RECONCILIATION WITH HIZB-1 ISLAMI: THE RISKS AND RETURNS OF NEGOTIATING WITH HEKMATYAR

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ABSTRACT

In light of increasing speculation about the potential for reconciliation with insurgents in Afghanistan, this paper examines the merit of negotiating and reconciling with long-time insurgent faction, Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin (HIG). By qualitatively applying a quantitative model known as an Expected Value Calculation, this research assesses the costs and benefits of reconciliation to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, factoring in the probability that HIG is willing to negotiate. In addition to finding that HIG has much more to offer than merely a statistical decrease in insurgent violence, this paper concludes that the expected benefits of reconciliation to President Karzai outweigh the expected costs. Consequently, this research tentatively suggests that Karzai should make a serious reconciliation attempt with HIG and that as the international community draws down in Afghanistan, the benefits to reconciliation with HIG will increasingly outweigh the costs.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to Afghans who simply seek peace and stability.

M. Randolph Westlund
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INTRODUCTION

As the post-9/11 conflict in Afghanistan enters its tenth year, a viable methodology for ending the insurgency there remains both contentious and elusive. South Asian expert Gilles Dorronsorro warns that “defeating the Taliban” is unrealistic and that Coalition Forces are “nearing the breaking point,” ¹ arguing that political negotiations with the Taliban is the clear policy direction.² In partial agreement, Afghan expert Michael Semple observes that reconciliation is a common occurrence and tactic in Afghan political history, but concludes that prospects for reconciliation between the Afghan Government and the general insurgency are poor at present.³ Semple does however suggest that there is “potential for the reconciliation of particular commander networks.”⁴

Understanding these particular networks and subgroups of active participants in the Afghan insurgency is paramount as the U.S. and its NATO allies increase their military and civilian presence in Afghanistan while simultaneously looking for means to extricate themselves from the current conflict. A number of distinct forces and factions are violently resisting both the Government of Afghanistan and the U.S.-led Coalition, although the media often identifies these discrete factions with the generic catch-all “Afghan insurgents” or “Taliban.” Militarily defeating all of the factions and groups

² Dorronsorro, 33.
⁴ Semple, 3.
involved in the insurgency seems increasingly unlikely as insurgents have expanded their areas of control.\(^5\)

Though the faux Taliban negotiator discovered in November 2010 is disheartening and would seemingly support Semple’s conclusion that Mullah Omar’s Taliban are too disparate to reconcile, policy makers should still consider the merits of reconciling with other smaller insurgent groups. These smaller groups may provide political, economic and security support at the local level, and their co-option may bolster the Afghan Government’s position vis-à-vis other insurgents—possibly all at a much lower cost and acceptable risk than a large and nebulous group like the Taliban.

One of these smaller groups that may be a candidate for negotiations is Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), the remaining militant and extremist political faction of Hizb-i Islami, led by Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. HIG, founded in the 1970s, is arguably the oldest faction participating in the insurgency and Hekmatyar has been influential in Afghan politics and power struggles for longer than the Taliban or al-Qa’ida have existed.

For more than three decades now, Hekmatyar has sought additional political power in Afghanistan, which he has pursued largely through military and terrorist tactics, a methodology HIG continues to employ. HIG’s anti-American rhetoric, active armed resistance, ties to al-Qa’ida, and attacks on U.S. forces earned Hekmatyar and HIG a spot on the U.S. State Department’s list of “other” global terrorist organizations in

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\(^5\) Dorronsorro, 32.
2003, though not an official spot on the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list. Yet, former members of HIG have tentatively participated in Afghan politics by holding legitimate governmental positions, suggesting that the organization’s members pursue institutional political power in addition to strictly guerilla war. Hekmatyar maintains political and military influence of HIG, which he has to this point leveraged against the Afghan Government and Coalition Forces, despite the surrender and political re-integration of some Hizb-i Islami members in the early 2000s.

Despite HIG’s continued involvement in the insurgency and its terrorist tactics a 2010 peace proposal from Hekmatyar raised the possibility that the proper bargain could convince HIG to entirely quit the insurgency. Though this possibility is immediately appealing strictly for the purpose of stopping insurgent attacks, the advisability and merit of negotiating and reconciling with a known terrorist organization presents a complex set of questions. Hekmatyar has additional benefits to offer in addition to a potential decrease in insurgent violence, but those benefits may not be enough to justify the potential costs that such negotiations would impose upon the Afghan Government; a closer examination of HIG’s benefits and the Afghan Government’s equities is necessary. This paper examines the military, political and economic benefits that Hekmatyar has to offer and the costs that his reconciliation would require.

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The research and analysis conducted in this paper conclude that the expected benefits of reconciliation that Afghan President Hamid Karzai could expect from a serious attempt at negotiations with HIG outweigh the expected costs. As part of reaching this conclusion, this paper takes a more comprehensive look at HIG’s potential benefits, rather than just examining the expected decrease in insurgent activity; this research reveals that HIG offers significant political and economic benefits to Karzai. Though there is still a probability that reconciliation cannot be reached, a serious attempt at negotiations now seems to be in Karzai’s best interest, and in the future the incentive to reconcile will increase in the shadow of the impending international draw down in Afghanistan.

To assess the relative costs and benefits of negotiations, this paper uses a historical case study of HIG and an Expected Value Calculation (EVC) methodology, described in Section I. Section II briefly presents the extant theoretical literature on negotiating with extremist groups, before Section III narrows to a specific focus on HIG, outlining its founding, history and evolution. Section IV examines the status of HIG today and its participation in the post-2001 insurgency in Afghanistan, with a concentrated emphasis on HIG’s current objectives and the influence of its ideology therein. Sections V and VI investigate the dividends and the costs, respectively, that HIG presents to the Afghan Government by reconcile or not reconcile; while Section VII considers the probability that HIG will actually reconcile. In Section VIII, the benefits, costs and probability identified in the preceding sections are re-framed into the EVC equations to
draw out some potential implications and conclusions for Karzai’s decision-making, which are discussed in Section IX.

I. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This thesis seeks to evaluate whether the Afghan Government should attempt to seriously negotiate with HIG. Given that HIG is officially declared a terrorist organization and that Hekmatyar is an oppositionist to the Afghan government, such a decision to pursue negotiations would be politically challenging. However, many other countries, such as Iraq, India, the U.K. and Israel, have had to decide whether negotiating with terrorists is ever acceptable and if so, under what conditions?

Asking this broader (and morally-laden) question, however, obscures the true value and necessity of the evaluating the prospects for negotiation/reconciliation. Entering negotiations must be objectively assessed and an accurate conclusion cannot be reached outside of the context of Afghanistan, its politics, its history, and the current insurgency—in short, without a specific study of HIG and Afghanistan. This case study will provide the foundation for performing a cost-benefit analysis for negotiation.

This paper will largely focus on HIG’s role in the insurgency and the benefits that Hekmatyar is willing and could actually provide if the Afghan Government were to reconcile with him. Estimating the cost of such reconciliation to the Afghan Government, on the other hand, is more difficult, primarily because of the disparate and
conflicting interests within the Afghan Government. Some government figures have a strong interest in reintegrating Hekmatyar, some are ardently opposed. For the purposes of assessing a cost and projecting a likelihood that reconciliation may occur, this paper assesses the cost to the Afghan Government from the perspective of President Karzai. Historical precedent for successful insurgent reconciliations since 2001 compels this approach: insurgent leaders who have been active in the post-2001 insurgency have depended upon Karzai to personally direct the Afghan National Security Council and/or Coalition Forces to arrange their reconciliation.7 Throughout this paper, I consider Karzai and the Afghan Government as synonymous, unless otherwise specified.

Answering the primary research question above requires several important sub-questions, many of which have already been intimated in the preceding paragraphs: Is there a theoretical framework for reconciliation and negotiation that ought to be applied to the prospect of HIG reconciliation? What are HIG’s objectives? What dividends can Hekmatyar and reconciliation provide? What will reconciliation with HIG cost Karzai? What is the probability that HIG will actually reconcile? All of these empirical issues are elements of a robust cost-benefit calculus of such negotiations.

Data

In this effort, I rely nearly exclusively upon secondary sources, including scholarly articles and books by regional experts, news paper articles, and statistics drawn from large studies on terrorist/insurgent attacks within Afghanistan. Additionally, I employ

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7 Semple, 40-41.
openly available information about the political allegiances of Afghan Government officials in an attempt to quantify HIG’s political strength and possible influence in the Afghan Government. Since the situational context in Afghanistan is constantly shifting (and may present influential new information at any time), I terminated research for this paper as of February 15, 2011, and I assessed the question of HIG reconciliation based on all indications as of that date in time.

_Data Caveats and Biases_

As I was unable to personally investigate the position of HIG in Afghanistan, my data necessarily reflects a variety of potential source biases beyond my control. For example, I could only evaluate English press coverage rather than Afghan sources in Dari or Pashto, or had to rely on translations from international news sources. Further, I was unable to communicate with actual HIG members or leaders, so an assessment of HIG’s objectives was derived strictly from public statements/documents, party decision-making and historical actions.

Additionally, data sets that detail terrorist/insurgent attacks are not all-inclusive, suffer attribution error, and other biases. Critically, insurgent attacks are often mis-attributed or unattributed, and therefore a precise numerical calculation of HIG’s contribution to the insurgency is not possible. Moreover, depending upon the result of the attack, insurgents may or may not wish to claim that attack, for instance, HIG would not want to claim an attack in which Afghan civilians were killed. Consequently, these data sources provide few—much less accurate—insights into the methods, tactics and
targets of HIG (i.e. HIG’s role in the insurgency). This particular data issue was mitigated by the fact that this analysis strove to qualify the totality of the costs and benefits that HIG could offer, a relatively small portion of which, as it turned out, revolved around the violence from HIG’s guerilla attacks.

Perhaps an even more foundational bias beyond data is my own perspective and assessment of cost-benefit. As neither an Afghan warlord nor the Afghan President, my ability to project the calculations of individuals such as Hekmatyar and Karzai is limited. My selected analytic approach, detailed below, hopefully mitigated part of this bias by pulling from a large set of historical declarations and decisions from these men and formalizing the costs and benefits implied therein into a tight framework.

Analytic Approach

The analytic approach I employ here is a cost-benefit analysis of the rewards and risks that Hekmatyar presents to Karzai should HIG completely reconcile with the Afghan Government. After an extensive review of the extant literature on reconciliation, I found no theoretical or political analytical treatment of this topic despite its obvious salience to U.S. policy in Afghanistan. To address this lacuna in the literature, I conduct an in-depth case study of HIG, its history and its role in the insurgency to assess the benefits that co-opting HIG provides to Karzai compared to the costs of the same. Though this methodological framework appears simple, to execute this analysis with maximum fidelity, I conducted extensive research in effort to properly characterize HIG, Hekmatyar and Karzai.
To frame my investigation of the variables that contribute to costs and benefits, I adopt a qualitative assessment tool derived from a qualitative model known as an Expected Value Calculation (EVC). Doing so allows me to organize the data paradigmatically and in turn permits me to draw several conclusions about the utility of serious reconciliation attempts compared to no reconciliation or attempts.

This is a defensible approach to take as HIG has already engaged in some manner of preliminary talks with the Afghan Government, officially as early as February 2010. As a result, Karzai is likely quickly nearing a decision point where he will have to make the choice to seriously pursue negotiations in an attempt to reach reconciliation, that is, he will have to ‘play a probability game’ with HIG.

For purposes of analysis, I assume that there are two extreme outcomes of these ongoing activities for President Karzai: serious negotiations are attempted and they result in reconciliation ($r$) or serious negotiations will fail, resulting in no reconciliation ($f$). The salient factors that Karzai must weigh in his decision whether or not to seriously pursue reconciliation are: the benefits of reconciling, the benefits of not reconciling, the costs of reconciling, the costs of not reconciling, and the probabilities that reconciliation does or does not occur. To compare the likelihood of Karzai obtaining a net gain, or a ‘win’ from a serious negotiation attempt, I considered an EVC equation for both the costs ($c$) and the benefits ($b$) that included the probability that reconciliation could be reached. The following equations outline the relationship between costs and benefits.

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Karzai might expect in terms of the likely outcomes, where $probability (r) + probability (f) = 1$:

$$EVC_b = Probability (r) \times Benefits_r + Probability (f) \times Benefits_f$$

$$EVC_c = Probability (r) \times Costs_r + Probability (f) \times Costs_f$$

To summarize in simple terms, $EVC_b$ is what Karzai can expect to gain, on average, given a serious attempt at negotiations to reconcile; $EVC_c$ is what Karzai is expected to lose, on average, in a serious attempt. The final conclusion on the utility of seriously-attempted reconciliation to Karzai—i.e. should Karzai ‘play the game’ with Hekmatyar—was then reasonably assessed by concluding whether $EVC_b$ exceeded $EVC_c$.

Given the difficulty of truly understanding the nuances of Hekmatyar and Karzai’s decision-making as well as my inability—for lack of data—to comprehensively enumerate the costs and benefits for reconciliation, my research did not presume to assign quantitative values to the variables in the equation. Instead, this research used a case study of HIG to suggest an approximate weight of variables and whether variables (costs, benefits, and the probability that HIG reconciles) were generally remaining the same, increasing, or decreasing, to reach a similarly relative judgment of whether $EVC_b$ or $EVC_c$ is higher; a higher $EVC_b$ suggests that, on average, the benefits of a serious negotiation attempt outweigh the costs.
Because the status quo is ‘not reconciled,’ which in actual terms is very similar to \( f \), I centered my research on the potential new and divergent outcome, \( r \), which meant a data and assessment focus on Benefits, and Costs. After conducting the case study on HIG, I opted to organize Benefits into three sub-categories (effect on violence/stability, political influence, and control of economic/illicit trade/facilitation routes and areas) because these emphasized the range of benefits that HIG reconciliation might offer—a new perspective beyond the stark assessment based only on attack statistics.

For the sake of a simpler comparison, I framed Costs in the same terms, since these two variables will represent opposing discrete outcomes if Karzai should attempt to play: if he seriously attempts to negotiate, he will either succeed and receive Benefits or fail and pay Costs. Similarly, though using a different organization, I set Costs against Benefits since these are also two opposing discrete outcomes of the same attempt to play: he will either succeed and pay Costs or fail and receive Benefits.

For these two variables, I elected to address the question of cost as defined by Director of Harvard’s Negotiation Research Project Dr. Robert Mnookin, who frames the concept of “cost” with three questions: what will negotiation/reconciliation cost in resources? Will reputation or legitimacy suffer? Will negotiating/reconciling set a bad precedent?\(^9\) This approach gives primary focus to the costs that Karzai, as the decision-maker, has to lose from a personal standpoint, rather than trying to force cost into an

unnecessary parallel structure with benefits; this allows a more objective, independent, and full assessment of both cost and benefit for the decision-maker: Karzai.

II. THEORETICAL LITERATURE ON NEGOTIATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

Considerable debate exists about the merit of negotiating with sub-national extremist organizations. Literature is primarily concerned with the question of terrorist organizations and whether governments should negotiate with them. Provocative titles such as Mitchell Reiss’s *Negotiating with Evil*, Mark Perry’s *Talking to Terrorists: Why America Must Engage with Its Enemies*, and Robert Mnookin’s *Bargaining with the Devil: When To Negotiate, When To Fight*, reflect the general hesitance of governments to publicly dialogue with terrorist organizations and hint at moral implications for entering such discussions. A primary reason for such hesitancy is the judgment that organizations which employ terrorism are so radical and hostile that no amount of compromise or concessions will appease them,\(^\text{10}\) but instead propagate the effectiveness of terrorist behavior.

Authors of texts on reconciliation—such as Reiss, Perry, and I. William Zartman among several others—examine multiple case studies of extremist organizations and their negotiations with their respective governments. Though these authors generally

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conclude that “negotiating with terrorists is possible within limits,”\textsuperscript{11} that stock refusal to talk to anyone who employs terrorism harms the interests of governments,\textsuperscript{12} or that governments must “think clearly and systematically about when it makes sense to engage a terrorist group,”\textsuperscript{13} they have not prescribed an applicable litmus test for when conditions are ripe and allowable for negotiation despite an organization’s employment of terrorism. Nor do any of these authors outline a process for identifying which extremist groups are likely to well receive negotiation attempts—other than the general categories such as “reconciliables and irreconciliables”\textsuperscript{14} or “absolute and contingent terrorists”\textsuperscript{15}

Given the lack of a well-formed negotiation criteria outline for assessing insurgent or terrorist groups, reducing the discussion to a standard cost-benefit analysis that examines the actual actors involved is necessary. Though these reconciliation texts provide insightful considerations for such an analysis, the advisability of negotiating with HIG can only be derived from within the situational, historical and cultural context of Afghanistan.

\textsuperscript{13}Reiss, 4331-39.
\textsuperscript{14}Reiss, 3889-99.
\textsuperscript{15}Zartman, 449.
III. HIG’S HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

As arguably the oldest participant in the Afghan insurgency, HIG has an exceptionally interesting history both because of its political roots and objectives and because it has remained in opposition to the standing government in Afghanistan through multiple political upheavals and violent conflicts. A thorough examination of HIG’s history provides the context for judging the prospects for reconciliation with HIG today.

History

HIG was founded by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an ethnic Ghilzai Pashtun Afghan from Kunduz Province. While attending Kabul University in the early 1970s, Hekmatyar became a member of the Muslim Youth Organization (MYO), an Islamist student movement influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and founded to counter the increasing Marxist influence of Soviet political parties in Afghanistan. The MYO was dedicated to opposing communism by using violence and thus quickly found its membership targeted for arrest and imprisonment; Hekmatyar himself spent two years in prison for the alleged murder of a Maoist peer. As Mohammed Daoud solidified control after his coup in 1973, MYO’s main activists—Hekmatyar included—fled to Pakistan as Islamists encountered increasing repression from the Soviet-backed Daoud regime. In 1975, the MYO split and Hekmatyar became the leader of one splinter group

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17 Misdaq, 90.
which he named Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA). In 1978, the HIA itself split into two groups, one led by Mawlawi Yunus Khalis and the other led by Hekmatyar, which was identified from that time as Hizb-i-Islami Hekmatyar or Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG).

Between 1975 and the Soviet invasion in 1979, Hekmatyar operated from Peshawar, Pakistan, where he and his group received training from the Pakistani Inter-services Intelligence (ISI). Throughout the Soviet war, HIG remained based in Pakistan and launched cross-border raids and attacks against Soviet interests. Due to HIG’s primarily Pashtun membership, HIG was the favorite of the Pakistani government, which actively encouraged Islamic groups as a means of influencing the Afghan government and countering Soviet influence. HIG was one of the “Peshawar Seven”—the mujahidin groups that received aid from the ISI, who poured funding and arms into Afghanistan via these groups. The CIA also funneled money to HIG, providing more financial and material support to HIG than any other mujahidin faction. As part of its work for the ISI and CIA, HIG was responsible for the facilitation and escorting of foreign fighters—mainly Arabs—who had come to wage jihad and who would eventually constitute the ranks of al-Qa’ida. HIG also helped train Uzbek and Uigher militants that would eventually form their own terrorist

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22 Rashid, *Taliban*, 130.
organizations. HIG’s fighters became battle-hardened in their insurgent rebellion against the Soviets and received increasing support, training and weapons. Though the ISI and the CIA had largely cut their funding by the early 1990s HIG retained its strength and the ISI and CIA lost the ability to control or influence Hekmatyar.

Throughout the Soviet war, HIG positioned itself to increase its power vis-à-vis the other mujahidin groups by warring as regularly with other Afghan factions as with the Soviets. Pakistan supported HIG in this endeavor, hoping to install Hekmatyar as the leader of post-Soviet Afghanistan. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1988, Hekmatyar and the other Afghan mujahidin immediately began to focus on one another, battling for position in anticipation of the communist regime’s collapse.

In the ensuing Afghan civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal, Hekmatyar was mainly concerned with defeating Massoud’s Tajik militia, but also moved to wipe out Afghan loyalists and other resistance parties that challenged HIG for control. Despite constant in-fighting from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the factions and militias led by Massoud, Dostum, Rabbani and others managed to form the Mujahidin Council, which was held loosely together by a “shared antipathy” for Hekmatyar, whom they sought to prevent from assuming control.

Although the mujahidin tried on multiple occasions to establish coalition governments, Hekmatyar actively rejected offers for compromise, refusing to

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participate in any government that included Massoud and continuing to ambush and assault the other factions. Though Hekmatyar temporarily agreed to a cease-fire in 1992, he quickly became dissatisfied with the power-sharing that the Mujahidin Council proposed and the consolidation of control by Massoud’s Shura-i-Nezar and Burhanuddin Rabbani’s Jamiat Islami. Factional violence resumed and from 1992 to 1996, Hekmatyar repeatedly subjected Kabul to barrages of missiles, shelling the city to demonstrate his power and allegedly killing as many as 20,000 Afghan citizens—an act which instilled a long-lasting hatred for Hekmatyar in much of the Afghan population.

Despite HIG’s continued attacks, support from Pakistan, and various alliances with other groups (including former communists), the party was unsuccessful in conquering Kabul or ever taking the tactical upper hand from Massoud. As it became clear that Hekmatyar would never successfully capture control of Kabul, Pakistan shifted its support away from HIG and to a new Pashtun-dominated group—the Taliban. Catching nearly all the mujahidin by surprise, the Taliban quickly overran much of Afghanistan, pushing HIG out of its entrenched positions around Kabul in 1995 and 1996. The Taliban had realized that HIG was a primary rival given the ideological and

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32 Rashid, *Taliban*, 34.
ethnic similarities, and thus targeted HIG and HIG’s supply depots in their initial military conquests along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and on the way to Kabul.\textsuperscript{33} As his forces were overrun, Hekmatyar made a few desperate attempts to align with Massoud and the other mujahidin leaders against the Taliban, but by then the Taliban had gained too much ground to be stopped, taking Kabul in 1996. Hekmatyar fled to Iran where he continued to lead HIG, though the party lost a significant amount of influence.

After the Taliban conquered Afghanistan, they successfully moved to cut HIG’s support base; many of the low-level HIG fighters and some of HIG’s key commanders defected to the Taliban soon after Hekmatyar’s flight to Iran.\textsuperscript{34} For the following five years, Hekmatyar remained in exile though HIG retained a significant portion of its organizational structure. Mid-level HIG members either receded into the background to avoid Taliban attention or shifted away from insurgency towards organized crime and smuggling along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

\textit{Leadership and Constituency}

As the group’s namesake, Hekmatyar is the undeniable leader of HIG and has been since its founding in the 1970s. HIG’s history is more often than not an examination of the personality of Hekmatyar, and he has unequivocally represented HIG and directed the party’s path. Hekmatyar consolidated his power by running the “tightest, most

\textsuperscript{33} Misdaq, 177, 181.
\textsuperscript{34} “Gulbuddin Hekmatyar: A Brutal Warlord Few Afghans Want To See Return,” \textit{Agence France Presse}, 3 October 2001.
militaristic organization in Peshawar,” ruthlessly tolerating no dissent and eliminating opponents. As a result, Hekmatyar commands a very loyal following that is beholden to him and trusts his leadership—for true HIG members, the party takes precedent over any other obligations and loyalties. Rarely is this precedence challenged, however, because HIG is entirely ethnic Pashtun, regionally-focused, and Islamist, which means that the party is largely homogenous and unified, and that Afghans with these particular loyalties have little difficulty following Hekmatyar. At the same time, these characteristics are generally shared with Taliban fighters as well, which has resulted in the intermingling of the groups among low-level fighters (exceedingly apparent after the Taliban conquest of Afghanistan), despite differences in objectives and grievances between their respective leaders.

One notable distinguishing characteristic of HIG as compared to other insurgent groups is the level of education. As Hekmatyar built up HIG, he initially drew from educated urban Pastuns who had attended universities or participated in Islamist political parties. As HIG continued to expand after Hekmatyar fled to Pakistan, he also spread his Islamic agenda in Pakistan-based refugee camps, recruiting heavily from the thousands of Afghans who had fled across the border. Even among the refugee camps however, Hekmatyar focused on urban camps and targeted alumni of universities

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35 Coll, Ghost Wars, 119.
38 Rashid, Taliban, 19.
and high schools,\(^{40}\) which has ensured that HIG membership maintains a significant educational advantage over other insurgent factions—both in the Soviet invasion and the present insurgency. HIG’s recruitment and training included a combination of extreme secrecy, political indoctrination and military training,\(^{41}\) and refugee camps, such as Shamshatoo, became a blend of “civilian refuge, military encampment, and political operations centers” for Hekmatyar.\(^ {42}\)

Additionally, HIG has generally been very regionally concentrated in northern and eastern Afghanistan. During the 1980s, HIG built up a social and political base in the provinces of Nangarhar, Konar, Baghlan, Laghman, Logar, Paktia and Khost,\(^ {43}\) which has remained the major area of strength for HIG.\(^ {44}\) At the same time, HIG provided social services such as health care and educational facilities in the refugee camps in Pakistan which increased HIG’s public support base and attraction as a jihadi group.\(^ {45}\) Though HIG’s base of support and operational arena has remained centered in eastern Afghanistan, most of HIG’s actual fighters are now coming from Pakistani refugee camps rather than from Afghan provinces.\(^ {46}\)


\(^{41}\) Rashid, \textit{Taliban}, 86.

\(^{42}\) Coll, \textit{Ghost Wars}, 118.


\(^{46}\) “Afghanistan: Hizb-I Islami is Key to Eastern Security,” 1.
IV. HIG TODAY

Over the nine years since the U.S. toppled the Taliban in 2001, HIG has continued on its insurgent path and maintained its opposition to the Afghan Government. Though the conflict in Afghanistan has shifted, Hekmatyar remains militarily defiant and has again opted to pursue his goals through violent tactics. The follow section details HIG’s participation in the post-9/11 insurgency, identifies the association and relationship between HIG and the other primary insurgent groups, and discusses HIG’s current objectives in continuing to use violence.

HIG’s Role in the Post-9/11 Insurgency

Following the 2001 invasion, Hekmatyar immediately condemned the U.S. attack and announced that if U.S. troops remained in Afghanistan, HIG would militarily resist. As a result of his hard line and his contentious history with other Afghan faction leaders, the UN-sponsored 2001 Bonn Conference that established the interim government and the trajectory of future Afghan politics did not include Hekmatyar and HIG. Surprisingly Hekmatyar initially pledged to support the interim government in 2002, seeking to acquire a role therein for HIG. However, when this bid for a share of power failed, Hekmatyar quickly changed his tone, declaring solidarity with al-

Qa’ida and the Taliban. He called upon all “true” Muslim Afghans to unite to drive
the U.S. out of Afghanistan in order to establish an Islamic government, and over the
following nine years, Hekmatyar has consistently and firmly maintained his call for the
removal of foreign troops. HIG’s anti-American rhetoric, active armed resistance, ties to
al-Qa’ida, and attacks on U.S. forces earned Hekmatyar and his group the status of a

HIG infrastructure and networks were not routed during the U.S. invasion as al-
Qa’ida’s and the Taliban’s were, and thus Hekmatyar was initially in a stronger position
to participate in the insurgency. In fact, reports from the first two years of the
insurgency suggested that former al-Qa’ida and Taliban fighters were regrouping under
Hekmatyar’s leadership, though the course of the insurgency proves instead that
HIG’s well-established networks merely provided temporary refuge and support for the
disoriented al-Qa’ida and Taliban fighters. Though Hekmatyar maintains a loyal
following, his support has declined in recent years and he commands far fewer troops
than the Taliban. HIG is also currently less active on the battlefield than both the

51 Ben Barber, “Warlord Returns to Afghanistan from Base in Iran; Hekmatyar a Threat To
53 “Patterns of Global Terrorism Annual Report,” U.S. State Department, 2002), 134 <
54 Indira A. R. Lakshmanan, “Al Qaeda, Talibian Said to be Grouping Islamist Warlord Emerging
as Leader,” Boston Globe, 1 April 2003, A8.
55 Ahmed Rashid, “Warlord Becomes a Major Threat to Afghan Stability,” Wall Street Journal,
Taliban and AQ, though HIG’s educated constituency is a notable factor in the propaganda of the insurgency. As Hekmatyar promised, HIG has continued to launch intermittent attacks against Coalition troops and convoys—for example, the purported killing of eight U.S. troops while attempting to overrun two bases in Nuristan in late 2009. Hekmatyar has continued to call for attacks against foreign troops, re-emphasizing in a late 2010 interview that he supported any and all attacks on U.S. forces, including attacks on convoys that transported their supplies. Though Hekmatyar claimed to command a force of 18,000 fighters as of 2002, his force—including fighters and arms—was significantly depleted when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 1996 and has not regained its full strength. Some estimates suggest that HIG members represent somewhere between 15% and 25% of the insurgent fighters, though tallying actual figures is difficult due to the mutual bleedover between the Taliban and HIG. Further, because of the initial subterfuge and secrecy emphasized in HIG’s founding, its strongest supporters tend to remain out of sight and cannot be accurately counted.

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59 Salim Safi, “Interview with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,” *Geo News TV*, 13 September 2010, <http://m.memri.org/14499/show/303b8510233b4f84c619a45a0c7bcffe&t=11bcd639a9e9e01368a8bd4c95ae83e7>.
60 Barber.
62 Baldauf and Tohid.
HIG’s Relationship with al-Qa’ida and the Taliban

HIG’s connection to other insurgent and terrorist organizations has similarly fluctuated with time, dependent upon the needs of HIG. HIG’s relationship with the other two primary groups in the current Afghan conflict (the Taliban and al-Qa’ida) has been tenuous at best and based solely on the common enemy embodied by the U.S. and Coalition Forces. Early attempts at a HIG-Taliban alliance failed and Hekmatyar has maintained a strict separation between himself and the Taliban since 2002, never giving his allegiance to Mullah Omar and repeatedly emphasizing that he is not allied with the Taliban, either in fighting or in ultimate objectives. In 2008, for example, HIG constructed a new constitution for Afghanistan, presenting it along with a critique of not only the current Afghan constitution, but also the constitution which the Taliban had proposed.

Although HIG and the Taliban allegedly coordinate on operations, the two forces generally operate in different locations and have reportedly clashed on occasion; some reports even indicate that HIG and Taliban elements only coordinate on the local level when al-Qa’ida members mediate. Nevertheless, over the years, there has been considerable low-level fighter convergence: many HIG members defected to join the

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64 Trofimov, A10.
Taliban in the late 1990s, and as the Taliban has reconstituted and increased its operations after its original defeat in 2001, HIG recruits have reportedly operated under the direction of Taliban commanders in their particular localities.\textsuperscript{68} The overlap among low-level fighters is attributable to their similarities in ethnicity and religious ideology: both are primarily Pashtun and espouse Deobandi Islam. Despite this overlap however, HIG leaders have as late as November 2010 emphasized the difference between HIG and Taliban by identifying HIG as a party and the Taliban as merely a movement, and have insisted that there is no tactical or strategic cooperation between them.\textsuperscript{69}

Though HIG and the foreign fighters that now constitute al-Qa’ida worked very closely during the Soviet war, HIG’s current interaction with al-Qa’ida is also limited. Though the two battle a common enemy, Hekmatyar does not champion al-Qa’ida’s global jihad agenda, and his support for al-Qa’ida has fluctuated. Initially in 2001 Hekmatyar claimed to not cooperate with al-Qa’ida because it was a terrorist organization.\textsuperscript{70} He then declared solidarity with al-Qa’ida against the U.S. in 2002—but maintained that HIG acted separately and was not officially allied in purpose with al-Qa’ida. In 2006, Hekmatyar publicly announced an alliance, saying that he supported al-Qa’ida’ efforts against the U.S,\textsuperscript{71} but as of January 2010, Hekmatyar insisted that he had had no direct contact with al-Qa’ida leaders.\textsuperscript{72} HIG and al-Qa’ida appear to provide mutual training and facilitation, and foreign fighters are still sometimes attached to HIG

\textsuperscript{68} Arnoldy, “Afghan Warlord Hekmatyar Talks Peace, But Brings Little To Table.”
\textsuperscript{69} “Hezb-e Islami Member Spells Out Differences with Afghan Taliban,” Daily Afghanistan, 14 November 2010.
\textsuperscript{70} “Hizb-i-Islami Wants to Join Government Despite Terrorism Accusations,” 1.
\textsuperscript{71} Moreau, Yousafzai, Hosenball and Dickey, 40.
\textsuperscript{72} Trofimov, Yaroslav, A10.
Yet, the groups’ followers remain ideologically separate, they operate in different geographic areas, and there is much less fighter convergence than that between HIG and the Taliban.

**HIG’s Ideology and Objectives**

Given the duration of HIG’s existence and the mutating nature of the conflict in Afghanistan over the past 30 years, a consistent list of HIG’s objectives is very difficult to construct. As an Islamist political party, HIG’s initial objections matched those of the MYO and other Islamist organizations in the 1970s, who all took exception to the subordination of the Muslim *ummah* to the monarchy. From its founding, HIG’s objective was a state and society with Islamic principles and this has ostensibly remained HIG’s primary objective over the past three decades. Hekmatyar envisioned a top-down approach, by which HIG would forcibly establish an Afghan Islamic republic based on Wahhabism, after driving out foreign forces. Hekmatyar stressed the party’s ideological purity, partly because it prevented subversion from external foes and partly because it provided a moral high-ground to prevent rivals from challenging his power. Despite its ardent and universal Islamist claims however, HIG, like almost all Afghan

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74 Misdaq 147.
77 Edwards, 619.
Islamist groups, is demarked by ethnic, regional and linguistic lines, and thus the interplay and blend between HIG’s ideological motivations and ethno-national motivations cannot be overlooked—HIG also wishes to see Pashtuns have increased control in the Afghan Government.

To accomplish HIG’s objective, Hekmatyar has remained singularly focused on power and the acquisition thereof, so much so, that it may be characterized as a primary objective, which has seemingly subordinated HIG’s Islamic agenda. Hekmatyar sought to absorb as much power into HIG as possible in order to ‘vanquish’ non-Islamic oppressors (i.e. the Soviets when HIG was founded). However, based on his history, decision-making, and past alliances—as well as the inability to establish an Islamic Government—Hekmatyar’s primary objective more often than not appears to be increasing his own power in Afghanistan.

In conflicts since the Soviet war, HIG has tried to ally itself with whichever side was most likely to gain control—regardless of the ideology or goals of that ally: HIG coordinated with the communist factions in Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal in an attempt to take power in 1990; Hekmatyar briefly agreed to be prime minister in the mujahidin government in 1992; Hekmatyar tried to align with Massoud when the Taliban moved on Kabul in 1996; and HIG fought side-by-side with the Taliban and al-Qa’ida following the U.S. invasion. HIG’s history demonstrates that

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78 Misdaq 148.
79 Coll, Ghost Wars,120.
80 Coll, Ghost Wars,119-120.
Hekmatyar is a pragmatic decision-maker and that strict ideology does not drive HIG. Equally noteworthy, HIG abandoned each of its alliances when the balance of power shifted. Hekmatyar’s drive for influence and control has given HIG the appearance of capriciousness, but has also meant that the organization has made decisions with a cold pragmatism that is aimed to secure influence.

HIG has faced some division over the course of the insurgency: a group of mid-level leaders, claiming to speak for HIG, renounced violence and joined the government in 2004; unfortunately, as demonstrated by the past six years, this group did not represent Hekmatyar or the majority of HIG which continues to fight. However, while many HIG members are vocally opposed to the central government, many are reluctant to commit to the insurgency in full force because of the higher education level among members: many are more vested in current Afghan society than the average Taliban insurgent. On account of this, combined with factional divides and membership loss, HIG has generally played a spoiler role in the current insurgency as Hekmatyar has attempted to acquire power and influence.

Given his influence and networks, Hekmatyar has the ability to propagate the insurgency by causing security problems for the Afghan government. Despite this ability, HIG is not (and has not been) in a position to take over Afghanistan or govern and is aware that it would not be given a position in a Taliban-run country. These

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83 “Afghanistan: Hizb-I Islami is Key to Eastern Security,” 1.
realities as well as the fluctuation in HIG’s public statements and allegiances raise questions about Hekmatyar’s objectives and HIG’s total dedication to the insurgency.

The most recent look at HIG’s purported objectives is a 15-point peace proposal presented by representatives of Hekmatyar to the Afghan Government in February 2010. Of the 15 points, at least four deal explicitly with the removal of foreign troops/influence from Afghanistan, at least seven deal with reforming the government, and only two explicitly refer to Islamic ideals. For reforming the government, Hekmatyar demands review (and possible replacement) of the Constitution, new elections that are designed to emphasize party allegiance/representation, and cooperation among the different political factions to form a security council. The 15 points clearly betray the desire to remove foreign influences and endow HIG—as a strong political party—with a foothold in the Government. This agenda is largely consistent with Hekmatyar’s goals during the Afghan civil war: he wanted a coalition government free from foreign influence in which HIG was the strongest faction.

In summary, while HIG’s avowed ideological objectives have remained Islamic, Hekmatyar’s decision-making and most recent rhetoric suggests a more pragmatic and nationalist agenda. Over the course of HIG’s history, two objectives have remained consistent: acquisition of power and removal of foreign influence.

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V. BENEFITS OF RECONCILIATION WITH HIG

Assuming that Karzai is not excessively risk acceptant, he would only undertake a serious attempt at reconciliation if he expected to gain significant value or benefit from HIG’s co-option. Given the limited role that HIG has played in the insurgency’s total violence, the incentive to negotiate with Hekmatyar is relatively small when evaluated strictly from a statistical standpoint. Karzai is not fearful that HIG by itself will overrun the country, which ostensibly lowers the gain from negotiating with them.

However, even though HIG is not the most threatening participant in the insurgency, the possible benefits of reconciliation with HIG are more nuanced and pervasive than simply a decrease in violence. The very fact that HIG cannot overrun the country puts the Afghan Government in an immediate position of strength over HIG—which is one of Reiss’s recommended preliminary conditions for beginning negotiations—and this strength potentially means Karzai could benefit from the varied dividends that HIG offers. The discussion on the benefits of reconciling and not reconciling can be divided into three categories: effect on violence/stability, political influence, and control of economic/illicit trade/facilitation routes.

Violence/Stability

Quantifying HIG’s specific role in the insurgency’s violence is incredibly difficult because many of the attacks in Afghanistan are not claimed by a specific group while others are claimed by both HIG and the Taliban. The National Counterterrorism

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86 Reiss 3921-30.
Center’s Worldwide Terrorism Incidents Database does not even identify HIG or the Taliban as the perpetrator of attacks, instead attributing nearly all attacks in Afghanistan to “Sunni extremists.”

The University of Maryland’s Global Terrorism Database only identifies 14 attacks possibly attributable to HIG between 2001 and 2008, most of which were also attributed to either the Taliban or al-Qa’ida. Of those attacks, 11 were directed against government or military personnel.

These statistics certainly do not encapsulate the number of attacks committed by HIG during this time period. From the limited claims of responsibility from HIG, the majority of HIG’s earlier attacks were against the weak Afghan security forces, though after 2005, HIG’s focus shifted towards Coalition Forces. This shift matches Hekmatyar’s emphasis on removal of foreign forces and the majority of HIG’s claims of responsibility in the media have been attacks in which multiple foreign soldiers were killed.

CNN’s Coalition Casualties database maps all Coalition casualties in Afghanistan, and besides the heavy losses in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, some of the next highest Coalition death totals have been in the provinces of Konar,

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Nangahar, and Paktika, locations in which HIG maintains a strong presence. Even if these casualties cannot be directly attributed to HIG, the argument can be made that if HIG were to join the government, the total number of attacks would go down because either HIG stopped carrying them out or its control of the area prevented other groups from carrying them out. Either way, there would be fewer casualties.

An additional influence that HIG may have on the insurgency itself is related to its impact on and connection to other insurgent factions, primarily the Taliban and al-Qaeda. As HIG’s history reveals, Hekmatyar’s relationship with both of these groups has been tenuous at best and based solely on the common enemy embodied by the U.S. and Coalition Forces. HIG has worked with (and therefore has knowledge of) both the Taliban and al-Qaeda; reconciliation with HIG could provide a wealth of intelligence information on leadership, capabilities and facilitation routes that would enable significant damage to these insurgent groups.

**Political Influence and Consolidation**

At present, Karzai is hurting for domestic political support as he has continued to lose support over the course of his presidency and as of 2011, is facing more rivals in Parliament than ever before. Hekmatyar’s ability to provide President Karzai with political support is potentially the most important dividend that will factor into the

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decision of whether to negotiate. Unlike the present-day dispersed Taliban, HIG has a well-defined political agenda and Hekmatyar has permitted political proxies to interact with the government on his behalf and former party members hold positions in the government—though Hekmatyar maintains his opposition to the central Afghan Government.⁹² Even though some HIG members renounced violence to join the Government, some believe that these members only renounced violence because of legal obstacles to political associations with armed groups.⁹³ The difference between “moderates” (who joined the Government) and “radicals” (who still fight) is relatively small; parliamentary members still support HIG’s political goals and still support Hekmatyar,⁹⁴ even if Hekmatyar has insisted they are not representatives of his party.⁹⁵ As a result, Hekmatyar already possesses a foothold and weight within the Afghan Government that would represent increased strength upon acceptance of HIG as legitimate.

A quantifiable conclusion on Hekmatyar’s ability to deliver political capital is difficult, but the number of declared HIG members who are in Parliament and those who hold other government positions provides a general outlook on his strength: As of 2008, two to three cabinet members were linked to HIG,⁹⁶ such as Minister of Education Farooq Wardak and Minister of Finance Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, a former

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⁹⁴ Antonio Giustozzi, Negotiating with the Taliban: Toward a Solution for the Afghan Conflict (Destin Development Studies Institute, 2010), 11.
HIG member; as of spring 2009, more than one third of Afghanistan’s 34 governors were official members of, or affiliated with, HIG; as of early 2010, 19 nominal members of HIG or HIA held parliamentary positions, and in the September 2010 Parliamentary elections, HIG/HIA affiliated members had won 16% of the seats.

HIG’s predominately Pashtun constituency provides another source of significant political capital that could benefit the Afghan Government. Given that a large percentage of Afghanistan is Pashtun, having a strong Pashtun figure in Hekmatyar supporting the government could help inspire an increased Pashtun investment in the political system. Karzai has been ineffective in consolidating or leading Pashtuns and as a result the Taliban has retained an iron grip on general Pashtun support, and the Afghan Parliament has continued to be unrepresentative of the Pashtun majority, with just over 100 Pashtuns winning seats out of the 249 available in the last election.

HIG’s largely Pashtun constituency would supply the Afghan government with Pashtun loyalties to rival the Taliban and it could give Karzai a much-needed boost in

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98 Giustozzi, Negotiating with the Taliban: Toward a Solution for the Afghan Conflict, 11.

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Parliamentary support after the September 2010 elections resulted in pro-government/Karzai supporters landing a minority of the seats.\textsuperscript{103}

In addition to direct political support, HIG may provide a secondary benefit to the political structure in Afghanistan: HIG’s complete integration into Afghan politics would likely mean an influx of well-educated Afghans into Afghanistan’s fledging political structure. At face value, this represents a benefit to the current and future strength of Afghan politics, which presently lacks capable politicians and well-formed political parties. HIG is a firmly-entrenched political movement that has lasted through multiple upheavals in Afghanistan and remains one of the more organized political forces in the country.\textsuperscript{104} Adding such a focused and united force to the government would drive improvements in government structures and institutions, such as Parliament, which a recent study found to be generally weak due to over 51\% of the members identifying themselves as independents.\textsuperscript{105}

Though largely Pashtun, HIG’s Islamic agenda allegedly transcends ethnic, tribal or regional loyalties,\textsuperscript{106} which in theory means it could begin to break down ethnic divides which have historically hampered Afghan governments. Though this approach failed in the late 1980s and 1990s, the international influence, attention and effort in Afghanistan could encourage and force HIG to fulfill this unifying role further than previously.

\textsuperscript{104} Arnoldy, “Afghan Warlord Hekmatyar Talks Peace, But Brings Little to Table.”
\textsuperscript{106} Edwards, 619.
Hekmatyar has continually called on all factions with Afghanistan to unite to focus on
removal of the “real enemy,” foreign forces,\textsuperscript{107} which suggests that HIG does have
unifying and nationalist intentions—though the improved position Hekmatyar would
acquire from foreign troop removal is also apparent. Similarly, unlike the Taliban or al-
Qi’ida, HIG’s strongest adherents aspire to obtain power in a modern Afghan state,
which requires institutions like schools, universities and Parliament that will solidify
and define their power. Lastly, given Hekmatyar’s pursuit of power, he would likely
encourage foreign aid and investment\textsuperscript{108}—once foreign troops had left—which could
lead Afghanistan further toward global integration.

Finally, incorporating HIG’s Pashtun influence into the Afghan Government may
have an ameliorating effect on Pakistan who continues to seek ways of exerting
influence into Afghan politics. Though Hekmatyar is no longer a favorite of the ISI,
Pakistan would likely see his assumption of power in Afghanistan as a beneficial
balance against the Tajiks and former northern alliance members that dominate Karzia’s
government. In late March 2010, Pakistani army sources suggested that the Government
of Pakistan was already putting pressure on HIG (as well as the Taliban) to take up
negotiations with the Afghan Government.\textsuperscript{109} This does not mean that Pakistan would
then cease its interference in Afghan internal affairs, but Pakistan may decide that
supporting an ethnically similar ally within the Afghan Government is a legitimate

\textsuperscript{107} Safi, “Interview with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.”

\textsuperscript{108} “Afghanistan: Hekmatyar Reconciliation Contains Dangers,” 1.

\textsuperscript{109} Antonio Giustozzi, \textit{Negotiating with the Taliban} (New York: The Century Foundation, 2010),
26.
alternative to providing support to insurgent factions like the Taliban. Iran would also favor reconciliation with HIG, with which it has enjoyed historically close ties. Iran is ardently opposed to the Taliban gaining control in Afghanistan, but has been supportive of HIG negotiations, largely as an opportunistic move to counter U.S. influence in Afghanistan.110

Control of Economic, Smuggling, and Facilitation Routes

Since 2001, the Afghan Government has struggled to ignite the Afghan economy and because of insecurity along trade routes has been limited in developing trade and commerce. The extended networks and control of HIG, particularly in Jalalabad and other crucial transit points in Eastern Afghanistan, could provide a considerable amount of stability and even economic incentive for the Afghan Government. In respect to the war effort, these transit points are exceptionally important and having them under control (or at least influence) of the Afghan Government could be very lucrative and may even increase the power of Afghanistan vis-à-vis Pakistan. Antonio Giustozzi identifies the involvement of warlords (or strongmen) in economics and control of trade in Afghanistan.111 Citing several examples across the country, he concludes that the solidification of strongman control over local and regional economies for the past several years suggests that negotiation with warlords such as Hekmatyar might become an economic necessity for the Afghan Government, rather than merely a benefit.

110 Giustozzi, Negotiating with the Taliban: Toward a Solution for the Afghan Conflict, 14.
Moreover, in order for state-building and government centralization to occur, co-option of political elites who have the monopoly of force—in additional to economic control—in specific areas is necessary on some level; Hekmatyar is one such individual.

Journalist Gretchen Peters suggests that Hekmatyar runs a sophisticated smuggling network in Eastern Afghanistan, working with foreign jihadis to smuggle heroin out of the region. According to Peters, Hekmatyar has been involved in the drug trade since the early 1990s, when he augmented his group’s poppy cultivation in (accurate) expectation that funding from the CIA and ISI would soon dry up. Noting that HIG reaps huge economic benefits from the drug trade, Peters notes that HIG would “cooperate with or assist any group that paid them.” While HIG’s long-term involvement in the illicit trade is disconcerting to international observers, Karzai likely has fewer objections to allowing the trade to continue if the Afghan economy benefits; no reconciliation with HIG, i.e. the current condition, results in no benefit from the drug smuggling or trade routes.

Additionally, Coalition Forces are increasingly recognizing control of crucial regions along the Afghan border as a vital need for undercutting the insurgency—dealing with extremism and terrorism that benefits from the porous border is paramount. Additionally, Afghanistan’s burgeoning drug trade—which by some estimates supplies 90% of the world’s opium—primary exit to the east is through

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112 Sheri Berman, “From the Sun King to Karzai,” Foreign Affairs 89.2 (Mar/April 2010): 2.
114 Peters, 53.
115 Peters, 128.
Jalalabad in Nangarhar and into Pakistan.\textsuperscript{117} Hekmatyar and HIG are entrenched in
many of the crucial positions along both drug smuggling and extremist facilitation
routes and with their buy-in, transit and facilitation back and forth across the border
could be significantly curtailed or put to use.

\section*{VI. Cost of Negotiation and Reconciliation}

In his 2010 book on negotiations, Director of Harvard’s Negotiation Research
Project Dr. Robert Mnookin frames the concept of “cost” with three questions: what
will negotiation/reconciliation cost in resources? Will reputation or legitimacy suffer?
Will negotiating/reconciling set a bad precedent?\textsuperscript{118} Answering these questions from the
perspective of Karzai presents a means for assessing the different types of personal
costs that Karzai would consider in negotiating or reconciling with HIG compared to
the costs that he is already facing by not reconciling (i.e. HIG’s insurgency
participation). The associated costs of any negotiations with HIG must be framed and
determined within the larger context of the Afghan insurgency and Afghanistan’s
objectives in relations with Coalition Forces, Pakistan and the international community.

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\textsuperscript{117} Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, “Geopolitics of Illicit Trade in Asia,” accessed 10 February 2011, <
http://www.pa-chouvy.org/>.
\textsuperscript{118} Mnookin, 31.
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Resources

The resource costs to Karzai of not reconciling with HIG are reflected in the current effort that the Afghan Security Forces put into fighting insurgents: ‘no reconciliation’ equates to more fighters on the battlefield with whom to contend. As the international community pulls back from Afghanistan, this military cost will be less and less covered by Coalition Forces. On the other hand, in terms of strictly physical resources, reconciliation with HIG would not cost Karzai much, though it will likely cost him some significant political capital. Many current Afghan government officials previously dealt with Hekmatyar during the Soviet and civil wars; thus any negotiations with HIG will likely be swayed by the undercurrent of past enmities, battles and personal distrust.\textsuperscript{119} Karzai will have to overcome such resistance from his current allies.

Additionally, negotiation will probably cost Karzai some political positions and influence in specific regions of Afghanistan. A 2010 Human Rights Watch report quoted Afghan official Masoom Stanekzai saying that reconciled insurgent leaders will demand jobs in the Afghan administration, and cited the appointment of former Taliban commander Mullah Abdul Salam to district governor after his re-integration.\textsuperscript{120} Though Hekmatyar’s 15-point peace plan does not outline a desire for a high position, Hekmatyar would not decide to join the Government after 30 years without acquiring some of the power and control he has always desired. It is probable that the Hekmatyar


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will want to have implicit control over his geographic and economic areas of influence in Afghanistan, with the freedom to run the region as he sees fit.

Karzai may also have to distance himself from the U.S. and other foreign powers, as their presence in Afghanistan has been (and remains) one of Hekmatyar’s primary critiques of the Afghan Government. Though Karzai has already begun to pull away from his international supporters, he still needs to have the international financial and military support to keep his fledgling government in place. Karzai risks losing additional support by pushing harder to remove foreign influence from Afghanistan. European nations, though in favor of reconciliation in general, have a difficult time providing direct endorsement to Karzai, given a great deal of anti-HIG domestic opinion. Similarly, Russia has remained vocally opposed to HIG reconciliation, perhaps because HIG was the most stubborn and brutal mujahidin resistance group during the 1980s.\(^{121}\) Karzai is already distancing himself from the international community in favor of domestic support—with such choices as refusing to prosecute corrupt officials for fear of losing internal political allies\(^ {122}\)—arguably suggesting that at present he has already assumed this cost.

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\(^{121}\) Giustozzi, “Negotiating with the Taiban: Toward a Solution for the Afghan Conflict, 13.

affirming the critique that Karzai has consolidated his own power only by buying or co-opting former warlords. \(^{123}\) That the warlord in this case is Hekmatyar multiplies the likely public backlash: Afghans have not forgotten the carnage that Hekmatyar inflicted upon his own people when he shelled Kabul from 1992 to 1996 and they have not forgotten the past nine years of HIG’s insurgent attacks, reinforced with public claims of responsibility. Hekmatyar and HIG remain notorious for their brutality and extreme Pashtun nationalism. \(^{124}\) Karzai has struggled to erect a political image that is embraced by the Afghan people and acquiescing (in the eyes of the people) to a man that is hated by many Afghans would further corrupt Karzai’s image. Though in past revolutions in other nations co-option of opponents required much in terms of financial resources or land control, in Afghanistan today the cost is high in terms of “honor and principle,” since the power broker in this case may be characterized as a “brutal thug.”\(^{125}\) Moreover, Hekmatyar himself has critical of Karzai, calling him “powerless” in the face of Western influence in a September 2010 interview.\(^{126}\) Blatant acceptance of Hekmatyar after such public insult would be difficult for Karzai, making him appear to be acquiescing to a strongman.

Negotiating with Hekmatyar could also further damage the relationship between Karzai and the U.S.: the U.S. cannot openly endorse a deal with Hekmatyar because Hekmatyar has been officially designated as a foreign terrorist by the U.S. (even though

\(^{125}\) Berman, 7.
\(^{126}\) Safi, “Interview with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.”
HIG is not on the State Department’s Foreign Terrorist Organization list). By negotiating, Karzai will take the risk of ostracizing the U.S. and other international donors. Many nations are already looking for excuses to pull their troops and funds out of Afghanistan and Karzai cutting a political deal with a long-time terrorist may be the escape clause many nations seek. The U.S. itself has expressed increased (if under the table) criticism and frustration about Karzai’s lack of resolve to combat corruption within his government, and reconciling with Hekmatyar, especially one that could allow Hekmatyar’s drug involvement to continue unchecked, would evoke further criticism against Karzai.

Precedence

Afghan history and the course of the current insurgency indicate that precedence represents the lowest cost to Karzai, and in fact, may not be a cost at all. According to Semple, Afghanistan has a “history of reconciliation” which is an “integral part of Afghan statecraft,” suggesting that negotiations have historical precedence in Afghanistan. Semple’s entire book Reconciliation in Afghanistan focuses on the efforts of reconciliation directed at Taliban fighters and other insurgents since 2001; historically and currently, Afghans are given to negotiations.

Karzai himself has demonstrated a willingness to co-opt former adversaries to ensure his own political power, Abdul Rashid Dostam and Ismael Khan being notable

\[127\] Isikoff, Moreau, and Yousafzai, 10.
\[128\] Semple 13.
examples in the run-up to the 2009 Presidential elections.\textsuperscript{129} Moreover, the Afghan Government reaffirmed the desire to reconcile former insurgents as recently as July 2010 with the formation of the Peace and Reintegration Program strategy after the June Consultative Peace Jirga. At the strategic level, the reconciliation effort would “focus on the leadership of the insurgency.”\textsuperscript{130} Karzai’s peacemaking commission, announced after the jirga, allegedly contained Taliban rivals, former warlords, and suspected drug runners,\textsuperscript{131} which, though upsetting to human rights activists, re-emphasizes that former unsavory Afghan leaders are already a part of the reconciliation and political process in Afghanistan.

Given that the Afghan Government has publicly declared an intent to reconcile with former insurgents and reintegrate them as members of society, a negotiation process with HIG is \textit{not} unprecedented (i.e. not a cost), and in fact may be more of a benefit: If an entire group such as HIG, which has resisted for so long, can find the means to make peace with the Afghan Government, it may provide a proof-of-concept for the Peace and Reintegration Program. Lastly, Karzai has seemed hesitant to pursue a negotiated settlement with the “insurgents” as a whole, preferring to co-opt individual or local commanders, which can be won over and more easily manipulated for a smaller cost than the entire insurgent movement.\textsuperscript{132} Reconciliation with Hekmatyar would fall neatly

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\textsuperscript{130} GiRoA, “Peace and Reintegration Program,” July 2010.
\textsuperscript{132} Giustozzi, “Negotiating with the Taliban,” 26.
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into this method preference for Karzai, but would represent the largest acquisition yet by this means.

VII. PROBABILITY THAT RECONCILIATION WITH HIG CAN OCCUR

A primary consideration for entering into negotiations with anyone or any group is the prospect for a successful outcome, which initially means that both sides must be prepared to actually negotiate and possibly compromise. At present, Hekmatyar does appear genuinely interested in negotiating.

Over the past decade, HIG has ostensibly broached peace talks or agreements with the government on several occasions, but has reached no reconciliation. Besides the initial attempt in 2002, HIG demonstrated a readiness for conditional peace talks in 2006, but only upon the removal of foreign troops. This remained true in 2008, when Hekmatyar’s spokesman declared that HIG would never negotiate with the Afghan government as long as foreign troops remained in Afghanistan and there was no timetable for withdrawal. In 2009, HIG representatives re-emphasized to American

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officials that Hekmatyar would join the Afghan government once a timetable for the removal of foreign troops was established.\textsuperscript{135}

The fact that the 2010 proposal was presented following the U.S. establishment of a date for troop removal to begin (July 2011) could suggest that Hekmatyar may actually intend to follow through on negotiations: the primary condition—foreign troop withdrawal—that Hekmatyar has demanded for years is on the table, which was not the case before now. Moreover, Hekmatyar has dropped foreign troop withdrawal as an absolute \textit{pre}-condition for peace,\textsuperscript{136} has expressed a willingness to negotiate on the timetable for the troop withdrawal he proposed, \textit{and}, as late as November 2010, allegedly said that HIG would not attack foreign troops if those troops stayed on their military bases.\textsuperscript{137} This uncharacteristic behavior by Hekmatyar could mean he is actually prepared to try to make talks work.

Hekmatyar’s genuineness is correlated to his objectives in pursuing a peace proposal and his intentions with the government. As noted above, based on his history, decision-making, and past alliances, Hekmatyar’s primary objective is increasing his own power in Afghanistan. Expecting that he would be willing to cooperate with the Afghan Government to acquire power is in line with Hekmatyar’s past strategy of reaching agreements with others, even if they are opposed.

\textsuperscript{136} Arnoldy, “Afghan Warlord Hekmatyar Talks Peace, But Brings Little to Table.”
Lastly, Hekmatyar’s 15-point plan remains true to HIG’s historically Afghan-centric goal—the establishment of an Islamic government in Afghanistan. Hekmatyar wants foreign forces out of the country and has promised to support Karzai, should Karzai stop following the direction of the U.S., unlike the Taliban who brand Karzai as a traitor.\textsuperscript{138} Similarly, Hekmatyar has emphasized that the conflict should be decided by Afghans, requesting in 2008 that the Pakistani Taliban wage jihad in their own country rather than Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{139} These factors support the claim that Hekmatyar truly does want to end his role in the insurgency—assuming his set of conditions is acceptably met.

Given Hekmatyar’s pragmatic pursuit of power and influence, he likely believes that pursuing a peace agreement is the best step to pursue his objective of an Islamic state. The insurgency has been unsuccessful in toppling the Afghan government and has not enhanced Hekmatyar’s personal prestige. Hekmatyar may believe that reconciliation would provide him with an improved political position as the U.S. withdraws troops: with the timing of the presentation of his plan, Hekmatyar could eventually claim when the U.S. withdraws that he had a firm hand in forcing the foreign troops from Afghanistan. Plus, Hekmatyar knows that the Taliban would not give him a position of power if they were to overthrow the government, and he understands that his best chance at legitimate power is via dealing with the current Afghan leadership.

\textsuperscript{138} Trofimov, A10.
The likely reasons that HIG would seriously consider reconciliation now (rather than in the past) also reflect Hekmatyar’s pragmatic mindset. As speculation of and attempts at negotiations between the U.S., Afghanistan and the Taliban have increased, Hekmatyar understands that a peace agreement with the Taliban would largely end the insurgency and marginalize HIG. Hekmatyar is acting quickly to acquire some measure of influence in the Afghan government before the Taliban strikes a similar deal that would leave HIG with nothing. Additionally, now in his early 60s, he likely realizes that his chances of ever acquiring legitimate power in Afghanistan are shrinking with each passing year. HIG’s power over the course of the insurgency has waxed and waned. HIG was strong and well-positioned from 2001 to 2003 at the beginning of the insurgency, it had weakened by 2005 as it lost fighters to Taliban, and it regained some strength from 2008 to 2010. Hekmatyar may fear that another decline in HIG power would be its final descent and is consequently hoping to institutionalize the power that he has acquired.

VIII. ASSESSMENT OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

Many of the costs and benefits of trying and failing to reach to reach reconciliation with HIG, are reflected in the status quo: the current participation of HIG in the insurgency as well as Karzai’s political trajectory, which are both remaining fairly consistent. On the other hand, as this case study suggests, reconciliation with

\[140\] Moreau, Yousefzai, Hosenball and Dickey, 40.
HIG, presents significant new costs and benefits. Figure 1 presents the variables

Benefit\textsubscript{r}, Benefit\textsubscript{f}, Cost\textsubscript{r}, and Cost\textsubscript{f}, that factor into the equations for EVC\textsubscript{b} and EVC\textsubscript{c}.

*Note on Figure 1:* Figure 1 identifies the different variables involved in the EVC calculation and attempts to qualitatively describe both the significance of those variables to Karzai (*weight*) and the projected change in the value of those variables (*movement*), i.e. is a specific cost or benefit increasing or decreasing as time moves forward from February 2011. As noted in the methods section, no actual mathematical values will be assigned to these variables. However, based on the case study conducted above, a general assessment of Karzai’s EVC calculations is made in the following section by assigning a *weight* of high, medium, or low, and a *movement* of increasing, decreasing or remaining constant to each of Karzai’s variables. There is no conclusive way to quantify these costs and benefits, but I have reached the assigned values in Figure 1 from my interpretation of information uncovered in the case study of HIG and Karzai.

**FIGURE 1: Costs and Benefits Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Summary</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefit\textsubscript{r}</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence/Stability Benefits:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIG will cease attacks against Afghan forces</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIG can provide intelligence on other insurgents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Benefits:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIG members already in Parliament and other government positions, more likely to come</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pashtun public support and political investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strong political party edifies Afghan political structure and institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pakistan mollification/appeasement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic/Trade Benefits:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIG delivers control of Jalalabad trade point</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Leverage on Pakistan in terms of increasing border</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
control
- Access to black market, either for influence, curtailment or exploitation
- Tightens porous border to undercut insurgent movements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Costs:</th>
<th>Cost, Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Political capital—needed to convince other Afghan officials to accept Hekmatyar</td>
<td>High Remaining constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Political positions—Hekmatyar will desire political control in his areas of influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distance from foreign powers to appease HIG</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legitimacy Costs:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Karzai ostensibly acquiescing to former warlords, already guilty of this</td>
<td>Low Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Negotiation with terrorist organization costs ostracizes U.S. and international community, which is already frustrated with Karzai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precedence Costs:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Karzai and Afghan politicians in general have history of negotiating</td>
<td>Low Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afghan Government official policy is currently to make peace with and reintegrate insurgents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Benefits:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Karzai maintains domestic political capital, though it is still slowly hemorrhaging</td>
<td>Medium Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Avoids concerted Pashtun voice in Parliament that challenges his authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintains international aid and support a little longer, though it is still slowly declining</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legitimacy Benefits:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Karzai’s domestic and international legitimacy are already tenuous; entering into negotiations already cost legitimacy</td>
<td>Low Decreasing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precedence Benefit:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Karzai has negotiated with nearly all other mujahidin leaders; Afghan Government strategy is to negotiate</td>
<td>Low Remaining Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence/Stability Costs:</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIG continues to contribute to a small percentage of insurgent attacks, unlikely to increase participation</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Political Costs:</strong></th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Possibly Increasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Karzai still lacks significant Pashtun support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some political capital already floated by entertaining negotiations, now a sunk cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- International community curtailing support, Karzai will need more domestic support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Economic/Trade Costs:</strong></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Possibly Increasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- International community decreasing aid, Karzai will need economic stability or windfall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Co-option of elites who have monopoly of force is necessity for state-building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Karzai’s EVCs, \(\textit{probability}(r)\), is an important variable, because a higher probability of success results in greater confidence of receiving the benefits and costs, which in theory makes the choice to attempt serious negotiations simpler: the question becomes only are the benefits higher than the costs, rather than having to factor in the unknown (i.e. will the reconciliation happen). Figure 2 expresses the summary of the values of \(\textit{probability}(r)\), and \(\textit{probability}(f)\), which are mathematically correlated—as one increases, the other must decrease. The probability of HIG reconciliation, from strictly Hekmatyar’s side, appears to be increasing, as described in the preceding section and summarized in Figure 2.

Arguably, the probability that reconciliation will actually occur is affected by more than just Hekmatyar’s willingness to negotiate or compromise. Many other factors, such
as Pakistan’s influence, the action of U.S. and ISAF forces, potential for a Taliban reconciliation, and resistance from other Afghan political actors, could influence that actual probability. However, these factors are largely assumed within the costs that Karzai has to consider: reconciliation will work if Karzai and Hekmatyar, the primary actors, can reach an agreement through a serious reconciliation attempt. External influence from other actors can be mitigated, but will require a cost, most likely political capital (covered above).

**FIGURE 2: Probability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Summary</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probability (r)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability reconciliation can be reached:</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Foreign troop removal is on the table, even if eventually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hekmatyar appears willing to bend on timetable for withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hekmatyar allegedly says HIG will not attack foreign troops on bases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIG’s 15-point plan is true to its historically Afghan-centric goal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hekmatyar’s historical decision-making is truly pragmatic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hekmatyar slowly losing opportunity to acquire legitimate political power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probability (f)</strong></td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability that reconciliation fails:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- As probability ((f) = 1 - \text{probability (r)}), the probability ((f)) decreases as probability ((r)) increases.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IX. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

By using the variable conclusions from Figures 1 and 2, Figure 3 in some measure summarizes the qualitative movements of key variables with the context of the EVC. The variables of both equations are color-coded to represent the potential movement of those variables (green = increasing, yellow = remaining constant, red = decreasing), which suggests the effect that they have on $EVC_b$ and $EVC_c$ and the relationship between them.

**FIGURE 3: EVC Comparison**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{probability} (r) \times \text{Benefit}_r &+ \text{probability} (f) \times \text{Benefit}_f = EVC_b \\
\text{probability} (r) \times \text{Cost}_r &+ \text{probability} (f) \times \text{Cost}_f = EVC_c
\end{align*}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increasing</th>
<th>Remaining consistent</th>
<th>Decreasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$EVC_b$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$EVC_c$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What becomes apparent from the above figure, even without assigning mathematical values, is that over time $EVC_b$ has the potential to outgrow $EVC_c$. $EVC_b$ has two positively-growing variables ($probability(r)$ and $Benefits(r)$) multiplied against one another, which ensures that the separation between $EVC_b$ and $EVC_c$ will accelerate
over time, given basic consistency in the other variables. Practically, this suggests that Karzai should make a serious attempt at reconciliation because he is more likely to “win” than to lose when the benefits and costs across both outcomes \((r \text{ and } f)\) are aggregately considered.

\(EVC_b\) will continue to improve in relation to \(EVC_c\) because \(Benefit_r\) is already high when the totality of benefits that HIG can provide is actually examined, and will continue to grow higher as international forces withdraw. Karzai has relied on international support to keep control of the country, fund security endeavors and development, and politically back him. As international support begins to wane, Karzai will have to look elsewhere for stability and political and economic benefits to consolidate his domestic control: \(Benefit_r\) is capable of fulfilling many of those needs and thus its value to Karzai will continue to increase.

\(Cost_r\) is potentially a very significant variable because at present, though it might be high in terms of political capital, it is decreasing in terms of legitimacy and precedence costs, which means that over time, \(Cost_r\) will probably decrease, as Karzai continues to lose international and domestic favor. Movement of this variable in the negative direction is qualitatively equivalent to the “nothing to lose” mindset. As the cost of reconciliation seems smaller and smaller (while the benefit and likelihood of success increase), \(EVC_b\) will exceedingly outweigh \(EVC_c\), and a serious negotiation attempt likely becomes a clear choice. As with \(Benefits\), the perceived or actual international drawdown in Afghanistan will prompt movement in this variable.
Given that Karzai has already sacrificed some political capital to even entertain negotiations, the Benefit$_f$ that Karzai might have gained has lost some potency as a variable. Again, the international drawdown influences this variable: Karzai is already losing aid, support and political capital, and though failing in reconciliation might reserve some of those a bit longer, they are aggregately decreasing either way. As probability($f$) decreases, Benefit$_f$ is increasingly marginalized as a factor in the $EVC_b$ equation anyway.

Cost$_f$ is likely to increase over time, given that political capital has already been partially invested in entertaining negotiations. This suggests that Karzai may find himself in a time crunch to make decision about seriously pursuing reconciliation; if he waits too long, the cost of not reconciling will have already been assumed and if the probability that Hekmatyar reconciles decreases or Cost$_r$ jumps for some reason, then $EVC_c$ would change trajectory, making the attempt uneconomical despite the spent Cost$_f$. Moreover, Cost$_f$ is not a pure variable because it is not primarily controlled by the failure of reconciliation. Cost$_f$ is likely to rise over time for Karzai, regardless of HIG because the political and economic costs therein are caused by factors external to the reconciliation, such as international community decisions or domestic political strife.

Probability ($r$) is an exceptionally important variable in this equation. As long as the probability that Hekmatyar will reconcile continues to climb—which at present it appears to do—the second halves of both equations (probability($f$) x Benefits$_f$ and probability($r$) x Costs$_r$) become increasingly irrelevant. As probability($f$) approaches zero, Karzai’s game becomes simpler: $EVC_b$ approaches Benefits$_r$, and $EVC_c$ approaches
Costs, so the decision becomes whether the benefits outweigh the costs. The findings of this case study suggest that benefits, which are increasing, outweigh the costs, which are remaining consistent or decreasing.

Karzai’s risk aversion or risk acceptance is a variable that is not currently factored into the equations, but which will certainly play a definitive role in the final cost-benefit analysis. Karzai’s risk aversion basically determines how great the disparity between $EVC_b$ and $EVC_c$ must be in order for him to decide that serious negotiations are worth the possible losses. Over time and as international forces continue to draw down, Karzai’s risk aversion is likely to decrease as he attempts to find domestic means for maintaining his power. Co-opting a powerful regional ally like Hekmatyar is one method for accomplishing this and a political tactic that Karzai has previously used. At the same time, with the conclusions suggested above, the disparity between $EVC_b$ and $EVC_c$ seems likely to increase over time, which means Karzai’s risk aversion/acceptance may not have to change; benefits may soon clearly outweigh the costs anyway, but an increasing desperation from Karzai may hasten a serious attempt to reconcile.

A common factor in all of the variable movements and weights identified above—and which in turn heavily influences Karzai’s decision-making—is the impact of the removal of international forces and decline of international support. This permeation of international influence apparent in the variables above appears to put Karzai into a tradeoff spectrum: the decision to reconcile or not reconcile requires a sacrifice between a difficult-to-quantify amount of international support and consolidated domestic
support. Earlier in the insurgency, Karzai rightfully chose international support because the international community was fully behind him and had a great deal to offer. By drawing down forces, the international community is nudging Karzai along this spectrum and making the consolidation of domestic support more important to him.

Moreover, mounting international criticism of Karzai is hurting his political legitimacy at home anyway, despite the support benefits he acquires from international supporters. As criticism increases and international support decreases, Karzai will be losing political capital, and he might as well trade it for the stability, political and economic benefits that HIG offers. In considering that choice, Karzai faces another tradeoff on the domestic level: negotiation and reconciliation would mean trading public image for vote delivery and consolidation of political gains. Given the opinion many Afghans hold of Hekmatyar, Karzai’s public image would take another large hit, but the gain would be the support of a strong political party that provides a tangible vote delivery.

Conclusion

Mathematics aside, the decision to negotiate falls to Karzai, but analysis of the benefits and costs of negotiating with HIG tentatively suggest that Karzai has a lot to gain from negotiations, well beyond a mere decrease in number of insurgent fighters. Though the consideration to negotiate with an insurgent group is often framed in terms of decreasing violence—in which case HIG might not meet the threshold for negotiation—the case of the Afghan insurgency is different because of the multitude of
actors involved. HIG does not have a monopoly or a majority on the violence, but examining the breadth of benefits that HIG offers suggests a different conclusion about the advisability and gain from reconciliation. Within the contextual and historical understanding of Afghanistan and its politics, reconciliation seems to be the logical and perhaps necessary direction for Karzai. It appears that negotiation and reconciliation would be in the best interest of Karzai and that the benefits do outweigh the costs, increasingly so over time.

The goal of this paper is not to prescribe how negotiations should occur, but it tentatively concludes that seriously attempting reconciliation is the best choice for Karzai. The Afghan Government has the high ground vis-à-vis HIG and any strategy of reconciliation with HIG must be considered within the grand strategy of ending the insurgency while consolidating domestic support and maintaining international support where possible. Though the grand strategy for ending the insurgency may not hinge on an over-arching reconciliation agreement, this paper’s analysis confirms Semple’s observation that there is “potential for the reconciliation of particular commander networks,”\(^\text{141}\) and suggests that HIG is one such particular group.

\(^{141}\) Semple 3.
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