
Here is the link to all the newsletters archived in the OMNI web site.

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ For views and information not found in the mainstream media For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change. Here is the link to the Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

Instead of Defense Department, Say War Department
Instead of War on Terror, Say War to Dominate World
Instead of Taliban, Say Pashtun/Afghan Resistance to Occupation

Nos. 15, 16, 17 at end.

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2 Books on the Taliban by Antonio Giustozzi
   Decoding the Neo-Taliban (2009)
2 Books by Linschoten and Kuehn,
   Myth of Taliban/Al-Qaeda
   Poetry of the Taliban

*The Sky of Afghanistan, Child’s Dreams of Peace*

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[haw-info] Jobs-Not-Wars Campaign

haw-info-bounces@stopthewars.org on behalf of Marc Becker
[marc@yachana.org]  

To:

haw-info@stopthewars.org

Attachments:

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Send President Obama and Members of Congress a Strong Clear Message

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On Election Day, the American people made their voices heard. We rejected austerity schemes to reduce the deficit at the expense of working people, the middle class, the poor, children, and the elderly.

We want those who caused the economic crisis to pay to fix it. We rejected more tax breaks for large corporations and the wealthy. We want the super-rich and giant corporations to pay their share and government to stop coddling the greedy and neglecting the needy!

One of the best ways to reduce the deficit is to put people back to work. It’s time to invest in our people and our communities to create stable jobs at living wages, rehabilitate our nation’s infrastructure, repair the social safety net, restore government services and programs that serve the needs of people and communities, and develop a sustainable planet for future generations.

We want the war in Afghanistan to end now and for substantial cuts to be made to runaway Pentagon spending.

We want an economy, government and nation that work for ALL of us, not just some of us.

Keep the pressure on – remind Congress and President Obama that they work for the American people.


AND SEND THIS MESSAGE TO WASHINGTON!

We will present the Jobs-Not-Wars Petition to Congress & President Obama around the time of the Inauguration.

Forward this email to everyone you know – ask them to join you in signing the Jobs-Not-Wars Petition. Post it to your Facebook page and Tweet about it to your social network. There is strength in numbers. Don’t let our elected officials forget who they represent.

We can, and must do better for all Americans.

Thank you.

The Jobs-Not-Wars Campaign
Participating Organization:
Historians Against the War

IT’S TIME FOR PEACE AND JOBS!

The full text of the petition:

Mr. President and Members of Congress:

During this period, when people of faith and secular people alike reflect on the year that is ending and look forward with hope to the year ahead, it is a time to put aside differences and enmities to celebrate our universal values.

It is in this spirit of humanity and hope that we call upon you to redirect your efforts and federal resources to:

• End the war in Afghanistan now, bring all our troops home, and care for and support them upon their return;

• Create good jobs at living wages: invest in our communities and our people to grow the economy and put people back to work;

• In communities devastated by hurricane Sandy, assure that reconstruction is
performed in the public interest with full transparency under the direction and control of local, state and federal governments and accountable to the people.

- Train and hire veterans, the unemployed, and youth from historically disadvantaged communities to perform cleanup and reconstruction as a part of a broader national jobs program to rehabilitate inner cities, build affordable energy-efficient homes, repair/replace public infrastructure, and develop sustainable manufacturing for the 21st Century.

- Redirect our nation’s resources from war and uncontrolled Pentagon spending to fund social programs and public services, protect and improve Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, repair the social safety net, meet the challenge of climate change, and reduce poverty and inequality.

- Rely foremost on determined diplomacy and patient negotiation, rather than military power to respond to international disputes, differences or conflicts;

- Require those at the top of the income ladder, giant corporations and financial speculators to pay their fair share of taxes.

We ask that you summon the personal courage and moral fortitude to transcend partisan differences to serve the common good and public interest.

**Give peace a chance!**

**We need jobs not cuts! Work not Wars!**

**SIGN THE PETITION:** [http://](http://)

Tough Questions for John Kerry

*The Editors*

*January 2, 2013*  

*This article appeared in the January 21, 2013 edition of The Nation.*
Barack Obama’s nomination of John Kerry as secretary of state gives the Senate a critical opportunity to probe the administration’s foreign policy priorities—and many of those policies demand inquiry. The Republicans—who, like Senator John McCain, sniped disgracefully at UN Ambassador Susan Rice—have expressed few coherent reservations about our current course. So it will be incumbent upon Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to lead a responsible review.

Here are a few questions senators should ask the nominee.

§ *Presidential war making:* Are there any limits to the president’s war powers in the so-called “war on terror”? Contrary to expectations, Obama has broadened the Bush administration’s view that the congressional resolution authorizing the pursuit of Al Qaeda after 9/11 gives the president the right to attack any suspect group in any country as long as there are terrorists—in other words, forever. That prerogative is said to include the power to kill anyone (including US citizens) that the president decides poses a terrorist threat to the United States. How would you reconcile this position with the Constitution? How would you suggest that Congress enforce accountability on a president who targets and kills innocent people by mistake?

§ *Climate change:* Do you consider global warming a clear and present danger to our national security? In his first inaugural address, Obama raised the hope that we would begin to “roll back the specter of a warming planet.” Yet the United States was essentially AWOL in the recent climate negotiations in Doha, and thus a key contributor to their failure. Do you
§ Global economic recovery: Does mass unemployment in the United States, recession in Europe and Japan, and continued trade conflict with China require new international policies from the United States? Washington is pivoting toward more austerity at home, while economic growth here and abroad is faltering. We are headed for a synchronized global recession with new trade and currency wars, when what we need is a synchronized global recovery. What steps would you recommend to revive sustainable economic growth as a part of our global policy?

§ Militarization of US foreign policy: How can the State Department reclaim from the military its proper role as the lead agency of US policy abroad? The militarization of foreign policy has continued unabated in the first Obama term. Regional military commanders act in effect as proconsuls who have far greater weight than ambassadors in regions around the world. Many countries know the United States only for its military bases, its military trainers or its drone attacks. Our foreign assistance budget is a global disgrace, while military spending is higher than it was at the height of the Cold War under Ronald Reagan. What commitments have been made, if any, by the president in terms of correcting this wrongheaded imbalance?

§ Afghanistan: Do you support the continued waste of lives and billions of dollars on this war? And what will you do diplomatically to ensure that our exit is not delayed beyond 2014? Reports are circulating that the administration plans to keep a military force of unknown size in Afghanistan past 2014, and has pledged another decade of financial support for a regime that at least one US official has called a “vertically integrated criminal enterprise.” What limits would you urge for this misguided commitment?

§ The Middle East: What should US priorities be in this region, as the promise of the Arab Spring looks increasingly like the Arab Fall, with a proliferation of regional militias in Libya, increasing tensions in Egypt and growing sectarianism among Syria’s rebels? How can we claim to support democracy in the Arab world when the monarchy in Bahrain—our ally and host of the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet—imprisons and kills peaceful protesters? Given the shredding of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, do you believe our “Israel right or wrong” policy adequately protects America’s security interests? Is it more, or less, important now for the United States to push for a fair settlement of the conflict by establishing a viable Palestinian state?

§ Iran and nuclear peril: Do you believe our current strategy of ratcheting up sanctions while
retaining the option of using military force prevents Iran from joining Israel, Pakistan and India in developing a nuclear weapon? Is it possible that these threats are actually accelerating Iran's nuclear efforts and helping to create support in the country for a nuclear weapons capability? Iran has often said it does not want nuclear weapons, especially if countries like Israel give up theirs. Would you be willing to test Iran's interest in what is known as a “grand bargain” (in which, among other things, Washington would renounce regime change and accept normalized relations in exchange for Tehran's agreeing to intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency)?

This is only a small sample of the questions that any nominee should answer. We are facing monumental foreign policy challenges. It’s time for the Senate to get beyond partisan cheap shots and exercise its constitutional responsibility to ask John Kerry how the administration plans to address them.

*Back in 2001, David Corn wrote an incisive piece on* "Defining John Kerry."

**The Editors**

January 2, 2013  |  *This article appeared in the January 21, 2013 edition of The Nation.*

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### 3 ARTICLES ON MORE AFGHAN REALITIES AND WHY WE SHOULD LEAVE

**Afghan Villagers Tell of 'Massacre' (Sgt. Bales)**

**Associated Press, Nov. 11, 2012, RSN**

Excerpt: "Stories of the massacre came, one by one, over a live video link from Afghanistan to a military courtroom outside Seattle: torched bodies, a son finding his wounded father, boys cowering behind a curtain while others screamed: "We are children! We are children!"

As the Afghans recounted the horror that left 16 dead in the darkness early on 11 Marc, the US soldier accused of carrying out the rampage sat quietly in the courtroom. At one point, Staff Sgt Robert Bales moved closer to a large monitor showing the testimony. At other times, he watched as it played on a laptop screen in front of him. Either way, he gave no discernible reaction.

Speaking through an interpreter, one Afghan closed his remarks with the words: "My request is to get justice."
KILLING AFGHAN CHILDREN: 2 Articles

**Newtown, Afghanistan**, Robert Dreyfuss


Twenty children killed in Newtown, Connecticut, and a huge outpouring in response: wall-to-wall media coverage, an avalanche of flowers and stuffed animals, a river of ink in editorials, nationwide flags at half mast, memorial funds and much, much more.


Are Afghan children any less precious? Or does it make a difference that the killers were wearing American uniforms, piloting US helicopters and fighters, and operating drones?

There was the March 2012 case, of course, of the army sergeant who *slaughtered children*:

Stalking from home to home, a United States Army sergeant methodically killed at least 16 civilians, 9 of them children, in a rural stretch of southern Afghanistan early on Sunday, igniting fears of a new wave of anti-American hostility, Afghan and American officials said. … The man gathered 11 bodies, including those of 4 girls younger than 6, and set fire to them, villagers said.

Or this, from *October 2012*:

The international military coalition in Afghanistan has confirmed that three children were killed in a coalition artillery strike in Helmand Province, expressing regret over the deaths and calling them “tragic.”… Family members…said the children had been sent to gather dung, which farmers in the area dry and use for fuel.

Or this one, also from *October 2012*:

A firefight that raged for an hour between international forces and the Taliban in eastern Afghanistan killed four children who were in the area grazing their sheep and goats, local
officials said. The international forces apologized for the episode Tuesday and said an investigation was under way.

Or this one, from February 2012:

The Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, accused NATO on Thursday of killing eight children in a coalition airstrike in eastern Afghanistan.

And from July 2012:

The fatal airstrike on Wednesday in Khost Province, which Afghan officials say killed eight children and two women, ignited outrage in neighboring villages, and it could deepen tensions between the Afghan government and Western authorities here.

Or this catastrophic one, from 2008, in which 60 children died (two, three, many Newtows):

A United Nations human rights team has found “convincing evidence” that 90 civilians—among them 60 children—were killed in airstrikes on a village in western Afghanistan on Friday, according to the United Nations mission in Kabul.

There are hundreds of these cases, dating back to the earliest days of the war in Afghanistan, in 2001-2002.

Don’t expect any wall-to-wall coverage by CNN anytime soon.

Check out Greg Mitchell on "Why the Media Must Focus on Other Kids Killed by Guns."

US Military Says Killing Afghan Children Is Fair Game

Thu Dec 6, 2012 7:27 am (PST)   Posted by: "Bill Warrick" jedi.knight8
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US Military Says Killing Afghan Children Is Fair Game

John Glaser, December 04, 2012

In October, the US launched an airstrike in Afghanistan that killed three children – ages 8, 10, and 12 – while they were gathering firewood (or by some accounts, dung to burn as fuel). NATO issued its usual dismissive statement, admitting it may have “accidentally killed three innocent Afghan civilians.”

But now, according to the Military Times, the US military includes children on their list of who they’re allowed to murder with impunity.

…a Marine official here raised questions about whether the children were “innocent.” Before calling for the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System mission in mid-October, Marines observed the children digging a hole in a dirt road in Nawa district, the official said, and the Taliban may have recruited the children to carry out the mission.

So digging holes in Afghanistan is now grounds for getting bombed? The children’s relatives and local tribal elders had confirmed at the time that they were not Taliban recruits and were not planting any roadside bombs.

That’s apparently not enough for the US military to simply admit that killing innocent children is wrong. Instead, they invent Orwellian rationales for why these poor children were worthy enemy combatants.

“It kind of opens our aperture,” said Army Lt. Col. Marion “Ced” Carrington, whose unit, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was assisting the Afghan police. “In addition to looking for military-age males, it’s looking for children with potential hostile intent.”

There you have it. The US military is now looking for “military-age males” and “children” to kill in Afghanistan.
It was a Monday in November, the second day of Eid al-Adha 2011, and the streets of Kabul were free of their usual knot of honking vehicles. In Taimani, a residential district of tree-lined avenues and walled courtyards in the center of town, groups of young boys ran down the road in sandals, calling happily to one another. Older men in pale, starched robes stood in pairs, murmuring salutations as friends passed by. A boy on a bicycle carried a stack of flatbread wrapped in a black-and-white scarf; the aroma of the baker’s oven lingered in the air after he rode by.

“This area is interesting because it was never poor,” Jolyon Leslie said to me as we left one of Taimani’s main roads and headed toward a hill called Kolola Pushta. Leslie, a slight, ruddy-cheeked South African architect with a widow’s peak of closely trimmed white hair, first came to Afghanistan in 1989 with the United Nations; he has been working here ever since. “I’m absolutely staggered how things have changed,” he said, gesturing at the half-built homes around us. “Almost every compound is having, or has had, construction done.”

[Dick: This optimistic opening is steadily undermined in the article, the theme of which is the economic collapse of Kabul as soon as the foreign aid is withdrawn.]

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Matthieu Aikins is a freelance writer based in Afghanistan. His article “Disappearing Ink” appeared in the January 2011 issue of Harper’s Magazine.

More from Matthieu Aikins:

Governor Ahmed Wali Karzai
Showdown City

ARTICLE — From the January 2011 issue

Disappearing ink

Afghanistan’s sham democracy

TALIBAN REALITIES, LEAVE AFGHANISTAN BUT RESCUE THE VICTIMS

By Dick Bennett

The warmongers in the Bush Administration and the Congress knew little about past or present Afghanistan, the Pashtun, the Taliban, the relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and everything else essential to justifying the invasion and succeeding in the occupation. Now after their initial defeat, the Taliban have returned, in some places to complete control, in others gradually expanding their power.

I have seen the Taliban compared to Nazis for their ferocity and brutality, but the Nazies were invaders and occupiers, while the Taliban are the victims of invasion and occupation, and subsequently resisters for their country and way of life. Thanks to the many observers and researchers of the New Taliban post-9-11, we can assess the nature of the enemy. We now know the alleged alliance of Taliban and al-Qaeda was only the phantom of minds deranged for vengeance. And we now know the Taliban, fierce in battle and extremely narrow and severe when in power, are also diverse and complex members of the venerable Pashtun culture.

The Taliban are particularly the extreme fundamentalist faction of the ancient Pashtun ethnic group who inhabit most of Afghanistan and Western Pakistan. But included among the Taliban are all those who support fundamentalism in various, decreasing intensities, including all those who dislike the leaders but who acquiesce to them, when their only other choices have been the brutal warlords conquered by the Taliban and the new super warlord, the USA. Furthermore, within the Taliban itself diversity exists. The Taliban today continue the resistance to foreign invasion and occupation going back to the Aghan resistance to the British empire and then to the Soviet empire—and eventual victory over both—and now against the US empire. But the Taliban are not warriors only. They are also the many relationships common to other countries. And as one book shows, they write poetry about those experiences.

As my newsletters show, every rationalization of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan has been exposed as false. The invasion and occupation are grossly lethal, destructive, illegal, immoral, unnecessary, and not only failed in its fabricated missions but creating enemies against the US worldwide. Our armed forces must leave at once. But after warring on the country for a dozen years, killing thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands, we must not abandon the living victims whose lives we have so endangered and disrupted, especially the women and children who now need rescue. Rather our leaders must study the realities of the (largely) Pashtun Taliban in order to help design a society beneficial to all. The New Taliban demands a new US approach to rebuilding the destroyed country and to creating respect for human rights there. These goals won’t be accomplished by tanks, bombs, drones, or special ops night raids. Our leaders with its passive public spent hundreds of billions of dollars on the Violent Way. Now let us spend that much money for suffering people using the
Peaceful Way. My future newsletters on Afghanistan will focus on that urgent need to end US/NATO violence and to convert the money for war to money for peace, to the extent that I can find useful writings and films. Send me what you find. Dick

2 BOOKS ON TALIBAN BY ANTONIO GIUSTOZZI


Since the Allied invasion of Afghanistan in 2002, the Bush administration has celebrated the imminent demise of the Taliban, with claims of a "moral and psychological defeat" playing a prominent role in the presidential elections of 2004. Some commentators suggested that "reconstruction and development" had won over the Afghan population, despite widespread criticism of the meager distribution of aid and failed attempts at "nation building," not to mention the infamous corruption of Kabul's power-hoarding elites.

In March 2006, both Afghan and American officials continued to assert that "the Taliban are no longer able to fight large battles." Unfortunately that theory would soon collapse beneath the weight of a series of particularly ferocious clashes, causing the mood in the American media to turn from one of optimism to one of defeatism and impending catastrophe. Suddenly faced with a very sophisticated and creative form of guerilla warfare, the West found itself at a loss to fight an insurgency that bore little resemblance to its former enemy.

In the first book ever to be published on the neo-Taliban, Antonio Giustozzi provocatively argues that the appearance of the neo-Taliban should in no way have been a surprise. Beginning in 2003, a growing body of evidence began to surface that cast doubt on the official interpretation of the
conflict. With the West cutting corners to maintain peace within the country, which included tolerating Afghanistan's burgeoning opium trade, the Taliban was able to regroup and grow in strength, weapons, and recruits. Giustozzi's book poses a bold challenge to contemporary accounts of the invasion and its aftermath and is an important investigation into the rise and dangerous future of the neo-Taliban.

About the Author

Antonio Giustozzi has spent more than a decade visiting, researching, and writing on Afghanistan. He is based at the Crisis States Research Centre at the London School of Economics, where he focuses on the political aspects of insurgency and warlordism. His most recent book is *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-92*.


Antonio Giustozzi gathers a renowned cast of journalists, experts, and academics to answer the most pressing questions regarding the Taliban today. Each contributor possesses extensive knowledge of the insurgency's latest developments, decoding its structure and organization as it operates within specific regions and provinces. They analyze the new Taliban as it expands: from the new south, where they hold sway; to the southeast, where they struggle to penetrate; from the west and the northeast, now in the initial stages of infiltration; to the provinces surrounding Kabul, which have been unexpectedly and quickly occupied.

Along with these advances, contributors review current theories for defeating the strategies and propaganda of the new Taliban. Issues covered include the strengths and weaknesses of the organization; the nature of its networks and whether they are based on traditional ties of kin and ethnicity or more institutional chains of command; its success at maintaining unity, even when faced with attrition in the field; the consequences of unruly leaders and conflicts over rule; the group's exploitation of the opium trade; the factors that have contributed to a
resurgence in Kabul; and the extent to which Taliban leaders have imposed strategy among
the rank and file, despite immense geographical challenges and poorly functioning
communication systems.

Guided by the wisdom and expertise of a celebrated, bestselling author, Decoding the New
Talibanis a critical tool for comprehending this dangerously chimerical, cleverly resurgent
threat.

About the Author

Antonio Giustozzi has spent more than a decade visiting, researching, and writing on Afghanistan. He is a research fellow at
the Crisis States Research Center, London School of Economics, and the author of Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in
Afghanistan and the bestselling Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban in Afghanistan.

2 BOOKS BY LINSCHOTEN AND KUEHN

1) Taliban complex, and not Al Qaeda
2) Taliban poetry reveals great diversity

An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan
BY Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn

Jul 2012,

Description
To this day, the belief is widespread that the Taliban and al-Qaeda are synonymous, that their ideology
and objectives are closely intertwined, and that they have made common cause against the
West for decades.

In An Enemy We Created, Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn debunk this myth
and reveal the much more complex reality that lies beneath it. Drawing upon their
unprecedented fieldwork in Afghanistan, as well as their Arabic, Dari, and Pashtu skills, the
authors show that the West's present entanglement in Afghanistan is predicated on the false
assumption that defeating the Taliban will forestall further terrorist attacks worldwide.
While immersing themselves in Kandahar society, the authors interviewed Taliban decision-makers, field commanders, and ordinary fighters, thoroughly exploring the complexity of the relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda and the individuals who established both groups. They show that from the mid-1990s onward, the Taliban and al-Qaeda diverged far more often than they converged. They also argue that this split creates an opportunity to engage the Taliban on two fundamental issues: renouncing al-Qaeda and guaranteeing that Afghanistan will not be a sanctuary for international terrorists. Yet the insurgency is changing, and it could soon be too late to find a political solution. The authors contend that certain aspects of the campaign in Afghanistan, especially night raids, the killings of innocent civilians, and attempts to fragment and decapitate the Taliban are having the unintended consequence of energizing the resistance, creating more opportunities for al-Qaeda, and helping it to attain its objectives.

The first book to fully untangle the myths from the realities in the relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda, *An Enemy We Created* is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand what's really happening in Afghanistan.

**Features**

- Without question, this is the most authoritative and deeply researched account of the Taliban and its relationship with Al-Qaeda available
- The book has already received prominent and positive coverage in the *New Yorker*
- Will be essential reading for anyone with a serious interest in the nature of enemy America is fighting in what will soon be the longest war in its history.

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Taliban Poetry: Yes, They Write Poems, and They're Surprisingly Diverse

*inShare* 15 JUN 11 2012, 7:31 AM ET 9

*The Afghan militant group's collected literary works provide a rare window into how they see the world.*
Poetry of the Taliban is an English language anthology of poems written by the Afghan Taliban that give an insight into the lyrical souls of the members of this militant group. Kandahar-based researchers and writers Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn have translated and edited more than 250 poems, sourced mainly from contemporary media -- specifically the Taliban's official website. The collection also includes samples of older poetic works that date back to the 1980s and 1990s.

Rather than presenting a cohesive ideology, the poems represent a melange of voices. Going beyond political and militant propaganda, these poems reflect a diversity of emotions such as "unrequited love, bloody vengeance and the thrill of battle, religion and nationalism, even a desire for non-violence," that are expressed through "images of wine, powerful women, song, legend and pastoral beauty." This anthology presents a complex image of the Taliban, one that complicates our sometimes monolithic image of the Taliban. "It was refreshing to be able to think about Afghanistan outside the usual tropes and patterns," say the editors.

Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn have lived and worked in Afghanistan since 2006. Together they founded AfghanWire, a network for researching and monitoring Afghan media. Poetry of the Taliban is on sale in the United Kingdom and will be available in the United States on July 17, 2012.

Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn discussed their book over email from Kandahar.
Afghanistan has a rich tradition of oral storytelling, poetry and music. Why do you think this aspect of Afghan culture has generally been overlooked by the West when trying to understand the Taliban?

A certain narrative of the war in Afghanistan, or of the country itself, has existed for a few years now. The groundwork was laid long before the events of September 11, 2001, in part by journalists who travelled in the country during the 1980s. But the main themes became very clear from 2001 onwards. As part of this, the focus has been on the foreign involvement in Afghanistan, rather than on Afghanistan itself (i.e. on its own terms). Literature, or the cultural heritage of the country, has always been a hard sell to editors back in the United States or in Europe, especially when these more marginal stories have to compete with events that strike closer to home such as dead or injured servicemen and women. That said, there have been people working in this field for many years, regardless of whether they've been covered in the media or not. Their efforts are available online to browse through, from Afghan women’s short story writing and poetry to paintings and music.

What kind of experiences do these poems speak about?

As you might expect from a collection of over 250 songs, there is a diversity of themes covered. We split it into five individual sections, covering love and pastoral themes, religion, politics and social discontent, the battlefield, and the costs of war in human terms. You will probably find all the things you might expect to be here, but sometimes not in the form you had imagined. In "Hunter," for example, the poet imagines that he is a deer in a forest, and thinks of the relationship between the foreign soldiers trying to kill him as if they are hunters trying to bag a deer. Or there is a poem written by a woman chastising the men around her for failing to fight properly.

What were your criteria for selecting the poems in the anthology? Were you trying to encompass a certain range of subject matter and styles, as well as a historical span?

We had two separate selection methods for this volume. The poems written pre-2001 were chosen to represent the thematic and authorial diversity of the period. The poems written post-2001 are an almost complete collection of everything published on the Taliban’s website between December 2006 and February 2009. In this respect, it’s a representative sample for that time period. We felt it was important to include the earlier (pre-2001) examples to show some of the context out of which this emerged; we could have gone back even further to examples of talibs writing poems in the 19th century, of course.

The anthology has already been criticized for promoting sympathy for the Taliban. How do you respond to such commentary?

We understand where these criticisms are coming from. Troops from 50 different countries are currently fighting in Afghanistan, and each week brings news of more injured and dead. At the same time, though, we would make a distinction between sympathy and empathy. This collection was not complied to garner sympathy for the Taliban. What it does give the reader is a new window on an amorphous group, possibly allowing one to empathize with the particular author of a poem, letting one see the world through their eyes, should one want to do so. For this collection, we felt these songs brought something new to the discussion, and added a perspective on where those who associate themselves with the movement are coming from. From our own experience, we knew how important and resonant these songs were for people living in Afghanistan, and we thought it would be useful to present these to a broader community of scholars, poets and the general public.

The average reader in the West probably regards the Taliban as being profoundly hostile to culture. How do we reconcile incidents like the destruction of the Buddha statues at Bamiyan with the outpouring of poetic sentiment documented in your book?
There is a difference between the formal pronouncements or edicts of the Taliban’s leadership and the fighters on the ground. That is as true for the Taliban as it is true for the British Army. In our introduction we also note the contradiction between the formal edicts issued by Mullah Mohammad Omar (banning most kinds of music) and his private consumption of those same songs that he had banned. This is to be expected. The Taliban are not a monolithic movement, with fixed and unchanging attitudes. In many ways, our difficulties understanding the movement say more about us than it does about the Taliban.

What implications, if any, does this anthology have for seeing an end to the war in Afghanistan?

This collection was not conceived or published with a political agenda. In fact, it was refreshing to be able to think about Afghanistan outside the usual tropes and patterns. If there is any wider point to be made, it is simply that this is not a conflict that has a military solution. The war will end when the political conflict is tackled, which possibly must begin by challenging and questioning our stereotypes about the Afghan Taliban as well as Afghanistan as a whole.

This article originally appeared at Asia Society, an Atlantic partner site.

1. **Poetry of the Taliban**
   www.poetryofthetaliban.com/


2. **Amazon.com: Poetry of the Taliban (Columbia/Hurst ...**
   www.amazon.com › ... › Literature & Fiction › Poetry › Middle Eastern
   $24.50 - In stock

   Afghanistan has a rich and ancient tradition of epic poetry celebrating resistance to foreign invasion and occupation. This extraordinary collection is remarkable ...

3. 'Poetry of the Taliban' elicits both anger, astonishment - Los Angeles ...
   articles.latimes.com/2012/jul/07/.../la-fg-taliban-poetry-20120708

   Jul 7, 2012 – KABUL, Afghanistan - War is an ageless poetic wellspring, yielding wrenching odes to the white heat of combat, the longing for lost loved ones, ...

4. **Taliban Poetry Is Not Very Beautiful - Global - The Atlantic Wire**
   www.theatlanticwire.com/global/2012/09/taliban-poetry.../57213/

   Sep 24, 2012 – In today's world tour of state media: The violent poetry of the Taliban is compiled in a book, Vietnam cracks down on "anti-state propaganda" ...

5. **Poetry of the Taliban - Christian Science Monitor**
   www.csmonitor.com/.../Poetry-of-the-Taliban-will-it-find-an-audienc...

   Jul 18, 2012 – Alex Strick van Linschoten, one of the editors of the US edition of 'Poetry of the
Taliban,' says many of the poems in the book deal with ...  

6. **Poetry of the Taliban** - review | Books | The Guardian
   [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) › Culture › Books › Poetry

7. **Taliban poetry: the gentle, flowery side of the story?** | World news ...
   [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) › News › World news › Taliban
   May 13, 2012 – A new collection of verse from the Afghan frontlines has caused much controversy, but it also provides a valuable glimpse of an otherwise ... 

8. **Anna Badkhen Reviews "Poetry Of The Taliban"** | The New Republic
   by Rebecca West - More by Rebecca West
   Nov 13, 2012 –

9. **Catching Up: Poetry of the Taliban at A Different Place**
   Dec 22, 2012 – The second book that came out this year — I co-edited it together with Felix Kuehn — was Poetry of the Taliban. Some people weren't entirely ...

10. **Taliban Poetry: Yes, They Write Poems, and They're Surprisingly ...**
    [www.theatlantic.com/.../archive/.../taliban-poetry...poems.../258304/](http://www.theatlantic.com/.../archive/.../taliban-poetry...poems.../258304/)
    Jun 11, 2012 – The Afghan militant group's collected literary works provide a rare window into how they see the world.
THE SKY OF AFGHANISTAN

By Ana A. de Eulate (Author), Sonja Wimmer (Illustrator)

Age Range: 5 - 7

A young girl dreams of the day peace will come to contemporary Afghanistan, the war-torn country she loves.

THE SKY OF AFGHANISTAN (reviewed on September 15, 2012)

A young girl dreams of the day peace will come to contemporary Afghanistan, the war-torn country she loves.

Letting her imagination soar, a little girl looks to the sky and visualizes flying the “bright kite of peace” across Afghanistan into “people’s houses, their homes, their families, their hearts.” She sees her dream in children’s smiles and eyes, “a wonderful dream in which we all hold hands” and the “sound of war has truly gone forever.” She envisions a future filled with hope, opportunity and harmony. Speaking idealistically in the present tense, the little girl’s voice rings with compelling optimism, and her verbal images of the sky, kites, soaring and flying are visually reinforced in elegant, wistful illustrations that compositionally sweep the eye diagonally upward across the page from left to right. Somber, gray pencil drawings and tan backgrounds reflect the current bleak Afghan reality, while blue headscarves and red kites provide hopeful accents. Powerful images of dancing kites, ascending doves, women in burqas, a child playing with toys made from trash and flowers sprouting from tanks juxtapose the real and the aspirational. While topically relevant, the absence of historical, political or cultural context for the current Afghan crisis may leave young readers somewhat clueless.
Ardent advocacy for Afghan peace. *(Picture book. 5-7)*

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