

## TEXTS: THE UNITED STATES IN AFGHANISTAN

*Compiled by Rozina Ali*

### **George W. Bush's Presidential Address to the Nation** (October 7, 2001)

*Source: The White House*

Good afternoon. On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against Al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.

We are joined in this operation by our staunch friend, Great Britain. Other close friends, including Canada, Australia, Germany, and France, have pledged forces as the operation unfolds. More than forty countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world.

More than two weeks ago, I gave Taliban leaders a series of clear and specific demands: close terrorist training camps; hand over leaders of the Al-Qaeda network; and return all foreign nationals, including American citizens, unjustly detained in your country. None of these demands were met. And now the Taliban will pay a price. By destroying camps and disrupting communications, we will make it more difficult for the terror network to train new recruits and coordinate their evil plans.

Initially, the terrorists may burrow deeper into caves and other entrenched hiding places. Our military action is also designed to clear the way for sustained, comprehensive, and relentless operations to drive them out and bring them to justice.

At the same time, the oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we'll also drop food, medicine, and supplies to the starving and suffering men and women and children of Afghanistan.

The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are the friends of almost a

billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.

This military action is a part of our campaign against terrorism, another front in a war that has already been joined through diplomacy, intelligence, the freezing of financial assets, and the arrests of known terrorists by law enforcement agents in thirty-eight countries. Given the nature and reach of our enemies, we will win this conflict by the patient accumulation of successes, by meeting a series of challenges with determination and will and purpose.

Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.

I'm speaking to you today from the Treaty Room of the White House, a place where American presidents have worked for peace. We're a peaceful nation. Yet, as we have learned, so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today's new threat, the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it.

We did not ask for this mission, but we will fulfill it. The name of today's military operation is Enduring Freedom. We defend not only our precious freedoms, but also the freedom of the people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.

I know many Americans feel fear today. And our government is taking strong precautions. All law enforcement and intelligence agencies are working aggressively around America, around the world, and around the clock. At my request, many

governors have activated the National Guard to strengthen airport security. We have called up Reserves to reinforce our military capability and strengthen the protection of our homeland.

In the months ahead, our patience will be one of our strengths—patience with the long waits that will result from tighter security; patience and understanding that it will take time to achieve our goals; patience in all the sacrifices that may come.

Today, those sacrifices are being made by members of our Armed Forces who now defend us so far from home, and by their proud and worried families. A commander-in-chief sends America's sons and daughters into battle in a foreign land only after the greatest care and a lot of prayer. We ask a lot of those who wear our uniform. We ask them to leave their loved ones, to travel great distances, to risk injury, even to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. They are dedicated, they are honorable; they represent the best of our country. And we are grateful.

To all the men and women in our military—every sailor, every soldier, every airman, every coast-guardian, every Marine—I say this: your mission is defined; your objectives are clear; your goal is just. You have my full confidence, and you will have every tool you need to carry out your duty.

I recently received a touching letter that says a lot about the state of America in these difficult times—a letter from a fourth-grade girl, with a father in the military: “As much as I don’t want my dad to fight,” she wrote, “I’m willing to give him to you.”

This is a precious gift, the greatest she could give. This young girl knows what America is all about. Since September 11, an entire generation of young Americans has gained new understanding of the value of freedom, and its cost in duty and in sacrifice.

The battle is now joined on many fronts. We will not waver; we will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail.

Thank you. May God continue to bless America.

### **Remarks by President Barack Obama on the Way Forward in Afghanistan** (June 22, 2011)

*Source: The White House*

Good evening. Nearly ten years ago, America suffered the worst attack on our shores since Pearl

Harbor. This mass murder was planned by Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan, and signaled a new threat to our security—one in which the targets were no longer soldiers on a battlefield, but innocent men, women, and children going about their daily lives.

In the days that followed, our nation was united as we struck at Al-Qaeda and routed the Taliban in Afghanistan. Then, our focus shifted. A second war was launched in Iraq, and we spent enormous blood and treasure to support a new government there. By the time I took office, the war in Afghanistan had entered its seventh year. But Al-Qaeda's leaders had escaped into Pakistan and were plotting new attacks, while the Taliban had regrouped and gone on the offensive. Without a new strategy and decisive action, our military commanders warned that we could face a resurgent Al-Qaeda and a Taliban taking over large parts of Afghanistan.

For this reason, in one of the most difficult decisions that I've made as president, I ordered an additional 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan. When I announced this surge at West Point, we set clear objectives: to refocus on Al-Qaeda, to reverse the Taliban's momentum, and train Afghan security forces to defend their own country. I also made it clear that our commitment would not be open-ended, and that we would begin to draw down our forces this July.

Tonight, I can tell you that we are fulfilling that commitment. Thanks to our extraordinary men and women in uniform, our civilian personnel, and our many coalition partners, we are meeting our goals. As a result, starting next month, we will be able to remove 10,000 of our troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year, and we will bring home a total of 33,000 troops by next summer, fully recovering the surge I announced at West Point. After this initial reduction, our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security.

We're starting this drawdown from a position of strength. Al-Qaeda is under more pressure than at any time since 9/11. Together with the Pakistanis, we have taken out more than half of Al-Qaeda's leadership. And thanks to our intelligence professionals and Special Forces, we killed Osama bin Laden, the only leader that Al-Qaeda had ever

known. This was a victory for all who have served since 9/11. One soldier summed it up well. “The message,” he said, “is we don’t forget. You will be held accountable, no matter how long it takes.”

The information that we recovered from bin Laden’s compound shows Al-Qaeda under enormous strain. Bin Laden expressed concern that Al-Qaeda had been unable to effectively replace senior terrorists that had been killed, and that Al-Qaeda has failed in its effort to portray America as a nation at war with Islam—thereby draining more widespread support. Al-Qaeda remains dangerous, and we must be vigilant against attacks. But we have put Al-Qaeda on a path to defeat, and we will not relent until the job is done.

In Afghanistan, we’ve inflicted serious losses on the Taliban and taken a number of its strongholds. Along with our surge, our allies also increased their commitments, which helped stabilize more of the country. Afghan security forces have grown by over 100,000 troops, and in some provinces and municipalities we’ve already begun to transition responsibility for security to the Afghan people. In the face of violence and intimidation, Afghans are fighting and dying for their country, establishing local police forces, opening markets and schools, creating new opportunities for women and girls, and trying to turn the page on decades of war.

Of course, huge challenges remain. This is the beginning—but not the end—of our effort to wind down this war. We’ll have to do the hard work of keeping the gains that we’ve made, while we draw down our forces and transition responsibility for security to the Afghan government. And next May, in Chicago, we will host a summit with our NATO allies and partners to shape the next phase of this transition.

We do know that peace cannot come to a land that has known so much war without a political settlement. So as we strengthen the Afghan government and security forces, America will join initiatives that reconcile the Afghan people, including the Taliban. Our position on these talks is clear: they must be led by the Afghan government, and those who want to be a part of a peaceful Afghanistan must break from Al-Qaeda, abandon violence, and abide by the Afghan constitution. But, in part because of our military effort, we have reason to believe that progress can be made.

The goal that we seek is achievable, and can be expressed simply: no safe haven from which Al-Qaeda or its affiliates can launch attacks against

our homeland or our allies. We won’t try to make Afghanistan a perfect place. We will not police its streets or patrol its mountains indefinitely. That is the responsibility of the Afghan government, which must step up its ability to protect its people, and move from an economy shaped by war to one that can sustain a lasting peace. What we can do, and will do, is build a partnership with the Afghan people that endures—one that ensures that we will be able to continue targeting terrorists and supporting a sovereign Afghan government.

Of course, our efforts must also address terrorist safe havens in Pakistan. No country is more endangered by the presence of violent extremists, which is why we will continue to press Pakistan to expand its participation in securing a more peaceful future for this war-torn region. We’ll work with the Pakistani government to root out the cancer of violent extremism, and we will insist that it keeps its commitments. For there should be no doubt that so long as I am president, the United States will never tolerate a safe haven for those who aim to kill us. They cannot elude us, nor escape the justice they deserve.

My fellow Americans, this has been a difficult decade for our country. We’ve learned anew the profound cost of war—a cost that’s been paid by the nearly 4,500 Americans who have given their lives in Iraq, and the over 1,500 who have done so in Afghanistan—men and women who will not live to enjoy the freedom that they defended. Thousands more have been wounded. Some have lost limbs on the battlefield, and others still battle the demons that have followed them home.

Yet tonight, we take comfort in knowing that the tide of war is receding. Fewer of our sons and daughters are serving in harm’s way. We’ve ended our combat mission in Iraq, with 100,000 American troops already out of that country. And even as there will be dark days ahead in Afghanistan, the light of a secure peace can be seen in the distance. These long wars will come to a responsible end.

As they do, we must learn their lessons. Already this decade of war has caused many to question the nature of America’s engagement around the world. Some would have America retreat from our responsibility as an anchor of global security, and embrace an isolation that ignores the very real threats that we face. Others would have America over-extended, confronting every evil that can be found abroad.

We must chart a more centered course. Like generations before, we must embrace America’s

singular role in the course of human events. But we must be as pragmatic as we are passionate; as strategic as we are resolute. When threatened, we must respond with force—but when that force can be targeted, we need not deploy large armies overseas. When innocents are being slaughtered and global security endangered, we don't have to choose between standing idly by or acting on our own. Instead, we must rally international action, which we're doing in Libya, where we do not have a single soldier on the ground, but are supporting allies in protecting the Libyan people and giving them the chance to determine their own destiny.

In all that we do, we must remember that what sets America apart is not solely our power—it is the principles upon which our union was founded. We're a nation that brings our enemies to justice while adhering to the rule of law, and respecting the rights of all our citizens. We protect our own freedom and prosperity by extending it to others. We stand not for empire, but for self-determination. That is why we have a stake in the democratic aspirations that are now washing across the Arab world. We will support those revolutions with fidelity to our ideals, with the power of our example, and with an unwavering belief that all human beings deserve to live with freedom and dignity.

Above all, we are a nation whose strength abroad has been anchored in opportunity for our citizens here at home. Over the last decade, we have spent a trillion dollars on war, at a time of rising debt and hard economic times. Now, we must invest in America's greatest resource—our people. We must unleash innovation that creates new jobs and industries, while living within our means. We must rebuild our infrastructure and find new and clean sources of energy. And most of all, after a decade of passionate debate, we must recapture the common purpose that we shared at the beginning of this time of war. For our nation draws strength from our differences, and when our union is strong no hill is too steep, no horizon is beyond our reach.

America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home.

In this effort, we draw inspiration from our fellow Americans who have sacrificed so much on our behalf. To our troops, our veterans, and their families, I speak for all Americans when I say that we will keep our sacred trust with you, and provide you with the care and benefits and opportunity that you deserve.

I met some of these patriotic Americans at Fort Campbell. A while back, I spoke to the 101st Airborne that has fought to turn the tide in Afghanistan, and to the team that took out Osama bin Laden. Standing in front of a model of bin Laden's compound, the Navy SEAL who led that effort paid tribute to those who had been lost—brothers and sisters in arms whose names are now written on bases where our troops stand guard overseas, and on headstones in quiet corners of our country where their memory will never be forgotten. This officer—like so many others I've met on bases, in Baghdad and Bagram, and at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Hospital—spoke with humility about how his unit worked together as one, depending on each other, and trusting one another, as a family might do in a time of peril.

That's a lesson worth remembering—that we are all a part of one American family. Though we have known disagreement and division, we are bound together by the creed that is written into our founding documents, and a conviction that the United States of America is a country that can achieve whatever it sets out to accomplish. Now, let us finish the work at hand. Let us responsibly end these wars, and reclaim the American Dream that is at the center of our story. With confidence in our cause, with faith in our fellow citizens, and with hope in our hearts, let us go about the work of extending the promise of America—for this generation, and the next.

May God bless our troops. And may God bless the United States of America.

### **Speech by President Hamid Karzai at Georgetown University (January 11, 2013)**

*Source: Office of the President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*

Mr. President DeGioia, Dr. Magrab, this is my second time in this lovely hall. The first time was quite a few years ago, and when I was very popular in the U.S. The second time is more real-time. And this university is also the one that has honored me with an honorary doctorate. And I thank you once again, President DeGioia, for that. It is hanging in my living room with the expectation that my son one day will be studying here. So I keep telling him, "Georgetown University."

But, ladies and gentlemen, a journey that we began together in 2001—that is, Afghanistan and

the United States—was for a great cause: freeing the world from terrorism and radicalism, liberating Afghanistan from a creeping invasion and that tyrannical, obscurantist rule by the Taliban.

The first one—in reverse order—the first one, freeing Afghanistan, happened within a month and a half to two months. And subsequent to that, Afghanistan began its journey towards democracy, the rule of law, progress in all aspects of life, as all societies desire. It went all right. It went reasonably good under the circumstances, and, without a doubt, with the help of the United States and our other allies around the world.

The second part, freeing us all from terrorism and radicalism, didn't work as smoothly as we expected. There were serious bumps along the road, and setbacks.

Now, the Afghan people, regardless of where they stand ideologically on all these issues, recognize that Afghanistan could not have made the progress that we have made in the past ten years without the help that we received from our allies, led by the United States of America. In more closer terms, the U.S. taxpayers' money. It did contribute massively to Afghanistan's upliftment: the return of women to the workplace, to society, to polity; the return of young girls to education and boys, of course; the return of universities, roads, communications, mobile phones, computers, all of that. Mobile phone wasn't a joke. I meant it.

When we started in 2001, we barely had telephones. My office was given a few walkie-talkies by the United Nations in orange color. That was the means of communication we had. Today, Afghanistan's population of nearly thirty million has telephones available to eighteen million of it. Not one or two or three companies, but many more—four or five. And they own them all. So the country has made progress.

Now, the War on Terror has been costly. It has been costly to you in America. So many of your men and women in uniform and civilians have lost life. It has been costly to our other allies. It has also been costly massively, massively to the Afghan people. We have lost, in the past ten years, tens of thousands of our civilians to violence. This year alone—I mean last year; this year has just begun—each month we lose—we lost—250 of our servicemen and women to terrorism, and nearly 450 casualties in our civilians each month. So the cost has been immense.

Therefore, complaints on both sides. It has been a difficult journey—a journey in which, at times,

expectations are not met. And when that doesn't happen, both sides complain. I am aware of the complaint in your media; you are aware of my complaints.

But the journey continued, the relationship continued, out of a reality that Afghanistan would always be better off in close contact and partnership with the United States. And that is why last year, when we convened the Afghan Loya Jirga, or the Grand Council of the Afghan people, what you call caucus, the Afghan people voted overwhelmingly for partnership with the United States. But the Afghan people voted overwhelmingly for partnership with the United States as a sovereign country, and expecting that that sovereignty will be respected by our allies.

Today I am glad to report to you, ladies and gentlemen, that as the Afghans and the United States government agreed on a format for expanding our relationship into the Bilateral Security Agreement by which the United States will reduce its forces in Afghanistan, will stay beyond 2014 in a limited number in certain facilities in Afghanistan, and that the United States will continue to train and equip and assist Afghanistan, and that Afghanistan will be responsible for its own security, protection of its own borders, and all that comes with it.

So is the future certainly good for us? Does it have dangers on its way? Are we certain to move forward? Will this partnership work? Yes.

What you hear in segments of the analytical work, the NGOs, or the various bodies informing you on events in Afghanistan, the media—if I watched television in the United States, or in Europe, and then if I judged Afghanistan from that perspective, it would be a disaster. I would lose all hope. But if I came from Afghanistan, with all the traffic jams there, with all the pollution there now, with all the phones ringing there, with all the television channels there, with all the media there, with all the hustle and bustle of life, and the young people going to education and studying and working and making life move forward, the wheel go forward, I would give you a different perspective. I would say Afghanistan is definitely moving in the right direction: 2014 will be a good year for us, and the years after will be even better, and that this country will have its third presidential elections in a year and a few months from today. I'll be a retired president. There will be a new president elected by the Afghan people. The economy will move further; it has already been growing at 8 to 9 percent annually in the past ten years, from a mere \$180 of income per capita. Today, we are speaking



of nearly \$600 to \$700. From a mere, I don't know, \$200 millions of our reserves—today, we are talking of—I don't know if I should tell you that, because the U.S. government will hear me and not help us anymore—\$7 billion in our reserves. More than thirty universities, private and public. Roads. Electricity. The future holds clear in progress and prosperity, by the standards of our region and Afghanistan.

Now, will Afghanistan, ten years from now, be a very prosperous country? Will Afghanistan, ten years from now, have resolved all its difficulties? Will Afghanistan be a superpower? No. But Afghanistan will be a country that will be moving forward. Education will draw better—thousands of our students will have graduated in our own universities; thousands more will come from studies abroad, who are now studying abroad. The democracy and the institutions that democracy requires will grow further. There will be more elections. There will be more parliamentarians coming. There will be more institutional reform. There will be a better civil service. There will be better governance. But Afghanistan will continue to face problems. There may be violence. There may be other impediments on the way forward. But this wheel of progress will move in continuity and not stop.

Will Afghanistan remember the United States as a country that helped, or a country that did not help? Definitely, Afghanistan will remember the United States as a country that helped. Definitely, Afghanistan will remember that it was the U.S. assistance that brought so much to Afghanistan. We will forget the less pleasant aspects of our relationship. We will move forward in the gratitude of the help that the United States has provided to Afghanistan and also our other neighbors.

But from today onwards, as we move forward, will this relationship be emotional, as it was at times—and you've heard us all in the past many years; will this relationship be emotional or will this relationship be more mature? This relationship has already grown mature. We recognize the United States' interests in Afghanistan and the region, and the United States recognizes that Afghanistan is a good old entity there and has a life of its own, has a law of its own, has a social context of its own. And within that social context, Afghanistan will move forward in partnership with America and also in partnership with the other countries of NATO that have helped us in the past many years.

Will Afghanistan, beyond 2014, be a country that you can visit as tourists? Yes, it will be. Will

Afghanistan suffer the consequences of terrorism? It might, on occasions. Will the peace process work? Yes, it will. Will the peace process take us back to times where the Afghan woman could not go to work? No. Will we keep our progress and the achievements of the past ten years, in spite of the peace, in spite of the return of Taliban to the Afghan social and political life? Yes. And this assurance is important today, to give through this forum where the Afghan Women's Council was created many years ago, that Afghanistan will have peace, but that peace with the Taliban will not drive us away from the gains that we have made. Rather, those gains will definitely be consolidated and those gains will remain with the Afghan people.

Today, as I'm talking to you, Afghanistan has a standing army and police of 350,000 people. Afghanistan has a banking sector. Afghanistan has a strong agriculture. You've all heard of pomegranates—they come from Afghanistan. You've all heard of grapes—they come from Afghanistan, the ones that come from Afghanistan; I know you have them in California as well.

So, ladies and gentlemen, there is a country in Afghanistan. Just like here in America. Just like in the rest of the world. There are weddings and wedding halls. There is music. There's cars honking. There are buses. There are donkey-driven carts. There are—there is life. There is society. This society is as lively and moving forward as any other society. And it is this that I would like you to remember when you think of Afghanistan: a country of 5,000 years' history, at least; a country that has produced thinkers, philosophers, poets; a country that has had a good past; a country like all other countries, has also suffered in its history. And I can tell you that the most recent period of the suffering of the Afghan history is behind us.

A new period is beginning—has already begun—and that new period will be consolidated with 2014 coming, where your sons and daughters will no longer be burdened protecting Afghanistan, where the Afghan sons and daughters will take the mantle and will move forward.

We will have plenty more to do. And that plenty more can best be described by Frost. "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep," and miles to go before we sleep in Afghanistan.

Thank you very, very much, ladies and gentlemen.

## Speech by President Hamid Karzai to Inaugural Session of the Fourth Legislative Year of the Afghan Parliament

(March 7, 2013)

*Source: Office of the President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*

In the name of Allah, the most merciful and most compassionate.

Your Excellency Speaker of the Lower House and chairman of the Session, vice-presidents, speaker of the Upper House, chief justice, jihadi personalities of Afghanistan, chairman of the Constitutional Oversight Commission, chairman of Afghanistan Council of Ulema, senior state officials, members of both Houses of Parliament, representatives of the international community, media members, ladies, and gentlemen!

It is such a proud moment for our great nation that, despite all the problems, interferences, and conflicts, managed to continue to build up on the democratic setup in the country.

In the rich history of a nation like Afghanistan, ten years is too short a time for these huge developments to happen. But at the same time, problems too persisted along the way.

Over these past years, considerable progress has been made towards reinforcing the sovereignty, state institutions, and ensuring stability. However, this journey of our people's long-held desires has been full of ups and downs.

Distinguished representatives, senators, ladies, and gentlemen!

Over the past eleven years, despite all our economic, social, political, and cultural achievements, we could not achieve peace.

On daily basis, our children, women, mothers, elderly, youth, and members of our armed forces are martyred. Mosques, schools, homes, and state institutions are destroyed. In view of this situation, the most urgent desire of our people is to see the war end in their country and peace prevail.

Although achieving peace is not easy, it is still possible but through patience and caution. We will remain focused with Allah's help on our goal to achieve a lasting peace. We are very well aware of the efforts hatched to hurt our peace endeavors and to deviate the process out of Afghan control—that we see as the only guarantee to the continuity of our political system and protection of our achievements—into fragmented individual or group level effort.

There are countries that by backing and encouraging such efforts want to see Afghanistan slip back into conflicts, unrest, and lawlessness of the nineties.

Distinguished participants!

At national level, our efforts throughout the past several years for peace were followed with good results. Those of the Taliban who are Afghans and Muslims with a feeling for their country have now come to the understanding, we are told, that they desire peace for their country and that they know their country is being destroyed by their own hands. However, there are efforts by outsiders who don't want to see Afghanistan have a government and system and that it be at the service of others, be bankrupt, in need, and divided among individuals and groups. It therefore requires all of us to join hands and pursue peace as collective demand of our nation.

The High Peace Council represents people from every tribe and corner of the country and I therefore very much hope that the Afghan parliament and our politicians stand fully behind our Peace Council as a unified and single body to move the peace efforts forward. We have no problem with the Taliban entering into talks with various elements, politicians, parties, and political personalities. They are welcome, they are also Afghans, there is no problem in seeing and sitting with an Afghan anywhere in the country, but if we engage with foreigners as a broken and fragmented nation, it could have dire consequences. It is therefore not a problem to talk anywhere among ourselves, with the Taliban, it is good, they are Afghans.

The peace process has its foreign dimensions as well, considered to be also very important. In view of all this, it is imperative for us, the people of Afghanistan to stand united and proceed with our peace efforts through one single body which is the High Peace Council. I therefore hope that all of us support and back this.

Distinguished participants!

Afghanistan agreed with the establishment in Qatar of an office for peace negotiations with the Taliban. This agreement is subject to conditions to be worked out between the High Peace Council and the Taliban. The conditions include protection of our gains of the past many years and respect to the constitution. I would like to call again upon the Taliban who are Afghans and Muslim and are from this land. Brothers! You must have now come to the understanding especially in the past few weeks that the guns are used by foreigners

against the people of Afghanistan and through these guns placed on our [your] shoulders, they destroy development, security, and prosperity of Afghanistan and impedes our country's progress. My Taliban brothers! You must understand that you are being used to serve foreign interests, you are used against your own soil and your own home. So, the time has come for you to have the courage to speak out.

Why I am saying all this? Because they [Taliban] have told us in the meetings about their problems and are scared to come out. I call upon them to come to their own land and rid themselves of the problems.

We too have problems. It is not as if the Afghan government is a need-free government. I wish it was. It is not a government standing yet on its own feet. Foreigners still pay our salaries, they equip our forces. However, despite all the needs and dependence we have to the world, we still have our own independent policy when it comes to our national issues.

Sisters and brothers!

I would repeat my call upon the Taliban. It is not like only you have problems, we too have our share of problems. However, despite all the major problems this country has, it still acts on its policy options independently and on the basis of national interests. We have many instances where foreigners who are here to help have wanted us to do it a certain way, but we acted our own way. So, if you cannot come forward due to fears of outsiders, remember that this fear you have will end up treason. I call you to come out of foreign homes and come to your land and save it.

Distinguished representatives and senators!

As you all know, a lasting peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan requires strong will and sincere cooperation by our neighbor Pakistan. However, sadly, no practical action has been taken to this end. The people of Afghanistan want that the government of Pakistan to earnestly help with peace in the two countries. Fanning the flames of war and violence in Afghanistan favors nothing but deepening of the crisis in Pakistan and the region. Today, Pakistan itself has turned into a scene of tragic terrorist attacks. Its major cities from Karachi to Islamabad, to the military bases, command centers, and its civilians all are falling victim to the direct threat of terrorism. The space now created by the presence of sanctuaries, training and financing grounds that terrorists enjoy in Pakistan have today not

only led to terrorism in Pakistan itself but it is also exported to other countries in the region. I would like to once again remind [everyone] that terrorism is the most serious threat [that] has menaced our entire region. For the sake of peace, stability, and economic prosperity for the region, it is an imperative for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to closely help each other.

Any instrumental use of terrorism will produce nothing but a backfire that will devastate its own promoters. I would like to reiterate, from this hall of the National Assembly, on the determination of the people and of the government of Afghanistan for a sincere cooperation with Pakistan in order for peace, unity, and stronger economic, transit, and cultural interaction to materialize in our region.

Representatives, senators, ladies, and gentlemen!

One of the other topics high on our agenda is to work to complete the process of transition of responsibilities to Afghan government, the fourth tranche of which is well underway and will provide for Afghan forces to secure over 87 percent of the entire population. Our experience of the transition over the past two years shows that our security forces have now gained the sufficient capability to provide security. In all areas where Afghan government has taken over for security responsibility, the situation has improved and we have no problems.

The people and the government of Afghanistan are committed to complete the process of transition at the soonest and take over the responsibility themselves. The completion of transition process means having Afghan people take the responsibility for their own affairs and country—a long-held aspiration we persistently try to fulfill. We can only protect this land with God's help and the ability of its own youth. As our brave ancestors have defended and protected this land throughout history, we too carry that responsibility and will hand an independent and prosperous land to the next generations. Relying on our own force and confidence to the ability of this nation and the aspirations of our people inspires us to move forward in ensuring stability and development. This requires that our politicians and our political elite learn from the lessons of the three past decades and help one another in moving this country forward to peace, stability and national unity.

The national unity in Afghanistan and reliance on the unbreakable unity of this land are the only assurances that can open the way for peace,



stability, and progress. The people of Afghanistan, in a system elected by the will of its people, must be able to enjoy all the rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Respect to human and citizen rights of the people are the high values we all must remain committed to.

Over the past three decades, our people never felt safe against the common practices of harassment, annoyance, torture, and illegal imprisonment as well as the deprivation of their basic freedoms. I am personally committed and bound by the respect to human and citizen rights of the people of Afghanistan, respect to their privacy, and respect to all freedoms and security of the people. That was exactly on this reason that I remind our security forces and state institutions to treat as their priority the rights and freedoms of the people of Afghanistan. No violation can be tolerated.

Distinguished participants!

The truth is that the governments of Afghanistan over the past three decades have continuously oppressed our people either through serving foreigners or through a totalitarian way of ruling. We, on a daily basis with no exception, are in some sort of a struggle with the international community on our quest for people's rights, for the human rights of our people, on issues like the bombardment of our homes and inflicting harm to our children. No villages should be hurt, no one should be harmed and imprisoned. We keep hearing that our own forces, the Afghan government forces engage in violating people rights, it is simply not forgivable. The Afghan nation has the right to hold each one of us accountable, from me to the parliament, to the government, cabinet, and security agencies.

Our homes are still not safe, how can I blame foreigners if we ourselves engage in violating our people's rights and torturing them at homes or in our prisons. We have sworn in to serve this country!

Sisters and brothers!

When I meet my security officials on daily basis, I continuously ask them to make sure that people's rights are protected and I want the same assurance from this house of the people and to assure back to our people that the government of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Interior, the National Directorate of Security, and all other state institutions are there to serve and protect the life and dignity of the people. We are duty bound to fight the powerful and irresponsible wherever they are, whether inside or outside the government. Wherever there is warlordism, they definitely derive their power from the

government, or the contracts given by foreigners, it is either of these that serves as the source of power for these people to engage in harassing public.

We therefore commit ourselves once again to the people to ensure their safety at their homes. But we will treat criminals as criminals. Rule of law has to be ensured, for which we need your serious oversight as the representatives of the people. If we cannot stop our own practices of torture and harassment in the administration, we won't be able to stop others. Presently, it is just the opposite. While we managed to stop foreigners, we unfortunately heard of signs of such practices by ourselves. When the UN released a report of torture in the Afghan prisons, I initially did not believe the findings as I was in contact with the relevant officials on daily basis. We first rejected the report, but then decided to look into it fearing it could be true. I assigned a delegation led by Mr. Adalatkhwa, deputy chairman of the Constitutional Oversight Commission, to investigate the issue. They carried out an all-out probe and the result was not what the UN report said, but still, it showed that there was harassment and abuse at the time of arrest by foreign forces and their Afghan partners, who are part of our forces. We decided that such practices must stop and for that, cameras be installed in the places of investigation and interrogation.

I hope that the government of Afghanistan takes the required measures as per my order and report back to the parliament and to myself.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished representatives!

Based on an agreement reached with NATO in Lisbon, they would be leaving Afghanistan as per the agreement and Afghans welcome that for the good of the country.

In the coming spring, Afghan forces will be taking the lead for security across the whole country. We want that, as per our agreement in Washington, ISAF and NATO troops start pulling out of Afghan villages into their bases.

Afghanistan is entering into a new phase of relations with NATO and would like to achieve our objectives set for 2014. What are the goals? The goals are that Afghan forces ensure security of the entire country and the population, and protect Afghanistan territory, and provide security for people in a manner that ensures the civic and human rights of the people.

Our efforts of many years finally yielded result in claiming the control over the foreign-run prisons, with the Bagram prison set to be transferred

next week. I hope the Americans do not delay the transfer any further. Once they did promise to transfer the prisons but did not do so.

The transfer will take place on Saturday. Did you hear? The prisoners will be transferred to Afghanistan on Saturday.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, listen!

After the transfer is over. We know there are some innocent people held in those prisons. Though I would be criticized, I will instruct to immediately release those innocent so that they go back home. However, those who are involved in bombings and killings of our people must be punished.

We will manage the foreign presence in Afghanistan on the basis of mutual relationship, where our national sovereignty, mutual respect, and our states' equal footing are fully taken into account. That's why, we move forward with much care in our talks with the United States of America on the security agreement, while considering the sovereignty and national interests of Afghanistan as the keystone of our negotiations.

The day before last, the secretary general of NATO came to meet me. He said that many countries wanted to remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

Listen carefully, ladies and gentlemen. It is a very important national issue for Afghanistan.

I told NATO Secretary General during our discussions that any country seeking to stay, provide assistance, and keep their military forces here beyond 2014 must reach an agreement with Afghanistan bilaterally. Having received our agreement, it can keep military presence here but no country can do so arbitrarily or under the NATO framework.

We have our own deal with NATO on its military presence beyond 2014. Any country willing to remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014 will need to seek our agreement and meet our conditions. Then, it can stay here based on our conditions. We are having such negotiations with the United States of America.

I know that foreign presence here beyond 2014 undoubtedly have benefits for Afghanistan too but we will pay a price for it. This presence is not only in our interest but in their interest as well. Therefore, it is not a unilateral deal but a bilateral agreement. We will have our own interests in any post-2014 military presence but their interests will also be taken into account.

Honorable ladies and gentlemen.

All the deals, whether with the United States or any other country, could only be made based

on the determination and decision of our people. The government of Afghanistan is not authorized to undertake such a great affair. So, it is up to the Afghan nation, the National Assembly and Jirga of Afghanistan to make such a decision.

Once the people agreed, the National Assembly of Afghanistan then can pass the public decisions. However, I give you this assurance that we are so prudent in our talks in this regard. No aspect of those agreements would be left without scrutiny. In this respect, I want to reassure our public through you that we are working very carefully and strictly in this regard.

As the chair pointed out to this issue earlier, we are in a very sensitive and risky juncture of our modern history.

During the past ten years Afghanistan has founded and established a democratic political system. That is to say: the State of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan—a political system established based on Islamic rules, democracy, inclusive public participation, freedoms of speech and press, and obligations to obey human and civil rights of the people.

A prosperous future for our people could only guarantee the survival of democracy in Afghanistan. According to the Independent Electoral Commission's program, free and just elections for president and provincial councils are scheduled to be held. We all will try inevitably to conduct a fair and free election.

After one year, if we were alive beyond today and if God give us a chance to live, I will be your ex-president. A new president elected by your votes will come to power.

Members of the National Assembly of Afghanistan!

What will be good for me as the incumbent president and my honorable vice-presidents, who are here and who have accompanied me during the past ten years, and for all officials of the government? Will it be good for us to hold good, dignified, transparent elections so that a new president will come to power with major legitimacy where I will live peacefully at home or not a transparent election that will result in controversies and problems? If it is not the right election, people will blame me, saying that the elections are spoiled because of me? Logically, what type of elections will I want? I will definitely want the first one, the good elections which will yield me good reputation and dignity, and the history will name me "good."

So, I will try my best to hold a peaceful, free, and independent election for the people to vote for a new president as well as the leader and members of provincial councils so that our country moves toward stability and progress. Undoubtedly, good elections will bring better stability to Afghanistan. Insha'Allah! No doubt, everybody wants it.

Now some individuals raise criticisms but on the day of the elections, everyone will seek good elections. We all wish this because bad work is in no one's interest. Good work and free elections are in interest of our people. Be sure it is beneficial.

So, we wish to move forward through joint cooperation and collaboration in order to conduct our elections well.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a very important point to note! In today's Afghanistan, one of the main reasons for constant crisis is unsustainability of the political systems that destroyed or ruined our homeland. Every few years or decades, Afghanistan suffered coup d'états or fell victim to insurgencies or wars arising from foreign invasions and interferences. People lost their rights and freedoms and the country was turned into a battlefield of blood and fire. For that reason, I speak very explicitly here that Afghanistan is not a political lab that could be used by individuals who rise up and put forward their desires and wishes or foreigners' objectives under the disguise of public demands, thus jeopardizing the survival of the system, national unity, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

The Afghan constitution is our national honor that has set a framework, and is a social and legal instrument, for guaranteeing sovereignty, rights, and freedom of our citizens. Any reform in the political system must be made based on the constitution and be an effort deriving from the determination of our people that strengthens our national unity, protects state sovereignty, territorial integrity and provides safeguards for human and civil rights of both our men and women. If so, it is good and we are absolutely ready for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, here I would like to reiterate that the forthcoming elections for president and provincial councils would be held according to the constitution and on the dates announced by the Independent Electoral Commission.

Candidates should manage and run their electoral campaigns as per the laws. The government has to ensure security for the elections so that our people would be able to freely participate and cast

their votes in the elections across the country. All relevant institutions of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan have been instructed as required in this respect and the work remained is still ongoing to this end.

The international community and the United Nations had a clear role in the conduct of our past elections. It is unfortunate to say that their involvement not only resulted in running the election costs very high for Afghanistan—a poor country in the world—but also paved grounds for widespread foreign interferences in the electoral process.

Due to the high expense of arrangements and organizing of our last parliamentary elections, every single vote cost around \$40 for Afghanistan. In a great country like India, every single vote costs less than one dollar while every vote costs around \$40 or \$30 for us. Our poor and needy nation must spend according to its incomes. We must manage, Afghanize, and conduct our elections efficiently. The ex-director of IEC is present in here, the current director of the Commission, and Mr. Najafi, who was the head of the IEC Secretariat are also here. They are well aware that how much the elections cost us.

So, I wish that we Afghanize our elections and reduce electoral costs in the future, adjusting its arrangements in accordance with our means and capacity. Afghanistan's elections also must not be a funding source for salaries paid to the staff of international organizations. We should take into account the realities of our country. We should manage to avoid unnecessary and additional expenses by Afghanizing the way elections are conducted and organized here.

Honorable chair, MPs, ladies, and gentlemen,

In the past ten years, we have had great economic achievements and great gains in governance. A few days ago, I was informed that Afghanistan has secured second rank in transparency of budget management among South Asian states. An international body has announced that, and our minister of finance is aware. It is good news for us. It means we have improved our capacity and day by day we are further developing it. Our gross domestic income has increased from 183 billion Afs in 1384 to one trillion Afs in 1391. One trillion is equivalent to 1,000 billion. So, we have increased our gross domestic income from 183 billion to 1,000 billion Afs. So, it is good news for our country. If our country continues to develop so for another ten years under a new president, under a

new government with a new thinking, we are confident that we will witness a twofold or threefold increase in our incomes.

Fortunately, today we have \$6.5 billion in our bank reserves. In principle, it means that if a country has funds to cover its costs for six months, the country is successful. We have funds to cover our expenses for nearly one year and a half or two years. God forbid, if anything goes wrong and if Afghanistan has no income, it will be able to survive very well on its reserves for one year and a half, or two years.

Honorable representatives, senators, speakers of both Houses of Parliament,

Our country is once again at the threshold of a very sensitive stage of history, transition from such a critical phase as well as peace and stability depends on the collaboration and cooperation of state institutions of Afghanistan.

I absolutely believe that with full knowledge of their legal responsibilities, representatives of our people in both houses of the National Assembly would not spare any efforts to this end.

The electoral bills and other draft laws that would be part of the working agenda of the National Assembly are of significant importance for continuation and consolidation of our legal system. Remarkable attention to this issue will enable us to fill our legal gaps, strengthening and solidifying more than ever a law-abiding system through the rule of law.

To fulfill this desire, we inaugurate the third year of the sixteenth legislative session of the National Assembly in the name of Almighty Allah and based on the provisions of our constitution.

I thank God for giving our nation this blessing of being able to take its political destinies on its own.

Availing this opportunity here, I thank the people of Afghanistan for their sacrifices, bravery,

patience, and tolerance, and for going through much hardship and devastation of this war on terror, and the loss of their and their families' lives. I also appreciate all losses and self-sacrifices of Afghan security forces that fight with patriotism and valor to protect their country, life, and property of the people. I am grateful to all those of our security forces who have even sacrificed their lives until now and to many of our scholars, elders, mothers, and sons lost lives in the past years.

Our representatives at the National Assembly of Afghanistan—both Lower and Upper Houses [Wolesi Jirga and Mishrano Jirga] and provincial councils, state officials, judges of our Supreme Court, attorneys, all the people of Afghanistan, and all state institutions have made sacrifices on this path.

Undoubtedly, the sacrifices we have made are not wasted. Results of those sacrifices are the newly blossomed flowers of progress and prosperity of our nation that we are approaching day by day.

We thank the international community represented by diplomats and officers here who helped Afghanistan in education and development in the past ten years.

This year, the [Afghan] government has increased its ad hoc budget to \$15 million in scholarship for higher education for our youth to study abroad. Increasing the budget from \$5 million to \$10 million during the last one and half year and from that to \$15 million this year. Through this program, our highly educated fellow-country youth will return home.

We thank our youth and international colleagues. Long live the nation of Afghanistan! We hope that we spend this year at service of our homeland and conduct such elections that will be good for the people.

You are most welcome! All the best! Thanks a lot!

# TIMELINE: AFGHANISTAN SINCE 1700

*Compiled by Fritz Lodge*

**1709:** Gilzai Pashtun tribal leader Mirwais Khan (1673-1715) wrests control of Kandahar from Persian Safavid dynasty; establishes Hotaki dynasty.

**1747:** Pashtun commander Ahmad Shah Durrani (1722-1772) establishes the modern Afghan state with the capital in Kandahar; the Durrani dynasty eventually controls an area from Persia to India.

**1803:** Shah Shuja Durrani (1780-1842), brother of former rulers Zaman Shah and Shah Mahmoud, becomes leader amid civil tensions.

**1809:** Shah Shuja signs a treaty of alliance with the British East India Company against a possible Franco-Russian invasion of India; weeks later Shah Shuja is deposed by Shah Mahmoud and the rival Barakzai clan.

**1826:** Dost Mohammad Khan (1793-1863) assumes rule in Kabul as the Barakzai clan defeats the Durrani clan.

**1839:** British forces occupy Afghanistan, oust Dost Mohammad and restore Shah Shuja as ruler; First Anglo-Afghan War ensues as rebellion spreads across the country; Dost Mohammad surrenders and is exiled to India.

**1842:** Afghan fighters loyal to Dost Mohammad kill 4,500 British and Indian troops as they retreat from Kabul; Shah Shuja is assassinated and the Barakzai clan takes power.

**1878—1880:** British forces invade Afghanistan in the Second Anglo-Afghan War after Emir Sher Ali Khan (1825-1879) strengthens ties with Russia; after Sher Ali flees and dies, his son and successor Mohammad Yaqub Khan (1849-1923) signs the Treaty of Gandamak giving Britain control over Afghan foreign affairs; Yaqub Khan abdicates and Sher Ali's cousin Abd Al-Rahman (1844-1901) becomes emir.

**1919:** Emir Amanullah Khan (1892-1960) declares independence from Britain; Third Anglo-Afghan

War erupts after Afghan troops cross border into British-ruled India; fighting ends with the Treaty of Rawalpindi granting Afghanistan independence and giving Britain friendly relations with the country.

**1923:** Amanullah Khan promulgates Afghanistan's first constitution, establishing a monarchy and limiting powers of tribal leaders.

**1926—1929:** Political and social reforms trigger popular unrest; a tribal revolt forces Amanullah Khan to abdicate.

**1929:** British-backed former general Mohammad Nadir Shah (1883-1933) of the Barakzai clan declares himself king; adopts a new constitution in 1931 granting tribal leaders more authority.

**1933:** Nadir Shah is assassinated in a family feud; his son Mohammad Zahir Shah (1914-2007) is crowned king; during a forty-year reign he maintains Afghan unity against foreign threats and develops the country with aid from the United States and the Soviet Union.

**1953:** General Mohammad Daoud Khan (1909-1978) becomes prime minister and strengthens relations with the Soviet Union; he introduces controversial social reforms such as abolishing the practice of keeping women from public view.

**1963:** Daoud Khan resigns after his vision for a Greater Pashtunistan prompts tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**1965:** Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) holds first congress.

**1973:** Daoud Khan overthrows Zahir, abolishes the Afghan monarchy and declares himself president of the Afghan Republic; aims to limit dependency on the Soviet Union and weaken the country's leftist groups.

**April 27, 1978:** PDPA coup d'état overthrows and kills Daoud Khan in the Saur Revolution; Nur



Mohammad Taraki (1917-1979) becomes president; new regime is paralyzed by infighting and violent opposition from mujahideen rebels.

**February 14, 1979:** Gunmen kidnap and kill U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubs; soon afterwards the U.S. cuts all assistance to the Afghan government.

**July 3, 1979:** President Jimmy Carter authorizes Operation Cyclone, providing non-military support for the mujahideen including aid for propaganda and medical supplies.

**December 1979:** Following internal coups, an assassination attempt on a PDPA president and growing resistance to the PDPA across the country, Soviet forces eventually numbering 100,000 invade Afghanistan to stabilize the regime and bolster the communist government against the mujahideen; Babrak Karmal (1929-1996) becomes president.

**1980:** Disparate mujahideen militias attack Soviet forces; Carter authorizes the CIA to deliver arms to the mujahideen, who also receive military support from Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia and European states, among others.

**January 1981:** President Ronald Reagan increases aid to the mujahideen, totaling more than \$3 billion over the next six years.

**1982:** The number of Afghan refugees fleeing to Pakistan and Iran reaches nearly 4.5 million.

**1983:** Congress passes joint Resolution 237 calling on the president to “support the people of Afghanistan in their struggle to be free from foreign domination” and “provide the Afghans, upon request, with material assistance” and pursue a negotiated settlement for an end to war.

**1984:** Osama bin Laden (1957-2011) joins fellow Saudis and other Arabs in Afghanistan to fight alongside the mujahideen.

**1985:** Mujahideen factions in Peshawar form alliance against Soviet forces; approximately half of the Afghan population is now displaced by the war.

**1986:** CIA provides mujahideen with Stinger missiles to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships, shifting the balance of the war.

**November 1986:** Afghan secret police head Mohammad Najibullah (1947-1996) replaces Babrak Karmal as PDPA leader; becomes Afghan president the following year.

**1988:** Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev announces the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; Soviet Union, Afghanistan, the U.S. and Pakistan reach a peace accord in Geneva; bin Laden forms Al-Qaeda at a meeting of jihadists in Peshawar, Pakistan.

**1989:** Soviet troop withdrawal is complete in mid-February; an estimated 1.5 million Afghans and 25,000 Soviet troops were killed during the ten-year occupation; war continues as the mujahideen push to defeat Najibullah; bin Laden returns to Saudi Arabia and resettles in Sudan in 1991.

**1992:** Guerrilla commander Ahmad Shah Massoud (1953-2001) leads mujahideen into Kabul and deposes President Najibullah.

**1992—1995:** A power-sharing agreement makes Burhanuddin Rabbani (1940-2011) president; Afghanistan collapses into civil war amid fighting between mujahideen factions loosely pitting Islamist group Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (1947-) against Massoud’s fighters.

**November 1994:** The Taliban, a mainly Pashtun mujahideen faction headed by spiritual leader and commander Mullah Omar, rise to prominence when it enters Kandahar to fight criminal gangs.

**1996:** Bin Laden is expelled from Sudan and relocates to Jalalabad, forges close relations with the Taliban against Massoud’s Northern Alliance and issues a declaration of war against the U.S. for basing troops in Saudi Arabia; Taliban forces capture Kabul, execute Najibullah, and establish the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; Taliban imposes draconian Islamic law, including banning women from public life and reintroducing stoning and amputation as punishments.

**1997:** Pakistan recognizes the Taliban government, which controls nearly two-thirds of Afghanistan; Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates follow suit.

**1998:** Taliban massacre at least two thousand civilians of the Hazara ethnic minority in Mazar-e-Sharif

and kill seven Iranian diplomats stationed in the city; Tehran moves troops to the Afghan border; bin Laden and Egyptian militant Ayman Al-Zawahiri announce formation of World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders; in a coordinated attack, Al-Qaeda terrorists bomb U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; President Bill Clinton retaliates with cruise missile strikes on suspected terrorist compounds in Afghanistan and Sudan; bin Laden is indicted in the U.S. for his role in the Africa bombings.

**1999:** United Nations Security Council adopts Resolution 1267 imposing financial sanctions on the Taliban regime.

**March 2001:** Taliban destroy sixth-century Great Buddhas of Bamiyan statues as “gods of infidels.”

**September 9, 2001:** Two suspected Al-Qaeda operatives posing as a TV crew assassinate Ahmad Shah Massoud in a suicide bombing.

**September 11, 2001:** Al-Qaeda terrorists hijack four commercial airliners and crash them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania, killing nearly 3,000 people; President George W. Bush blames Al-Qaeda for the deadliest attack on American territory in history.

**October 7, 2001:** U.S. and British forces invade Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom after the Taliban refuse to extradite bin Laden; the military coalition expands to include Turkey, Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, France and others.

**November 13, 2001:** Airstrikes and ground attacks by coalition forces enable the Northern Alliance to capture Kabul and topple the Taliban regime.

**December 5, 2001:** Afghan leaders meeting in Germany adopt the Bonn Agreement forming an interim Afghan administration with Hamid Karzai (1957-) as chairman.

**December 7, 2001:** Kandahar falls to the Northern Alliance, followed by Zabul province two days later; Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces retreat to the Tora Bora mountain range and eventually to Pakistan; bin Laden’s whereabouts are unknown.

**December 20, 2001:** UN Security Council Resolution 1386 establishes the International Security

Assistance Force (ISAF), tasked with helping an Afghan interim government maintain security.

**2002:** A loya jirga appoints Karzai interim president of the Afghan Transitional Administration; high-ranking Taliban officials surrender to the new government, and are granted amnesty.

**March 20, 2003:** U.S. launches invasion of Iraq after accusing Saddam Hussein of amassing weapons of mass destruction and coordinating with Al-Qaeda.

**May 1, 2003:** U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declares an end to “major combat” in Afghanistan.

**August 11, 2003:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) takes control of the international peacekeeping force in Kabul.

**January 26, 2004:** Karzai ratifies Afghanistan’s new constitution after it is drafted and adopted by a loya jirga.

**October 9, 2004:** Karzai wins the first direct presidential election in Afghan history with 55.4 percent of the vote from a field of eighteen candidates.

**May 23, 2005:** George W. Bush and Karzai sign the Joint Declaration of the United States—Afghan Strategic Partnership, which commits the U.S. to long-term security, reconstruction and democracy building in Afghanistan.

**September 18, 2005:** Six million Afghans vote in elections for parliament and provincial councils; despite allegations of fraud, U.N. monitors confirm the validity of the results; 27 percent of the members of parliament are women.

**December 8, 2005:** NATO agrees on an expanded role for the ISAF, enabling it to take over full command of international military forces from the U.S.-led coalition.

**April 15, 2007:** Human Rights Watch says nearly 670 Afghan civilians were killed in armed attacks by Taliban insurgents and 230 by NATO airstrikes in 2006, making it the “deadliest year” since the 2001 invasion.

**July 11, 2008:** U.S. airstrike kills forty-seven Afghans in a wedding party, prompting Afghan government anger over rising collateral civilian deaths.

**September 9, 2008:** Bush announces an additional 4,500 U.S. troops to respond to the uptick in Taliban-related violence and roadside bombs.

**February 17, 2009:** President Barack Obama orders the deployment of an additional 17,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan.

**March 27, 2009:** Obama announces a new Afghanistan strategy that links success in Afghanistan to stabilization in Pakistan; it includes an increase in U.S. security assistance to Pakistan and deployment of an additional 4,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan.

**August 20, 2009:** Allegations of fraud delay the results of presidential elections; preliminary results show Karzai winning with 54.6 percent; Independent Election Commission (IEC) declares Karzai the winner in November after his rival, former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah (1960-) withdraws before runoff balloting.

**December 1, 2009:** Obama announces the temporary “surge” deployment of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops for a total of 100,000 to slow Taliban insurgents.

**December 30, 2009:** A Taliban suicide bomber, posing as an informant, infiltrates Forward Operating Base Chapman near Khost, killing at least eight people including seven CIA officers.

**February 13, 2010:** Fifteen thousand NATO and Afghan troops launch Operation Moshtarak against Taliban strongholds in Helmand province, the biggest offensive since the start of the war.

**November 20, 2010:** NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration envisions Afghan security forces “assuming full responsibility for security” in the country.

**May 2, 2011:** U.S. Navy SEAL team kills bin Laden at a hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan; Egyptian Ayman Al-Zawahiri (1951-) is later declared Al-Qaeda’s new leader.

**June 22, 2011:** Obama announces a U.S. pullout from Afghanistan by 2014; an estimated 1,500 American soldiers have died in the war.

**September 20, 2011:** Taliban suicide bomber assassinates Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of Afghanistan’s High Peace Council and a key mediator in talks with the Taliban.

**October 4, 2011:** Karzai and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sign a strategic partnership agreement in New Delhi that outlines India’s financial, development and security commitment in Afghanistan.

**November 19, 2011:** A loya jirga agrees to peace talks with the Taliban and endorses a strategic agreement with the U.S. that would maintain some U.S. forces beyond 2014.

**January 3, 2012:** Taliban announce they will open a political office in Qatar for future negotiations, dropping a demand that U.S. troops withdraw before the start of peace talks.

**March 11, 2012:** U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales kills sixteen civilians, including nine children, in Kandahar; a U.S. military court later sentences him to life in prison.

**May 13, 2012:** Unknown gunman assassinates Arsala Rahmani (1937-2012), a former Taliban leader and member of the High Peace Council.

**May 21, 2012:** ISAF member countries meeting at a NATO summit in Chicago reaffirm the Lisbon timetable to withdraw foreign troops by the end of 2014.

**February 4, 2013:** Karzai and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari agree to cooperate against Taliban resurgence.

**June 18, 2013:** NATO forces hand over command of military and security operations in the country to the Afghan army; an estimated 3,400 foreign troops and 20,000 Afghan civilians have died in the 2001 to 2013 period.

**June 19, 2013:** Karzai suspends talks on a security agreement with the U.S. after the Obama administration and the Taliban announce direct talks in Qatar excluding the Afghan government.

**April 5, 2014:** Afghans vote in presidential and provincial elections.

**April 26, 2014:** IEC declares Abdullah and former finance minister Ashraf Ghani (1949-) as top vote-getters in presidential elections to compete in a second-round runoff; commission estimates nearly seven million Afghans voted, with nearly 45 percent for Abdullah and 31.5 percent for Ghani.

**June 14, 2014:** Amid violence Afghans vote in a second round of presidential elections; IEC estimates voter turnout at seven million; results are inconclusive as accusations of vote fraud emerge.

**May 27, 2014:** Obama announces that 9,800 American troops will remain in Afghanistan after 2014 to support Afghan and NATO allies, and will withdraw by 2016.

**September 21, 2014:** Ghani and Abdullah sign a power-sharing deal brokered by Secretary of State John Kerry that names Ghani president and Abdullah the country's chief executive officer.

**September 29, 2014:** Ghani is sworn in as Afghanistan's second elected president.

**September 30, 2014:** U.S. and Afghanistan sign long-term security agreement allowing American and NATO troops to remain in the country after the formal end of the international combat mission at end of year.

