

## TRANSCRIPT

# "THE PASHTUN QUESTION: MYTHS, REALITIES, AND MILITANCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN"

*A Conversation With Abubakar Siddique and Amna Nawaz*

\* \* \*TRANSCRIBER NOTE: INTERVIEWEE HAS HEAVY ACCENT\* \* \*

### **ANNOUNCER:**

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### **CHRIS ROGERS:**

Good evening everyone. Thank you very much for coming. My name is Chris Rogers. I work with the regional policy initiative on Afghanistan and Pakistan here at Open Society Foundations. The elections have-- with the elections in Afghanistan, ongoing-- conflict and peace talks in Pakistan-- I think we're entering-- a truly pivotal period in the region. So I think why a book like Abubakar's, which I think challenges many of our assumptions about the nature of the conflict, Pashtuns, and the Taliban-- in the region-- is coming at a really critical time.

And so, we're very glad and happy to have him as well as Amna Nawaz here to discuss today. Abubakar Siddique is an internationally recognized journalist with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty based in Prague, specializing in the coverage of Afghanistan and Pakistan. He researches and writes on security, political, humanitarian, and cultural issues in the region and the Pashtun heartland where he was born.

He is the author, of course, of the newly published book *Pashtun Question*. Amna Nawaz is an Emmy award winning NBC correspondent and bureau chief for NBC news in Pakistan. She previously report-- previously reported for NBC's investigative

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unit, covering the war in Afghanistan, the US raid on the Osama Bin Laden compound in Pakistan.

She has reported through NBC throughout the world, including Syria, Turkey, Columbia, South Africa, and Haiti. Nawaz has also reported extensively from the conflict affected areas of Pakistan on US drone strikes and militancy including recent exclusive reporting from north Waziristan. So we're gonna start with Abubakar offering a couple opening remarks-- on his book-- and particularly in the contemporary context-- of-- of politics and conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Then-- Amna-- will pose a couple questions and have a bit of a discussion-- and dialogue between the two of them. And then we will open it up to the audience for questions. And I look forward to a great discussion. Thank you very much.

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well Chris, thank you. I must thank the Open Society Foundations for hosting me, Chris Rogers in particular, Rachel Reed, and Jared Rossari (PH). And I'm also grateful that Amna is moderating me. I hope she won't ask me too many difficult questions. We are both journalists and we know the tricks.

I'll first give you a be-- a bit of a background story on why I wrote the book. I was born-- and-- and-- and I've lived in Waziristan and I've been raised in Waziristan. In Waziristan, we have a saying which-- in our particular accent of Pashtuns in (FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED), which means that even the highest mountains have a path over them. So this whole Afghanistan and Pakistan thing is something that I've been writing about, trying to understand now for nearly 15, 20 years, is-- is a very complex issue.

And what was lacking was that there were not too many indigenous perspectives. There were all angles, from Washington, from London, from Islamabad, from somewhere else covering these issues but not what people thought they are-- what is essentially the reality was still-- I mean, about the Pashtuns, the last good book that people still cite and is, I think, being recommended in-- in campuses was written by Olaf Caroe, the governor of northwest frontier.

And-- and the books was published in 1958. The society has changed. Afghanistan and-- and Pakistan and this region has been through tremendous changes. And-- and we still see the Pashtuns essentially through-- through those-- lenses. In-- in-- as-- growing up as a schoolboy in Waziristan, what I saw essentially was a lot of suffering, particularly of the (UNINTEL) refugees who had fled their homeland, (UNINTEL) occupation. And-- and I was exposed to two very contradictory perspectives or narratives.

One was from Radio Kabul which said invasion is a great thing. The soviets are our friend. They're here to-- develop us. They-- they-- they are bringing development and prosperity and all of that. The other narrative was in the mosques, in the schools, in daytime which said that-- the-- an infidel power has occupied a Muslim

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country and we must fight them. And there must be a jihad.

And people we are hosting here are all m-- mujahideen, the refugees. And the mujahideen-- will be ultimately victorious. Now, we'd been (UNINTEL) these two narratives over the past 30 years. The Pashtuns have been the main-- or 40 years have been the main victims. Their institutions have been destroyed. Whatever political evolution, they-- that-- that they did over the past century, it was kind of in man-- so many ways undone.

And-- and I wanted to find good-- answers to all these questions. I wanted to-- understand what the-- being Pashtun means in 21st century, what the Pashtuns s-- society is like today. What does-- a tribe means? How are the tribe related and all that?

But I also wanted to understand that-- there's a lot in the book. The current militant networks operating the Al Qaeda, the Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, the (UNINTEL) Taliban, the political relations between two very important states in modern age, Afghanistan and Pakistan. And also, the-- the key thing that-- that I have tried to bring out is how integrated these societies are. Afghanistan and Pakistan are two, in many ways, hostile neighbors.

But the society in both countries is extremely integrations. There are hardly two neighboring countries anywhere else in the world that are so integrated in terms of the society. And what integrates them, what's-- integrated society is, of course, the Pashtun people who now are around 50 peo-- 50-- million in both countries. In Afghanistan, they are nearly-- the majority or the largest-- group. In Pakistan, they are the second largest group.

I-- I-- I would not go into the details of the intricacies of the tribal society and-- and-- and-- the Pashtun political problems in Pakistan. What is happening Afghanistan, different regions of Afghanistan, that is all in the book. And I hope you read it. I would like kind of focus today's talk more on what is happening now in Afghanistan and Pakistan and what is the way forward. In Pakistan, essentially we have-- these so called peace talks with the Taliban.

And by talking to a lot of senior politicians recently, I was told that the tease-- the peace talks are nothing more than Nawash-- Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif effort to appease the Taliban essentially. And-- and-- and the strategy is to protect himself, his family, his business interests, and the eastern Punjab province, which is his main political base, from Taliban attacks.

The military is apparently not happy. There is a lot going on between the military and Nawaz Sharif. Some of it is coming out into the news. So in Pakistan-- I mean, these are kind of-- in (UNINTEL) term as-- are major threats. The Taliban talks, as far as I can see, will not succeed because they are no basis for-- for them to succeed. The Taliban-- the state cannot simply give away part of its territory to-- a non state actor-- of people organized as essentially in alliance with international terrorism.

In Afghanistan, the prospect, because of the elections look-- more positive-- and more optimistic. Everybody in this room, I hope, saw the television pictures of

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people queuing in lines for hours to cast their ballots-- on April 5th. But we also have to remember that democracy is not an event. Democracy is a process.

And that process takes a long time to take root and kind of-- get into this unique mold of-- like for example, if we have in-- Indian democracy, we have a Pakistani democracy. We are seeing now the evolution-- and strengthening of the (UNINTEL) democracy. The key steps there, of course, that Afghanistan-- the political elite now have to accept the results. Or if there is a run-- a run off, of course, it will create a lot of-- disagreements, a lot of divisions.

But still, they need to somehow come out of it as a unified nation. One of the things that you-- I hope when you read my book, you realize that I have discovered all these stereotypes about (UNINTEL PHRASE) being bitterly divided among-- along ethnic lines and all that. The reality of the society is very complicated. And I'll give you one small example. Since 9/11, particularly in this country, the media has told us that Abu (UNINTEL) are essentially these four major ethnic groups, the Tajiks, the Hazaras, the Pashtuns, and the Uzbeks.

And they are all at loggerheads. They-- they're fighting each other. But when you go to Afghan society and you live in them, there's a lot of-- assimilation, a lot of Pashtun speaker Abuhans-- have adopted (UNINTEL). Most Abuhans are bilingual to go with. But a lot of Pashtun speaking Abuhans have adopted (UNINTEL) as their-- native language, their first language. They still retain the Pashtun. So there is no basis for this kind of territorial based ethnic conflict in Afghanistan-- as we have seen in other countries.

But in Afghanistan, the big thing is that-- I suppose I can see things. The future Abuhan leadership has to-- sign the BAC precisely for the reasons that Abuhan security forces, which now happen to be 250 million need-- sustained international funding. In-- and Afghanistan needs-- to-- to-- to be-- a state robust enough-- that can administer a territory and prevent it from being taken over pre-- primarily from groups that are based in-- in neighboring countries-- and-- and get outside support.

The last points that I want to make-- is about the future. In my book, I go on into land, documenting the history of bad relations between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Pashtun question, what do Pashtun want, what-- what they don't want. In-- in 2014, I can see that we have a reasonably good chance of-- establishing what I essentially call lasting peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And this-- this is a process. This is not an event.

The process will go like Islamabad being the more powerful state has to convince the Abuhan elite, the Afghanistan-- Islamabad is not entrusted in installing governments in Kabul. That Afghan-- Islamabad is a friend of Afghanistan. It's-- Afghanistan's internal affair. By the way, Islamabad (UNINTEL PHRASE) all other labors.

They have never tried to appoint ayatollahs in Iran or influence the Chinese communist party. And of course, they cannot even think about-- about doing so-- so to India. But in Afghanistan, they should not-- support a group of ruler mullahs (PH)-- called the Taliban, who by the way are genuine Abuhan movement. But the

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thing is that they do not represent-- the entire spectrum of afghan population. They do not even represent Pashtuns.

They are a very small segment-- segment within southern Pashtuns primarily. And-- and the Abuhan elite, on their part, Afghanistan also has to recognize that for durable peace there has to be-- some kind of a recognized border between the two countries. For-- and-- and then-- and the way forward for this is what I have argued is economic integration. The society is incredibly integrated. If you can build on economic integration in-- one generations or maybe even before that because the Abuhan elite is now very smart.

They have learned their lessons. You will have the confidence in both capitals that we can go ahead with this, that the whole (UNINTEL) line question will not be that central. It will not be relevant. And frankly, a lot of that has been based on, I think, perceptions, not realities. In Pakistan, I'll give you one good example. So today in 2014, despite all the while it's being-- concentrated in Pashtun regions of Pakistan, the tribal (UNINTEL) as Balochistan, parts of Balochistan and also in (UNINTEL PHRASE).

Pashtuns-- do not have a cessationist movement. The two major Pashtun nationalist party, the Awan (PH) (UNINTEL) party and the Pashtun (UNINTEL) party are mainstream political parties. And their maximum demands already have been-- addressed in the 18th-- amendment that was passed in 2010.

So-- but at the same time, I can-- I have-- and I have documented this at length. There is a lot of unease among the Pashtuns about this whole phenomenon of extremism, about what they essentially see as their society being controlled or micro managed through violence and terrorism. And that has to end for-- peaceful future.

## AMNA NAWAZ:

Thank you very much. Thank you to everyone for coming as well. I hope you won't mind if I just take a few minutes to pose some of my burning questions-- having read the book. If you get a chance, if you have any interest in the region at all, which I'm assuming you do if you are here, I strongly encourage you to get it. It is perhaps one of the most comprehensive and detailed looks at a very specific community that we have been talking about for the last decade quite a bit, but very few people have firsthand and long term experience with.

So thank you to Abubakar for drafting this. I think you've done probably one of the most difficult things that any journalist can do, which is try to take a critical look at your own people. And it is-- it's sweeping and comprehensive. So I-- I do encourage you to-- to read it when you can. I wanna pick up on what is sort of the largest premise, I think, in the book. And the intent you actually touched on this. It's written in response in a lot of ways to the discussion you've seen taking place over the last decade.

This idea, the kind of-- the common assumption that the extremist elements, the

militant elements that have taken root in the Pashtun heartland find their support there, if not tacitly, then overtly in some way. That there's something rooted in Pashtun culture-- that they support this movement in some way. And you've actually touched on-- in the-- on the-- in the book in several ways over the last 100 years that there have been other forces using or exploiting the Pashtuns in many ways, dating back to the ruler in Kabul using them as-- as a fighting force and Pakistani government using them as a fighting force in the battle for Kashmir. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about why that is. Is there something in Pashtun culture, in their geo political location-- that allows that to continue to happen?

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Well, one-- one of the big points that we have-- the Pashtuns are dealing with-- two states-- who have been failing or at some point have failed. Afghanistan, for instance, in 1990 have failed. So that's one of the biggest things we remembered. Also-- but also the thing that historically-- I mean, since-- the European invasion of South Asia, Pashtuns-- have been-- on the decline. The Pashtun power in South Asia, pash-- we should not remember that Pashtuns have been kinged in India-- historically.

There were-- there were-- dynasties, Pashtun dynasties that not only ruled-- India-- or South Asia but also Iran and central Asia. So-- the-- these are-- this-- this is not a secluded tribal society. This is very much-- people-- connecting two very important region, the central as-- central Asia and south Asia. In modern days-- I-- I have-- I-- and of course, there-- there are all kind of-- we-- we know about the great king and how the Pashtun regions were one big part of that (UNINTEL) and-- and-- and what happened and how it shaped modern Afghanistan and how it shaped-- for example about modern Afghanistan.

I mean, you take a state that loses a lot of its strategy, or majority of its strategy and majority of its population, how can that state ever be-- or that nation ever been strong? This is the tragedy with Afghanistan. That's what the Abuhan strong-- very-- every Abuhan-- feels very strongly. It comes out in moments.

It-- for example, I'll give you-- I've touched upon it in my book. One-- part of the communist movement in Afghanistan was-- that they were also nationalists. They wanted to-- kind of take their society out of-- of what they saw afflicts it, which is-- ignorance, illiteracy, backwardness, all that. And-- and they look to-- communism in Moscow to do-- help in-- in-- in turning it around.

In today's context-- I'll give you Ra-- I mean this country, a lot of people-- like quoting polls and figures. There has been-- an investment of close to a trillion dollars, or more than a trillion dollars, in the wars-- basically centered in Pashtun regions by countries as diverse as Cuba, Czechoslovakia, which no longer exists by the way. I live in Czech republic. It's a separated country-- (LAUGH) from Slovakia and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirate and you name it.

Everybody's-- was involved. Which society in the world could have sustained that



kind of funding? We-- a few days ago, somebody in Washington asked me the-- the same question essentially. What is-- is there something intrinsic in the Pashtun culture that-- that-- that they are violent and all that? And I said, "Look, in Pakistan, I'll give you one very good example. In Pakistan, one of the most peaceful people or people who are not associated with violence and were not called the wild tribes were the people of South Punjab."

This is-- classic south Asian feudal society where the feudal lord is the lord really in the literal sense. But now-- you-- if you look at-- if you study that region, most of the terrorist recruitment or extremist recruitment, anti (UNINTEL) (NOISE), all kinds of them come from South Punjab. What has changed there? It's the money that somebody's putting there.

So in Pashtun case, there is a lot of funding to that end from many sides. And it's still happening unfortunately as we speak. Unless you stop that, you-- you break that-- political economy of conflict, things will not improve. They will-- if-- if a father has five sons and he cannot feed them, he's gonna send them to Madrasa. And if he's lucky, the Madrasa will not be violent. I-- I have made very clear in my book I have not leveled anybody.

I have gone into great detail to research who the Ubundis (PH) are, who-- how they-- they-- they defer over the (UNINTEL PHRASE) for what. In many cases, some of them want to be peaceful. Some of them-- see violence as a means of achieving their political objectives. So-- so my-- question-- my answer is a resounding no. And one other thing that I want to add to it is in-- ruler Pashtun settings, particularly in tribal society, violence is very structured.

In Waziristan, we have a saying that if you kill somebody, it will bring snow. Snow is a very bad thing in Waziristan by the way because mud houses. And it can kill you. So-- you never kill anybody without a good reason. And-- and that-- that kind of-- what we call-- what the British have called "Badal" (PH), this whole notion of revenge killing is not actually revenge killing. It's a very modern concept of reciprocity.

You-- being a New Yorker, I'm sure you-- every day, you meet people who do something good for you. And you will do good for them in-- in return. This is called reciprocity. And that's what also happened in Pashtun society. The-- in tribal settings, if there is no-- hotels, if you cannot go and find a motel in, say, (UNINTEL) or something, you will go and visit your friend or s-- your father's friend or somebody whose name you have heard. Or you will show up at the village mosque and somebody will give you food.

And-- but-- but-- and-- and when somebody from that village comes to your community, he will expect the same. That's why this is-- but-- but a lot of people have kind of romanticized these notions. Olaf Caroe is one good example. The whole British colonial ethnography-- that-- that went on for more than 150 years is a very good example of that. And still being quoted. People-- every second book that I read about Afghanistan quotes *The Malakand F-- F-- Force*. This book-- written by Churchill when he was a journalist-- (LAUGH) back in 19th century-- in Malakand.

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So modern Pashtuns, my effort was, should not be seen through those eyes.

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

You talk a lot about the money that's going in and--

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Yeah.

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

--that's gone in through the years. This-- this-- economy of-- of conflict there. And-- but you seem to also argue that money is what's needed to be able to change the culture. And I'm curious about that in two ways. One is what kind of economic investment you'd like to see because there are some efforts beginning to be made-- at least that I've seen on the Pakistan side which is-- just ironic the way the money's been flowing from Pakistan in the last-- decade or so but less so on the Afghan side.

And I wonder what you think the difference of treatment is of Pashtun culture is on both sides in terms of economic investment and how that can lead to stability there. And also if you think that economic investment at this point in time, where we are now given the relationship between the two countries, given-- the post-- election-- scenario in Afghanistan and the post-- withdrawal of US forces as well whether this is the right time to do it at all without security and stability.

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well, I've always been-- I mean purely from a very personal perspective, I've always been opposed to this idea that-- people from outside, particularly the (UNINTEL) show-- show up in con-- conflict zone and then roll out-- hand out aid in terms of, like, giving people wheat or (UNINTEL) oil. And this is not gonna change anything. It's gonna-- make people dependant.

The Pashtun society or Pashtun economy-- has three main-- economic sectors that they engage in. One is-- trade. The other one is transport. They are very closely related. The-- the-- the third one is agriculture. And all these three need peace. So there has to be a lot of movement on the political side first to establish peace. And when you have peace, the Pashtuns have the resources that they need.

Of course, it will take a generation. You have to (NOISE) (UNINTEL) people. For example, in Swat, we have some of the best trout fish anywhere. Swat grows one of the best beaches ev-- everywhere. Where I am from, we have the best apples in Pakistan or in that region. In-- (UNINTEL PHRASE). You name it.



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Across-- the border in (UNINTEL PHRASE), the same. And Afghanistan, a lot has happened-- since 2001 with international investment. But of course, corruption is a very big problem. The capacity of the Abuhan government is a very big problem. You wouldn't believe how much money is wasted purely on only guarding these natural security (UNINTEL). How little is actually-- for example, if there is \$100 million sanction for Afghanistan, somewhere in the western capital, that's (UNINTEL).

Maybe 100,000 million-- \$100,000 of that is actually of some benefit to Abuhans. The rest is all-- goes into overhead. I mean, this is a very complicated-- and it-- it will-- it also needs-- requires-- a very good study to-- to pinpoint what is happening. In Pakistan, the Pashtuns have a very big political problem.

One good political problem is-- for-- what we call Fata. Now Fata is an obsolete-- structure. It was created by the British as-- a kind of-- a no man land between Afghanistan and Pakistan as this known conductor. Because when we had Pashtun political movements in-- in Pakistan-- what is essentially in Pakistan (UNINTEL PHRASE) movement, it could not go through Fata to Afghanistan. We have-- one of-- the leading-- reformist movement anywhere in Islamic societies after Turkey under King Amanullah in the 1920s.

And Amanullah's reforms didn't see through Fata to-- Pashtuns, eastern Pashtuns because Fata was this man-- no man's land (UNINTEL PHRASE) whatever. You cannot-- these people are not humans. These are tribes. And tribes are therefore subjugated under these laws. In Fata, the law of the land is today called frontier crime's regulation. It's an obsolete law. It-- established a collective punishment. If there is a crime in my tribe's territory, the whole tribe is responsible for that. I mean--

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

But in terms of the economic investment, I want to--  
(OVERTALK)

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

--to get around to the-- the disenfranchisement of people--

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Yeah. Yeah but--

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**AMNA NAWAZ:**

--who were treated to Fata as well.

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

But-- but-- but--

(OVERTALK)

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

--economic in-- investment will make an impact when people are in power, when they get questioned. I-- I mean--

**AMNA NAWAZ:**

In power politically?

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Politically. When they have representation, when they have a voice in national mainstream. In Fata, yes a lot of the money goes. But I mean how much of that money actually-- reaches the people? What good is-- it does? No one can-- for example, there-- there is a road in southwest (UNINTEL). The road was built by (UNINTEL). It's a very good road. The best road-- one of the best-- in Pakistan that you can travel on. But the entire Maseed (PH)-- Massoud tribe, which is half of the population of-- Waziristan is banned from traveling on those road-- that-- that road because--

**AMNA NAWAZ:**

Banned by whom?

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

By the Pakistani state, by the Pakistani government. Be that the military civilian. Every Massoud who wants to travel on that road has to get a permit from the political agent or some kind of-- government authority in south Waziristan seven days before he travels. People cannot-- the Pashtuns are famous for loving their land. They want to at least bury their dead in their graveyards.

But that's not been happening. The Massoud have not purchased land close-- close

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to (UNINTEL) to bury their dead because they cannot travel to Waziristan because of this law. So-- it-- it look all-- it looks very good and nice on papers and-- and in newspapers and in television bulletins that we are bringing development and this and this. But unless you empower the people and you make them-- if-- if-- if a Pakistani citizenship means one thing to a person in Waziristan and another thing to a person in-- in Lahore (PH), it will-- there will always be political problems. There will always be-- unrest. The-- the people will-- because humans, after all, are famous for-- carving out their own survival strategies.

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

This brings me back to the-- the question on the border that you mentioned earlier though. If that were to be more firmly maintained and strictly controlled, if the two countries came somehow to some agreement that said, "This is where we draw the line, if Afghanistan recognizes the Durand line as the international border." Can you still have that kind of investment in the population? Or does that just divide and-- and further cause disarray in-- in the Pashtun heartland at least?

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well, the border-- I mean-- I'm sorry I-- can you just--

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

Of course. You-- you're saying that if they-- they feel more empowered politically-- and I'm assuming that means in the central governments on both side of the border. That's the way to do it, right? Without creating their own government. So if that border was to be maintained and more firmly kept in place and recognized by Afghanistan, you're essentially dividing--

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Yeah. Okay yeah--

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

Are-- are you--

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Okay yeah, I got you.

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## AMNA NAWAZ:

So how do they become more politically empowered?

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Okay. In-- in Pashtun, we have a term. We have a saying which says that you cannot divide-- separate water with a stick because water will go around it. This is the example of the Pashtun society. You cannot have a hard water. You cannot mine and fence that (UNINTEL) and say, "Forget about Afghanistan and the people of Peshawar and Waziristan and (UNINTEL PHRASE) or Islamabad."

And let's-- and similarly in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is fundamental difference. In Pakistan, the Pashtuns are minority. So they have all these com-- complaints that a lot of other ethnic groups in most developing countries have. This is-- I mean or very similar to. In Pakistan, we have a Baloch insurgency. The Baloch have similar complaints or perhaps more-- I mean, they are com-- aggravated complaints.

In-- in-- in-- but in Afghanistan, the Pashtuns are a minority. So whoever-- rules Afghanistan and-- and there were known Pashtun rulers in Afghanistan in the past century. They have to-- they cannot subjugate the Pashtuns. The Pashtun-- they will not-- they will still rely on the Pashtuns.

Like for example, in the past ten years, every time-- I-- I read Pakistani papers and-- and sat in these press conferences in Islamabad, people always complained, "There is no Pashtun representation of"-- but when I went to Kabul, I met Afghan officials from Karzai down to say-- in Afghan they call it-- in Afghanistan, they call it a Mamura (PH) cleric. The Pashtuns were a well-- overwhelming majority. In the parliament today, they are well-- over-- overwhelming majority.

Among the 12-- 11-- presidential candidates that (UNINTEL), ten were Pashtuns. And even Abdul Abdullah claims Pashtun heritage. And he is-- I mean he-- everybody who thinks he's a Pashtun. He's a Pashtun to me. It's not a racist notion of any kind. (LAUGH) So-- so this-- this-- in-- in Pakistan, the dynamic is very different. So-- precisely on this thing-- I-- I know that-- the Pakistani government particularly-- historically but also since 2005, 2006, there was a famous meeting between Karzai and-- Musharef with Bush in 2006.

And the story behind it, it was very bad. They-- they were not talking to each other. Bush was being a very good host, but even he could not persuade them to smile and shake hands and all that. And the reason was that Musharef wanted to-- Musharef proposal was to fence the borderline-- the Durand line. Now you tell me if there are people who are intended on doing bad things who want to blow up planes or attack the city, who want-- who have attacked London. Do you think that three meters of barbed wire will stop them or a couple mines will stop them who want to blow themselves up?

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This is not the answer to extremism. So the best will be, yes, border military is another thing. That there has to be that. But there has to be overall improvement and confidence. Afghanistan has no intention of ever conquering Pakistan. Today is Afghanistan. Today is Afghan leadership.

Pakistan-- should also give up on the hopes that they will be the main, like, power brokers in Afghanistan. Whoever rules Afghanistan, they can be friends and this through mort-- the moral of economic integration. I have outlined the two countries can-- exist. The Pakistani Pashtuns can be good Pakistani citizens with all their rights. And they can-- they have country (UNINTEL) international development. Your famous (UNINTEL) is a Pashtun.

Great politicians, great poets. Even in Urdu language, some of the best poets have been Pashtuns. So-- and-- in-- in afghan-- and in Pashtuns, the key point is the Pashtuns of Pakistan, if they are more integrated in Pakistan, they will-- make this bridge to be good friends with Afghanistan because there is no difference. If somebody in Islamabad can go and represent Pakistan, as some of Pakistani's ambassadors have recently done, in Pashtun and there are two Afghans, there is nothing like that. That's a good basis for friendship.

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

In the post election context in the region in Afghanistan, it seems-- there was a time in-- the relations between the two countries when the hostility and the tension seemed to sort of-- go underground for a bit. Though I feel it was-- kind of knew it was there. And in recent months, that certainly started to tick back up a bit. You're starting to see a lot more aggressive language between the two countries. And I'm wondering what you think will happen-- if someone-- like Ashraf Ghani or someone-- is elected, someone who has-- much more firm idea about the role that Pakistan has played in-- supporting terrorism, supporting militancy, whatever those ideas are. But if those tensions are to-- to peak again, what kind of impact do you think that's going to have on Pashtun community?

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well, we have to go back in history a bit. In 1992, the people-- who essentially took over Kabul, there was a peaceful transfer of power after the fall of the communist government, were all-- they all-- drove in their S-- Japanese SUV's from Peshawar. So these were the people who had lived in Pakistan. They had been essentially a Pakistani-- friends or whatever you call them for a very long time. But once in Kabul, they had to look after-- the international interests.

And that national interest there that we have to have Indian-- presence. We have to have relations with India for instance. And that-- that during that time, you would be surprised to know that-- Kabul sanctioned all these counselors to Pakistan that

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everyone was very angry about. So in-- in-- in a similar scenario, whoever-- comes to power in Kabul-- they have-- I can assure you that Karzai has done his best to kind of take this path of friendship with Pakistan.

Because unlike the past Afghan leaders who had no exposure to Pakistan, this is a leadership who knows what goes in (UNINTEL), in Pakistan. Karzai speaks Urdu. He reads every Pakistani paper or knows about every Pakistani paper. A lot of his people in-- in the government or most of the people in the government have lived in Pakistan. And 60% of today's Afghanistan's population has this experience of living as a refugee in Afghanistan.

This can be a great basis for this friendship between the two countries, not hostility. And-- and-- and I-- I think with Ashar (UNINTEL), he-- or Abdul Abdullah, they will take the s-- same (UNINTEL). The problem in Afghanistan is that the Durand line issue is a very sensitive issue. No Afghan-- we-- that-- from any community-- regardless if they are Pashtuns or Tajiks or Uzbeks cannot publicly say-- stand up and say, "I'm gonna sign the Durand line tomorrow in Islamabad."

The only way they-- they can do that is through a process. First you have to do the confidence building. You have to build-- integrate the economies. The Afghans have to feel that Pakistanis are not gonna send any armed groups or create new armed groups to conquer our country. And that Pakistan respects Afghanistan's serenity. And-- Pakistan's return has to know that Afghans are not gonna let their soil being used against us-- against Islamabad.

And I think it's-- Ashaf (UNINTEL) and Abdul have both-- have been part of the system. They will not change the policies radically. They know where the problem is. And they will do their best to-- kind of-- develop this new friendship with-- they can easily set maybe at leadership level, the chemistry will work better between Ashar (UNINTEL) or Abdul Abdullah and (UNINTEL) Sharif. Or-- and that is something positive. But on the fundamental issues, they cannot leave the line. They cannot come up with any radical solution. Abdullah cannot-- or Ashar (UNINTEL) cannot dream up and come up with a new approach.

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

But there's a bit of a-- I mean, there's a short term and a long term discussion in all of this, right?

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Yeah.



## AMNA NAWAZ:

That these are things that will happen over a very long time once the confidence is built, once the infrastructure is there. Then those changes can be made. But without those changes being made, it's almost as if those earlier-- changes can't happen. You can't have confidence without allowing people to participate in the political structure. And you can't have the political structure without having the line drawn.

But-- that it's-- that's a separate point. But on the economic investment-- side as well, it's also a short term and long term discussion, isn't it? Because there are sh-- there are some investments being made. But on a day to day basis, if-- individuals are-- are making more as many of them are by picking up arms and joining in whatever fight is going on, they'll continue to do that.

If they con-- if they make more by leaving Waziristan and going to Karachi or economically migrating to different places and have no economic investment or reason to stay home, then they'll continue to do that. So what is the immediate sort of thing that you'd like to see happen that you think can start to keep the young man in Waziristan? Can start to give them a reason to not join whatever jihad is-- is taking place?

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Well, in case of, like, all human society, when they war, when there is a problem and people try to find an answer to their problem, they take time. It's natural. It's how societies work. It's what we are essentially. There's no-- I mean, in this country or any country, there is no one issue or problem that's resolved like this by somebody saying, "Hey, this is what I'm gonna do today," and this will solve our problem.

In our case, our problems are centuries old. So I hope they will not-- take centuries to resolve. They'll take years-- months and years. So the first-- the-- the best thing is for-- for example-- I'll give you one example as a journalist. For example, if Pakistani media today sends ten good journalists to cover Afghanistan. And they can be Pakistani correspondents in Mazar and Herad and (UNINTEL) and (UNINTEL PHRASE). And they can report good news stories.

And they can tell me in Lahore, in Karachi that all-- all Afghans are, for example, not Taliban. In Afghanistan, women are going to school. There is a lot of normal life going on and this is what is happening. This is a good thing. Similarly for Abuhan media to do the same thing about pak-- of Pakistan. That's also a positive thing. On the government level, I have educated (NOISE) and it's not a secret that a lot of the bilateral relationship, you cannot get it right without-- Washington's involvement.

And I'm bailed out. But a lot of-- people-- in Washington-- Ambassador Crocker-- was discussing when we did the launch. And he completely agreed with this point that, yes, unless there is greater-- western engagement-- at very senior level and consistent engagement, you cannot walk away from Afghanistan again. There-- there

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will be this impetus, this force behind this process.

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

This is the last question I'll ask and then I promise to open it up to everyone else in the room. On the long term approach-- because some of the investment that's being made on the eastern side of the border at least is being done by the Pakistan military, the building of the road, you mentioned some markets, small business support-- commanders on the ground there use the kind of language that indicates that they will be there for a very long time. They talk about the next generation of investment (UNINTEL PHRASE). They talk about-- you know, a militancy that will take 20 to 25 years to bring under control and have a stable region. I wonder what-- what you think of that. How--

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well I-- I don't--

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

--that (UNINTEL PHRASE).

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

I don't necessarily agree with that-- point of view. Because Pakistan-- it's not a problem in Waziristan. However, Pakistan has a larger problem and that-- v-- admitted frankly and honestly. That problem is the military's dominant political role. We had four dictatorships.

And when they're not dictatorships, the military is still in charge somehow. That's what all of my Pakistani friends inform people, like you tell me. (LAUGH) So-- so-- that has to change in pak-- I mean, you cannot have a democracy where there is no c- - civilian supremacy. There has to be civilian supremacy.

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

But assuming that will not change any time soon--  
(OVERTALK)

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

--cho-- change--

**AMNA NAWAZ:**

Without a long-- prolonged presence--

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

I mean one bad--

**AMNA NAWAZ:**

--in Fata.

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

--scenario is-- I-- I don't want to be very pessimistic. But-- in Fata, of course-- in Fata, a lot of pa-- Fata population-- I'm not talking our-- people who are educated and-- and have exposure and can read papers. A common man who has never been to a school will tell you that this is all just a game and we are the victims. It's all just a show to kill us, to force us to leave our region, to end our way of life. This is-- in the audience-- I know there are people from tribal areas.

They will bail me out on this right here and they'll-- they'll tell you that this is absolutely true. What is-- for example, part-- (UNINTEL PHRASE) one of the main towns in-- in tribal areas, it's a predominantly Shia-- town. The population is-- religiously-- they subscribe to the Shia sector of Islam.

There are half a million residents there. And they have been blockaded for-- nearly four years. Predom-- mostly people who are either from Waziristan or associated with the militant networks in Waziristan. Now, historically, there has never been a war between the tribes of Coram and the tribes of Waziristan. Why? Because the com-- they don't-- cross their paths. Coram is closely linked to (UNINTEL).

Waziristan is linked to Banu (PH) and Miranch (PH) and Barismilhan (PH). So the Wazirs or the Maseeds never invaded Coram. Similarly, the Turis (PH) never invaded Waziristan. So why-- and-- and where-- where did the sectarian problem begin in Pakistan? Is it-- and I mean-- just natural or is-- it's basically rooted in-- in-- in the south Waziristan?

Well the first-- time there were-- these kind of sectarian rights in-- in Coram were-- in united India where something lip-- happened in Lachnau (PH). So in-- in today's age, this is also true, that Waziristan and the rest of the tribal region far as a whole

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and the Pashtun region will follow whatever happens in Islamabad, what way the country is moving.

If you have a country where there's democracy-- thriving and-- and politicians are in charge and these are good politicians, they are clean politicians. I hope someday we will get politicians in Pakistan that are acceptable to powers to be in Pakistan, or credible enough. (LAUGH) So-- I think I-- I see change. In Fata, (UNINTEL PHRASE) one thing that most political parties have no agreed on the need for integrating Fata.

There's something called-- Fata reforms committee. And they are-- a coalition of all political parties, right, left, religious-- secular-- whose-- who think that it's a good idea-- and this is the popular idea in Fata itself that we need to be integrated into Pakistan. We should be as-- similar to citizen in Islamabad, in Lahore. We should not be seen as to these kind of colonial lens of these people who do not want to-- development.

I'll give you one-- other example. The society in Fata is very integrated to Pakistan. If you go to Islamabad, in every street, you will find a house who is a retired bureaucrat from Fata or some businesses from-- businessmen from Fata. Why they live in this town? Why they don't live in Sabor or Coram or-- because they want to be more than citizen. They want to send their children to good schools in Islamabad. And that's only possibly in Islamabad. It's not possible in Coram or Waziristan or (UNINTEL)-- or-- or-- or (UNINTEL).

And they want to get-- good health access. And they don't want to fight. They don't. They're sick and tired of getting a gun every day. They don't want their next generation to be like that. I hope soon enough, people get that point. I'm sure that there are many count-- country-- I mean, in military terms. They purely think in terms of-- insurgency and counter insurgency and how to control territory and how to manage territory.

But on a larger political level-- and this is a game. It's not-- to the colonel or-- major or (UNINTEL) serving in Waziristan. It's up to the military's leadership and the political leadership of Pakistan that they need to come up with a good plan and show leadership.

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

I'm all-- I'm taking all that to mean that you think prolonged military presence there is a bad idea.

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Prolonged military pre-- presence might prolong the (UNINTEL) simply. Because you have then one side of the conflict. And-- and then-- I mean, Pakistan it need-- state needs to show to the people of Fata that it cares about them.

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**AMNA NAWAZ:**

Thank you for that.

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

You're welcome.

**AMNA NAWAZ:**

And with that, I'll open it up to the room.

\* \* \*TRANSCRIBER NOTE: MIC QUALITY IN THE AUDIENCE IS POOR\* \* \*

**JOHN:**

My name is John (UNINTEL PHRASE). I wanted to ask you a question about-- Abdul-- Abdul. He's associated with Bin Laden alliance and the (UNINTEL) would traditionally rulers of Pakistan. Do you think that the Pashtuns will accept him as their ruler? Or maybe if he has an alliance with (UNINTEL)-- maybe that would-- make him more acceptable?

**ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well, the first thing is that Abdullah's father was-- I mean back in (UNINTEL) when Afghanistan was a monarchy was a senator. And he (UNINTEL) from Kandahar. Most of Afghanistan elite is-- traditionally-- I mean, they have a Kandahari heritage. The Mohammed (UNINTEL) is a clan of (UNINTEL) which is a predominant Pashtun tribal (UNINTEL) in southern Afghanistan.

So-- Abdul Abdullah, if he becomes the president, I think-- I mean, through an election that's seen as credible, he will be accepted as president. Afghanistan has moved on. We have seen this election. One of the good things-- in-- about Afghan elections that we have-- had cross party and cross ethnic alliances. You had Pashtun leading but with an Uzbek deputy in case of-- Ashar (UNINTEL). And a Hazara deputy or sometime a Tajik leading with Pashtun deputy like-- in case-- Abdullah is-- I mean-- by-- his Pashtun heritage. But because he's been close to (UNINTEL) or this-- what outsiders called a predominantly Tajik alliance.

But you also have to remember that (UNINTEL) Islamic party had very strong links to southern Afghanistan. (UNINTEL) Islam was predominantly ethnic Tajik-- under la-- an Abani (PH) leadership, Massoud being the most prominent military commander of that group. But in southern-- Afghanistan, they had very prominent presence. There was-- I am forgetting his name but-- Mullah Nekibullah (PH). Mullah

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Nekibullah was once the most-- one of the most powerful commanders in southern Afghanistan.

He's the guy who talk-- who took over Kandahar from Taliban. He was so respected. And he was-- all his life, he was loyal to Jamied (PH). I was-- I happened to watch a lot of Afghan TV as well as Pakistani TV. And-- I was-- very happy to see that in Kandahar of one-- Abdul Abdullah has one of the largest political rallies. Literally at least-- I mean there were ten-- tens of thousands of people.

They were not, like, in thousands. So he-- and he has been to places like Paktika (PH). He has been to places like Paktika and Hos (PH). So in Afghanistan, this whole-- I-- have a very critical of this view of-- of-- of-- seeing Afghans as people divided. Afghanistan is not a people divided. Afghanistan is a people united.

## AHMED HUSSEIN:

That's good. Ahmed Hussein. Thank you very much for the book. I'm almost three-fourths that-- through that. And excellent work (UNINTEL PHRASE). I want to put your-- will is-- obviously the bold states, Pakistan and Afghanistan in-- in a very transition. My heart-- I don't wanna use the word fragile out here. So outside input is very important, whether economic or political or military (UNINTEL PHRASE).

I don't know whether you have seen in the last-- 12 months out there is both in the west and in America is that Afghanistan is-- or even that (UNINTEL) region is going way and-- and-- down in terms of priorities, both in economic or military investment back there. And my feeling is it's actually most of the people are thinking-- and we cannot ignore it-- because of the threat of extremism, both international and local back there.

My fear is that most people which are thinking, which is the more cost effective approach is the plan B idea, which is to work on a smaller scale back there only to neutralizer the extremist threat back there from that area. Because we already spent so much of money and blood and treasure in ten years. And there's not much to show promise in that area. In fact, things have gotten worse.

The-- all the instability has crossed the Durand line. And that area is unstable, which was not ten years ago back there. This is a lot of people, both the military and the diplomatic are thinking on the lines where we find the local allies on both sides of the Durand line there who agreed with our plan there. The-- the purpose is to contain the threat in that area back there. So with this background is what you think with your kind of-- experience and expertise on both sides of the Durand line back there.

Because that-- next phase of conflict would be ex-- isolate again to that the Pashtun line back there. So if the-- because these are the powers which is not in the hands of the Pashtuns back there, whether it's in Islamabad or in-- in-- in-- London or Washington back there. How you feel if this approach is-- come from the outside back there? How it's going to further destabilize the region back there? And especially the impact on both states, Pakistan and Afghanistan.



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## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Well, what I know and by talking to officials, I don't think that there is any US government or any western government policy to go-- actively after-- individual actors. I mean, it's quote, unquote war lords. And-- and make them-- and there is this-- of course-- there is a lot of diplomat-- diplomatic engagement that goes on a lot of the time. And I'm not an official. I don't have-- an insider view on what-- the policy might be.

But as far as we can see, I mean, clearly-- I mean Obama's-- AFPAC strategy and-- and the diplomatic comp-- component of them strongly emphasized on stability, strongly emphasized on improving the bilateral relationship. The thing is that-- I mean, as long as you-- there can be no micro management by outsiders of that region that will ultimately lead to disasters. The soviet tried to do it. Somebody else wanted to-- to do it.

And in many cases, like for example, some of the militias that were created. That's not gonna work. The-- cross border proxy wise, both if Pakistan is supporting someone or Afghanistan is supporting one. And historically, both have done it. In the '70s, I mean we all know about the Taliban being-- based in Balochistan. It's-- but in '70s, the Baloch (UNINTEL) insurgency was-- migrated in mass to southern Afghanistan.

The mighty Baloch even fought for the communist regime, the PDPA, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in 1970s against-- the mujahideen. So-- the-- there is this history and all that. I-- I think it will be a huge-- another thing that I want to make point about is that, look, Afghanistan today is very different. It is a changed place. So be that in wash-- Washington or London or Islamabad or Moscow or somewhere, Afghanistan should not be seen through the prism of 1990s.

Yes, in 1990s, it happened. There was anarchy. There were a lot of domestic factors to it. There was a lot of inter-- international. Afghanistan today-- is not-- Afghans are not ready to go that (UNINTEL). Afghan elite is not going-- I have seen, I mean, what people's-- may think about. But in k-- if you go to Kabul and you meet people from different views, you will see that there is a lot of unanimity of views. I have seen a lot of Persians because-- (UNINTEL) because on-- on TV talk shows deliberately trying to speak in Pashtun.

And Pashtun is doing the other one. So they are not leveled as these extremists-- extremist nationalist in some sense. In Afghanistan today-- the society has changed. We have millions of kids going to school. We have-- Afghanistan is better in-- internet connectivity than Pakistan with a 3G and stuff. So-- I don't think that this whole idea of recreating warlordism will work.

And the other thing is that warlords themselves are so keen on transforming their-- their-- their image, they are investing-- literally investing millions and millions on trying to create a new image. (UNINTEL) for instance. I mean we-- who in the world would have thought that (UNINTEL) will make-- a political alliance which, by the

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way, also means that he has recognize Ashar (UNINTEL) as his leader with Ashar (UNINTEL). And-- and the same goes for, for example, the Hazara guy who was with Abdullah.

There was a lot of bad blood between these two groups in the 1990s. So Afghanistan is a changed place. If somebody-- I don't know why no evidence of this is really happening or not. I mean but if this-- this is happening, it's not gonna work. It will ultimately lead to failure.

## HELEN:

Hi, my name is Helen (UNINTEL). I'm an independent journalist and I write about Afghanistan. I focus-- mainly on narcotics. But I'm not gonna ask you about opium and poppy 'cause that's a whole other subject in many ways. My question is about-- Pashtun (UNINTEL). And I'm wondering, you know, separation of men and women.

I'm wondering if over the time-- and you talk about this in your book I haven't read yet. Has that-- changed at all in your-- your opinion over-- over the years? And then-- the second thing is-- I don't agree with you about the bilateral cul-- bilateral strategic agreement. I think it's pure blackmail. It's basically saying to Afghanistan, "Do you want \$40 billion?" And it's clear the country needs money. Because without that money, the government could collapse. A whole number of things could happen.

But basically, it's blackmail in the sense that you get the \$40 billion. But we-- the United States has ten military bases, over 10,000 troops, immunity for-- troops. And I-- I'm opposed to that. I want the US out because I believe that that can only prolong a real democratic Afghanistan from-- from emerging. And if the US is out, then that is--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## HELEN:

What-- what do you think about that? I mean are you for--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## HELEN:

--the ten military bases? Are you for the (UNINTEL PHRASE) that will continue? Are you for--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

I would love to answer the first question first because I happen to have been-- trained in anthropology and I've done a lot of stuff on what Pashtun (UNINTEL). Actually, the Pashtuns hardly-- use the word Pashtunwali. They call it doing Pashtun. This-- Pashtun is our language.

You speak Pashtun but you also do Pashtun. In reality, what does Pashtunwali means? Pashtunwali has few ideals. Ideal behavior types, like you should not be-- you should be a good host. You should be a good person. You should be honest. You should be truthful. You should say the right thing. You should not be aggressor. And that kind of stuff. The other thing-- the other part of-- and this is shared with all of the societies in our surrounding, with the Balochis, with the Tajiks, Uzbeks.

Everybody-- all humans essentially have these ideas of good behavior and how one can be a good person. The other part of-- Pashtunwali is very technical. It is legal. It is something called (UNINTEL). In pure Pashtun tribal setting, every tribal-- tribe or clan or region, it-- is kind of-- it-- it changes from region to region has this particular-- unwritten legal quote which mitigates-- political disputes, for example.

Or-- land disputes and-- and-- and-- and Waziristan, for instance, there are no land records. So if somebody says, "Hey, this land is mine," you will go and call up (UNINTEL), which is another institution (UNINTEL) within Pashtunwali. So I also-- I initially discussed this whole idea of-- the (UNINTEL PHRASE) the-- the notion of reciprocity and not being revenge killing, which is something that most of the literature will tell you-- in wall-- Pashtunwali.

So Pashtunwali is kind of complicated thing. It has universal values. But if it's application is very local-- for example, in Waziristan, if you show up at somebody's room-- door, the tradition is because-- they had a lot of livestock, that they will sacrifice a goat for you. But if you do the same in Swat, the chances are you will be offered-- rice because they grow rice.

In-- in Waziristan, for example, if you have-- this kind-- and then-- it also relates to the state. In Afghanistan, there were Pashtun regions where the state was very strong. The state imposed taxes. Similar in-- in Pakistan, the state imposed-- or in India, they impose taxes. And these parts of Pashtun cultural law became irrelevant. They-- people-- you wouldn't-- there are not social memories about that.

The tribal s-- structure similarly changes. You t-- talked about women. There is no-- nothing specifically in pash-- Pashtunwali that says-- I mean this-- I mean this is local interpretation but it also is very much related to-- the absorption or integration with the state. For example, it was a Pashtun king of Afghanistan who was a champion of modernity. He-- encouraged women education. He un wield his-- encouraged his wife to un-- go public with unwilling (UNINTEL PHRASE).

He sent a lot of people from Paktia (PH) region, (UNINTEL) Paktia region to get-- education in the west. So-- so the-- and he was-- I mean he-- he modeled-- he wanted to model everything on (UNINTEL PHRASE) model. Unfortunately, it didn't

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work in Afghanistan case. So there is no-- in-- I mean in urban Pashtun settings, for example in Peshawar, it's almost modernity for fem-- families to send their girls to schools.

You would be surprised if you went in regions like Waziristan, there is still thousands of school girls going to schools. Because there is a community where there is a school. But you cannot expect people to go-- (LAUGH) to a school where there is no school. You cannot come-- expect a community to go send their daughters to schools when they are dail-- daily wage earners in a city-- like Karachi, thousand miles from where their home base is. And the second question was about--

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

Was about the BSC. Yes. (UNINTEL)--

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Yeah, the BSC, I think I'm-- I'm nobody to say it's a good idea or a bad idea. The Afghans had a (UNINTEL) in November. And the (UNINTEL) got (UNINTEL PHRASE) said we are for it. All presidential candidates who are running in Afghanistan say, "We are for it. We want to get it signed. This is in Afghanistan interest." So I'm speaking-- I'm just telling you what I've heard from them.

I-- in Karzai's case, Karzai also said in his own record that-- I recognize the fact that this is very good for Afghanistan. It's a good thing. It-- it will help Afghanistan to move forward and all that. But he has these two conditions. He want the United States to-- initiate a peace-- credible peace process with the Taliban. And all his other-- objections were addressed. The-- US forces after the agreement are not supposed to raid homes.

## **MICHAEL:**

Hi, my name is Michael (UNINTEL). I have-- a question about cutting edge digital technology. So if-- if we could wave a magic wand knowing that every culture in the world has very entrenched power people that have made a lot of money and that-- that run the country that are going to be against change because that's going to threaten their existence. So given the fact that that's gonna happen and given the fact that the Arab spring happened about three years ago.

And it's-- there was a large vacuum created. And it's still not clear what's gonna fill the vacuum. If all of the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan could have access to knowledge on the thing that they all carry around with them, in their native dialects, what impact over time could that have on the relationships between men and women and the whole society if, with the explosion of massive open online courses and learning and technology, if you could do that, how would that-- in-- in your

viewpoint change things?

Given the fact that nothing new has to be developed, it's just taking things that already exist and are implemented in selected places and be able-- as I said, waving a magic wand, to put them there? And even though there is very few smart phones and not good internet connectivity--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

--technology can have any kind of impact in general society there. Checks and (UNINTEL).

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well, I think it-- it will have great-- but we must remember that we are talking about society where literacy levels are still very low. So you first have to-- this infrastructure of education, basic education. And then a good professional education. And then creating all these-- classes of people who can lead the society in different (UNINTEL). For example, Afghanistan-- I feel still needs a lot of international support and help.

And-- and-- and just to give you an example, in medical schools-- in medical-- education, I-- I happened to visit-- their medical faculty in Afghanistan. And some of the books they read are still from 1970s. In-- in-- in-- if you are a doctor, and I happen to know a lot of doctors, it's like reading 19th century books about economics in 21st century. (LAUGH) So-- so that-- that-- that-- that's-- that's a gradual thing.

In the past 12-- 13 years-- media just kind of brought on a-- a revolution. In Afghanistan today, we have 70 channels. Similarly in Pakistan, we have a lot of channels. But the thing is that as journalist, I have-- I'll tell you one little secret. It's not that the explosion of media is a good thing. It's what people listen and read on that media. If they read the same old propaganda that has been on the state TV for 60 years, nothing is gonna change. Things are gonna complicate it. But if they're gonna-- get good information, good analysis inside, good reporting, that-- that's gonna make a substantial impact. And it will discredit these-- these negatives.

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

So you think it's the-- the quality of what the information they're seeing?

## **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Yes.

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## AMNA NAWAZ:

Not just the general access to it--

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

No, not the-- yeah.

## FEMALE VOICE 2:

(UNINTEL PHRASE). I also write about Afghanistan. And I'm very glad that she brought up the economic issue because there is so much confusion about it. For instance, I don't think Afghanistan needs \$40 billion. You know, they got (UNINTEL PHRASE) the next ten years. They were-- they handed them 20.

But putting that aside, I-- I totally agree with you that if you want confidence building nations between Pakistan and-- and Afghanistan, you have to do-- put the-- the two communities working together or something. And I know the kind of person that-- that complements President Bush (UNINTEL). But one of the ideas he had, which I thought was very good, and I want to-- to see what you think about it was the-- the idea of the reconstruction of the opportunity zones between the two countries. And that was-- you know, everybody was very excited about it and nothing ever happened. So I want to-- to hear your views about that. Thank you.

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Well the-- essentially the reconstruction of opportunity zones was a good idea. But it was not implemented because of the security concerns. And in Pakistan, I-- or the last time I heard about it, there was some idea that, yes, we can have-- a reconstruction opportunity zone but not inside Fata because it's too insecure.

We should have it in somewhere else. That obviously would not have benefited the population of Fata. And then-- and-- and that-- we-- was also-- I'm-- I'm not completely agree with that part of the-- American policy thinking, or western policy thinking is because there was a lot of emphasis on this kind of outlandish economic ideas. But there was not talk of basic political realities.

You cannot have-- establish an industry in a place where there's no taxation, where there's no energy. You need to have-- if you want to establish a factory, you need electricity first. In a lot of Fata, there is no electricity. So if you want to build the best-- industrial park for textile building, there's no-- obviously, there's no cotton-- cultivation there. So how can you do that?

So it-- it must have been something that was local. It could have come up. And for that, that's why I educate this kind of political change. And that's very easy to



happen. Unless you do that, you will have all kinds of ideas-- and all kinds of money being-- spread around and thrown around in the name of developing Fata or border regions. But nothing will change there.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## MALE VOICE 2:

My name is (UNINTEL PHRASE). I'm a journalist. But first of all, as an Afghan, I very much agree with you. And that's kind of how it sometimes (UNINTEL PHRASE) with people from the other side of the border. When-- when it comes to issues of the mutual interest of prominent issues. I don't know if-- if I-- heard this correctly. You said the violence is structured in-- Pashtun areas or Pashtun societies. But if you said that-- as a Pashtun, I would say in the absence of rule of law, Pashtuns had no other ways but to go to (UNINTEL PHRASE) because that's-- that was the only way to make out justice.

So-- and if-- if you can see the examples in Afghanistan, a lot of-- tribes in the rural areas and the eastern and southern provinces, they-- they used to have the (UNINTEL) to-- to-- to bring justice for them. But after-- in the past few years, there are judges. There are government that they-- they do those kind of things. I'm not going to go too much into detail. I have not read your book. So maybe you have talked about those issues.

But my question is about the Pashtun ethnicity and Pashtun-- identity. Why there is so much focused on this? I mean, you say that-- before, the Pashtuns of Pakistan are completely different from Pashtuns of Afghanistan. There are more similarities between the Pashtuns are Arabs, Tajiks in Afghanistan. And from my experience, there are more similarities between Pashtuns and the Urdu speaking people in Pakistan.

So first of all, why there is so much focus on this? Is this something that we want to do this or it was actually-- (UNINTEL) where we got it from the Great Britain that-- with their historian came and they just called us braves? They have called us, you know, warriors and so on and so forth while people really would like to-- carry on with their normal life. And-- and-- and if you think that there-- there-- there is a time to have Pashtuns be recognized as Afghans and (UNINTEL) be recognized as Pakistanis rather than having a whole big group which they do not have much to-- to share? Thank you.

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Well-- well I think-- I mean you made good points. And you said, obviously, a lot of this-- the-- the things that were based on facts. That Pashtuns are like this or whatever. I kind of disagree with a bit of it because in Afghanistan and Pakistan there is still like-- there's nothing like-- going up and speaking to a Kandahari in

Pashtun.

I mean it's still-- they-- and there-- and there are-- there's a lot of cross border tribal connections-- like the (UNINTEL) tribe. Half of it is in-- in-- in (UNINTEL PHRASE). Half of it is in Nangahar (PH) province. And they have-- there are people who have homes in both countries. In-- 1960, there was a member of parliament who was at the same time a member of the Afghan parliament. And in the-- Pakistani summers, he will go and sit in the Afghan parliament.

And he was, at the same time, the member of the west Pakistan parliament in Lahore. In harsh Afghan winters, he will go to Lahore. (LAUGH) So there-- there-- there is all-- all-- all these factors-- related to that. It's not-- as simple. But ideally, I mean, what you said, there should be-- this-- evolution of paki-- the citizen of Pakistan being from whatever ethnicity, being-- a Pakistani citizen with full rights and a sense of pride in that identity.

And the Abuhans, being the citizen of-- in Afghanistan, there is a revolution because of the Afghan constitution 1970-- '20s-- said that all-- everybody who lives in Afghanistan is a citizen of Afghan. Afghan historically was only a term used for the Pashtuns. So-- so-- so-- so to-- these-- these developments have come. In Pakistan, I also have to tell you that still the people in Peshawar are very-- (NOISE) and other parts of-- of-- (UNINTEL) province, when they write their names on government papers, when it comes to what is your nation-- ethnicity, they say-- I already have to write Abuhan.

For the Pashtuns, it's-- it's still-- because of the lingering thing. And-- and-- and unfortunately, with all the ethnic groups in this region-- a lot of these are misunderstanding and myths. And colonial myths like-- in Pakistan, there are still a lot of colonial myths.

There's still this idea of somehow martial race. This is a discredited theory used by the British to recruit officers-- or soldiers for certain regions. So they will say that, for example, this region in Punjab is marital whereas this (UNINTEL) is not. I mean in-- in modern times, it's just frank racism. So we should go over it. And-- and-- and we should forget about it.

## AMNA NAWAZ:

Just building on that point though, doesn't-- for-- in order to have that kind of political investment, doesn't this identify, the Pashtun identity then have to give way to a different identity? A Pakistani identity or an Afghan identity?

## ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:

Well, the thing is that-- in America, you can be a Hispanic Pashtun-- Hispanic American. You can be a Cuban American. You can be an Iranian American, which is a positive thing. Identities are like flowers. The more you have, the better.

In-- in Pashtun case, it will not go away because Pashtuns have survived in the past 500 years, and that's in my book-- they have survived a lot of-- these efforts. In the British times, the speaking of-- I mean-- the current-- had banned the speaking of Pashtun. But they had banned-- the propagation of Pashtun language. You could not-- there was no Pashtun schools.

In-- in-- in-- even in Pakistan at one point because of the communist fears and the red color being associated with nationalist feelings-- you could not mention red. So in poetry you will not say in song that-- I love red roses or something. So despite that kind of oppression, the Pashtun identity has survived. I don't see it going away because in today's world-- people-- even migrants, people who-- the background you come from-- they speak Urdu at home. Or they have geo TV going on. So changing identity will be very difficult. But Pashtuns can be good Pakistani citizens. And that is where our-- should matter.

### MALE VOICE 3:

(UNINTEL PHRASE). My English is very poor. So I have a question and a (UNINTEL) comment.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

### MALE VOICE 3:

I am a fan of your-- (UNINTEL PHRASE) your articles as well. I am from southern Afghanistan, Kandahar. And-- (UNINTEL PHRASE) the-- no matter what about (UNINTEL PHRASE) Pakistani (UNINTEL PHRASE). Saying that the Pashtun in Afghanistan are more similar to the-- other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. I mean, of course for centuries we Pashtuns have lived together, the (UNINTEL) and Tajiks. But-- compared to them-- like you said, you know, (UNINTEL) eventually we are very close. We know between you and I just like-- across the border from (UNINTEL PHRASE).

We have (UNINTEL) tribes there. And we have (UNINTEL) tribes there. And still, we went abroad in the United States and Europe. We still cannot get together with our-- with Pashtun. We-- we would be-- you know, we can live with them. We can communicate with them. So there's more-- whatever you said. I totally agree with you. But-- since I also worked in the propaganda media. But-- you are very-- popular-- (UNINTEL PHRASE). I have been following and reading your articles.

As a Pashtun journalist, since Afghanistan and across the border, it's a very tribal area. And how do you deal with the (UNINTEL PHRASE) when you write a book? Basically, I mean, I worked with (UNINTEL PHRASE) as a political (UNINTEL PHRASE) with them. It's so-- based on political propaganda, (UNINTEL PHRASE) people. And-- one thing which I was a bit disappointed that whatever (UNINTEL PHRASE) in Afghanistan or either western (UNINTEL PHRASE). That's not true of

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Pashtun people.

We can see most of the western-- (UNINTEL) and America forces are deployed to the south and the east. So that's basically the populated part of the country where all the (UNINTEL) comes from. I mean, they're not in the part where other European-- troops are. They are-- they would have-- I mean, compared to the south and east, they don't face that much challenge. So my question is that how do you deal in your book with the statistics which (UNINTEL PHRASE) the media is a huge misconception to most western people? And on the other hand, I would like to say something. You said that--

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

Sir, is there a question attached to the second part? Or would you like to have him answer on the statistics?

### **MALE VOICE 3:**

Yeah just one small part. You say Pashtuns in Afghanistan today, they feel as a second citizen. It's true. The (UNINTEL PHRASE) in Massoud, they cannot-- go to the races. Pashtun laws-- the language is-- a (UNINTEL) language of the country. So Pashtun have this feeling of (UNINTEL) of power. So I would appreciate if you (UNINTEL PHRASE). Thank you.

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well, the thing is that-- in modern states, there's always a degree of dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the current political system and all that. In Afghanistan, I think-- with the statistics, I will-- give you an example. I'm not-- used a lot of statistics. The only statistics I have used is the government-- the population figures. How many person was there Afghanistan, how many there are in Pakistan.

And to me, the most reliable source was both the government and the government agencies said about this. In Afghanistan, I've quoted the CSO. And in-- I think-- (UNINTEL PHRASE) or something in that (UNINTEL) too. In Pakistan, I have-- quoted the ministry of population, welfare I think. And-- and those are statistic in Pakistan in the-- national census.

They do ask people what is your-- native language. And that's based-- and that reflects at how many Pashtuns are there, whatever. So-- I-- I-- I-- on the other thing that-- in-- in Afghanistan, I have felt that there are extremes. There are a lot of Pashtuns who think that-- what you said that we have-- I mean we are-- in a disadvantage. We have lost power and all that and all that. But there are others who look at things way differently, who-- who think that if we have peace, it doesn't matter if they are Hazara ministers, if they are Tajik ministers.

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And I've written a paper about it. I didn't go in length-- in this book about those issues. But I think essentially these are very-- small problems, easy to look after. Of course-- in modern societies, you have to accommodate. And you have to be-- one thing that I have reviewed for all Pashtuns is to be part of a mainstream.

They should not be-- something that is-- that they are out of the mainstream. And they are these people who are not interested in being-- part of the states that they live in. I have strongly argued that the Pashtun future-- is in the mainstream. They are not a people who should try to seclude themselves, who should try to think of themselves as somehow very different. Better or worse than other people. They are like other people. They need to have the same rights in the modern political system, in the states that's what the whole state system is about. And-- and it has worked out well.

## **MIKE:**

Hello. My name is Mike Dietrich (PH). I'm-- I'm a lawyer. I have a (UNINTEL) practice up the-- road. I'm also f-- retired army reservist. And I spent 2012 in-- Kandahar air field. So I met quite a few-- Afghans there. And I was very impressed with the people I met. The-- and I'm pressed by the anthropological view. And I have a lot of questions, but too many to ask. So let me try to have one-- one question in--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

--last question of the evening. So no pressure but-- (LAUGH)

## **MIKE:**

Okay, I have one-- one question in 15 subparts. (LAUGH)

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

## **MIKE:**

No. The-- the-- the thing that-- well one thing that was very sad for me was that-- of the Afghans I met-- (UNINTEL PHRASE) was one of my jobs there. I was (UNINTEL) lawyer also. But I-- I would say maybe 10% of the-- mainly Pashtuns I met could-- could read or write. So it looked like that's a big hurdle for any kind of democratic system.

But if-- if the goal is-- re-- a republican style democracy, which I think would be the goal-- goal there. So the question is what your view is of how-- how optimistic we

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can be that that can work in a society that's largely tribal? And I-- I-- I will say I-- I'll give you one anecdotal thing. When I was with the foreign claims commissioner--

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

I'm gonna stop you right there sir. If there's a question attached to it please--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

### **AMNA NAWAZ:**

I think there's a lot to cover with the literacy angle. You're asking basically if there's--

### **MIKE:**

It's not really the literacy. The question is to what extent we should look at anthropological principles to help. And-- and to what extent we can-- can get a republican democracy in Afghanistan in light of the-- the tribal nature of a large portion of the country.

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

Well I think-- where I live close to there's a place called Bavaria in Germany. And there were tribes-- (LAUGH) at some point.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

### **ABUBAKAR SIDDIQUE:**

So-- so this-- this will take time. It-- it is a process of evolution. And Afghans have clearly shown that they are behind the system. I mean, in this election, they have rejected these notions of being some kind of extremist society and all that. The majority of Afghans want to be democratic. But democracy, as you know, better-- will not survive-- I mean what happens internally in Afghanistan.

Whatever has happened in Afghanistan has this huge external influence angle, the soviet invasion, what happened before that, the bilateral relationship with Pakistan. The civil war where-- where all the-- surround-- the neighboring countries were deeply involved. And even now today, when you have like militaries of 40 countries in Afghanistan, you have this hu-- huge international engagement.

And what will hap-- happen after this international engagement. So it's not only to the Afghans. It's also in-- I mean the most important country is, of course, Pakistan. But what-- the west does, how much-- much it remains engaged is-- one of the

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complaints that I have heard from President Karzai a lot is that the moment-- the-- the-- the-- the co-- the soviet government fell in Afghanistan, and this was, like, the pro-soviet communist government, most of the rest-- western embassies closed, shut down, and they left.

We were the people who were allies. And after our government came into power, they-- we were abandoned. So they-- they don't want to be abandoned again. They want to be very much part of the mainstream. But it's, again, from the international community.

And-- and my effort was to give people-- a normal reader. I'm not trying to make it an academic-- book. You might-- you-- you will bail me out if I'm wrong about it. It's very readable in the-- that sense. So it is to tell a normal person in the west-- an English speaking person-- I mean everybody who can read English that, I mean, whatever you have been-- all the stereotypes about the Pashtuns are wrong. They are very much ready to be part of the world that you live in. Thank you.

## **AMNA NAWAZ:**

With that, thank you so much for coming. (APPLAUSE)

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

\* \* \*END OF TRANSCRIPT\* \* \*