contact and face-to-face meetings (Fields & Ahmed, 2011, p. 28). In 2020, corresponding preparatory work was done with the US-Taliban Deal. Without these US diplomatic efforts, there would not have been such an official meeting between the Afghan government and the Taliban so soon.

9. Fundamental problems of the state have to be addressed and key issues have to be on the agenda of the peace talks.

The Bonn Conference objectives were limited as difficult topics were left out of the discussions. Topics as how to address government corruption, a proper demobilization of militia groups, mid-term financing of the Afghan state budget, and ethnic tensions in Afghanistan were missing on the agenda. Deficiencies in the

reconstruction of the state in 2001 were based on the inclusion of anti-state actors and warlords. War crimes committed by the Taliban and the Northern Alliance have not been investigated. It is uncertain whether topics such as the dissolution of corrupt state structures or human rights, especially women's rights, will play a leading role in the Doha agenda.

10. It has to be learned from mistakes of the past. If not, that could lead to the repetition of events.

Mistakes in Bonn led to the failure of the Bonn Process. The Doha talks are a result of the failed implementation of the Bonn Agreement and thus a direct result of the failed negotiations in Bonn in 2001.

The paper is concluding that the Bonn Process has failed because of the lack of the Afghan government's legitimacy, lack of economic development, dependence on international aid, security concerns, limited scope of state institutions beyond urban centers, and lack of basic freedoms and democracy which can be observed today in 2021. Because the state cannot resolve these problems the Taliban claim more and more support over the years in Afghanistan. The transformation to statehood and democracy has failed in Afghanistan (Kargar, 2012, p. 103) (Welch, 2013, p. 1). Dr. Rohschürmann highlights: "The goals from 2001 have not been met. By 2010, democracy had eroded more and

more⁴⁶ (interview Dr. Rohschürmann, line 85-87).

The republic of 2001 may be a failing state, but it is not yet a failed state, pending the outcome in Doha⁴⁷ (interview Dr. Zeino, line 248). Dr. Rohschürmann speaks of two sides of the coin: Bonn was a utopia and Doha is a dystopia depending on what democratic values are still maintained at the end of the peace talks⁴⁸ (line 157-158). Afghanistan is not a failed state, as there have been positive developments over the years, such as the development of women's rights and the right to freedom of opinion.

6. Conclusion

“It will most certainly be a very rough road with much back and forth and occasional outbreaks of violence, hopefully ending with a political system that both sides can live with (...).”⁴⁹
~ Dr. Rohschürmann (line 304-306)

“(Doha) is only the starting point to give more space to the process and to go in the right direction of peace.”⁵⁰
~ Dr. Zeino (line 254-255)

This study presents a comparative analysis of negotiations in Bonn in 2001 and Doha in 2020. It identifies the problems of the strategies based on their similarities and differences. Advice and learnings potentially facilitate future diplomatic negotiations. Both events have historical significance in the long road of the peace process in Afghanistan.

By conducting a comparison, the negotiations do not only differ in place (Bonn versus Doha) and time (2001 versus 2020/21) but in other pre-conditions such as the diplomatic leverage (victory of the US and allies versus territorial control of the Taliban and their increasing attacks) and the trends on international affairs (interventionism/good governance versus new nationalism). The participating parties are different in Bonn and Doha as are their power constellations: In 2021, the Taliban is a negotiation party; the US has more a background role at the negotiation table and regional players are getting more involved. In 2021, participants seem to be more knowledgeable about the complex Afghanistan and the Central Asian region than in 2001. The objective of democratic state-building in 2001 changed over 20 years to the international withdrawal and protected western nations. The implementation of the Bonn

⁴⁶ Nein, die Ziele aus 2001 haben sich nicht erfüllt. Man hat das schon 2010 gesehen: Zu dem Zeitpunkt ist die Demokratie immer mehr erodiert. (translation of the author)

⁴⁷ Ich würde sagen Failing State statt Failed State. Ich will nicht den Staat komplett negieren. (translation of the author)

⁴⁸ Man könnte sagen es sind zwei Seiten derselben Medaille. Bonn war wie eine Utopie, ein idealistischer Ansatz (...). Doha ist die böse Schwester

dieser idealistischen Einstellung (...). (translation of the author)

⁴⁹ Mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit wird es eine sehr holprige Straße mit vielen Vors und Zurücks mit immer mal Aufflammen von Gewalt, an deren Ende hoffentlich ein politisches System steht, mit denen beide Seiten leben können (...). (translation of the author)

⁵⁰ Das ist nur der Startpunkt dem Ganzen Luft zu geben und in Richtung eines Friedens zu gehen. (translation of the author)

Agreement and thus the outcome in Bonn has failed. The outcome of Doha's peace talks has not yet been finalized. It is open whether the outcome in Doha will differ from Bonn pending on if the basics of the political system and democratic values can be preserved or not.

The vision of the summit in Bonn and Doha is the same: finding a peaceful outcome and shaping Afghanistan's political future. Some similarities have been found in the status-quo of Afghanistan in 2001 and 2020 because it has hardly changed over 20 years; the exclusion of the civil society at the peace negotiations, the use of the light footprint approach, and the promotion of an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace negotiation. The US is dominant in Bonn and Doha whether because of its military or its financial leverage.

The interpretation of the research results showed that mistakes that were made in Bonn were either resolved or reappeared in Doha. The main problems in Bonn relate to the exclusion of the Taliban and civil society, the influence of the host country, and the short-term nature of the solution. Other mistakes of Bonn were the strong influence of external actors like the US, the ignorance caused by a military victory, and the faulty implementation of the light footprint approach. A reference to bad diplomacy at Bonn shows the lack of knowledge of the negotiating diplomats, the concept of international interventionism, and the implementation of a one-size-fits-all approach on a Muslim country with traditional, ethnic, and strong family structures. The Bonn Agreement could only mention core problems superficially but over 20 years these

could not be properly addressed. As a result, Afghanistan and its government were driven into a strong economic and political dependency after the peace at Bonn.

Doha has already learned a few things from Bonn's "bad diplomacy". Afghanistan's past may not be its future. To achieve genuine peace lessons had to be learned:

1. There can be no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.
2. Inclusive negotiations with all-important agents from Afghanistan are crucial.
3. The power interests of Afghanistan must be balanced between all agents.
4. The involvement of regional agents and their interests is important.
5. The interests of Afghanistan come before all singular interests of other stakeholders.
6. Understanding complexity and individual state-building could prevent a weak state.
7. Time and long-term measures are needed in a sustainable peace process.
8. Skilled mediation is important for fair peace talks.
9. Resolving the deep-rooted problems of Afghanistan must be part of the peace agenda.
10. One can learn from the mistakes of the past.

The results of the study confirm the predefined hypothesis of a significant correlation between 2001 and 2020. The peace process in Bonn failed. This statement contrasts with the state of

research of other studies which claim that the state that was established in Bonn in 2001 has failed. This study refrains from calling Afghanistan a failed state, but rather a weak or failing state. The analysis supports the determination that it is not the Afghan state but the Bonn process itself that has failed. Doha is just continuing the peace process that started in Bonn.

Literature research and interviews with German experts provided the main sources of this analysis. Future studies can be conducted on how a broad range of different representatives of the Afghan civilian population view the negotiations in Bonn and Doha. Further, the role of other regional or international powers in the Afghan peace process could be analyzed, such as the role of Pakistan. Another research approach could be a comparison between the post-Soviet withdrawal scenario in 1989 and the post-American withdrawal scenario in 2021. However, this depends on how events continue to develop in the peace process in Afghanistan.

The peace talks in Doha are a historic opportunity for Afghanistan. It remains to be seen whether the respective goals and agenda issues will be addressed more profoundly in post-2021 Afghanistan so that no further reworking will have to be done 20 years later. Even if the military troops will not be present in the future, the international community must not withdraw from the peace processes in Afghanistan and consider further engagement in and with Afghanistan. The fate of Afghanistan is resting on the outcome of Doha. Future generations will judge if security, stability, and an end of the war in Afghanistan can be achieved.

Abbreviations

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
HCNR	High Council for National Reconciliation
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISKP	Islamic State-Khorasan Province
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OFS	Operation Freedom's Sentinel
PRTs	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
RSM	Resolute Support Mission
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
US	United States
WFP	World Food Program

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