



# Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion

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## Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion From Oxford University Press

The longest war the United States has ever fought is the ongoing war in Afghanistan. But when we speak of "Afghanistan," we really mean a conflict that straddles the border with Pakistan--and the reality of Islamic militancy on that border is enormously complicated.

In *Talibanistan*, an unparalleled group of experts offer a nuanced understanding of this critical region. Edited by Peter Bergen, author of the bestselling books *The Longest War* and *The Osama Bin Laden I Know*, and Katherine Tiedemann, these essays examine in detail the embattled territory from Kandahar in Afghanistan to Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas. They pull apart the distinctions between the Taliban and al Qaeda--and the fractures within each movement; assess the effectiveness of American and Pakistani counterinsurgency campaigns; and explore the pipeline of militants into and out of the war zone. Throughout, these scrupulously researched studies challenge convenient orthodoxies. Counterterrorism expert Brian Fishman criticizes the customary distinction between an Afghan and Pakistani Taliban as being too neat to describe their fragmented reality. Hassan Abbas paints a subtle portrait of the political and religious forces shaping the insurgency in the Northwest Frontier Province, uncovering poor governance, economic distress, and resentment of foreign troops in nearby Afghanistan. And Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann try to identify the real numbers of drone strikes and victims, both militants and civilians, while disputing claims for their strategic effectiveness.

These and other essays provide profound new insight into this troubled region. They are required reading for anyone seeking a fresh understanding of a central strategic challenge facing the United States today.

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### **Review**

"[Peter Bergen] has edited and introduces *Talibanistan*, a frequently brilliant collection of essays by different experts on the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including an analysis of the extent to which their past links with al-Qaeda represent an enduring threat to the West..." --*New York Review of Books*

"[Talibanistan] is written with analytic rigor, historical depth, and lucid prose. This is the one book to read on Afghanistan now." --Fareed Zakaria

"One of the most insightful and nuanced books available about the most dangerous neighborhood in the world, and one of the world's murkiest military-religious groups. This collection of essays by experts is a must-read for Af-Pak practitioners, analysts, and enthusiasts."--Omar Samad, United States Institute of Peace and former Afghan Ambassador to Canada and France

"When the Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan nearly two decades ago, they confounded outside analysts. The extremism of their ideology and actions-and their own claims of religious purity-masked the diversity and complexity of their movement. After the September 11 attacks, American and N.A.T.O. policymakers tried to ignore the Taliban, dismissing them as a defeated and unpopular force as they concentrated on Al Qaeda. Now it is evident that the Taliban are a resilient force that will shape politics and violence in Afghanistan and neighboring countries for years to come. *Talibanistan* is an essential, sophisticated, and highly readable guide, one that takes the complexity of its subject seriously but delivers deep, reliable analysis about an enduring foreign policy and security challenge."--Steve Coll, author of *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*

"This timely and superb array of richly detailed essays by both established scholars and emerging experts captures the essence of the conflict that rages in the unforgiving landscape that is the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region-a conflict now seeping into Pakistan proper."-- Shuja Nawaz, author of *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within*

"Ultimately, the book offers a glimpse into a little known but much discussed group, giving the reader an improved understanding of the complexities in this region. ... Recommended." --*CHOICE*

### **About the Author**

**Peter Bergen** is the director of the National Securities Studies Program at the New America Foundation, and is National Security Analyst at CNN. He is the author of *The Longest War* and *The Osama Bin Laden I Know*.

**Katherine Tiedemann**, co-editor, was a research fellow at the New America Foundation until mid-2011. She is the deputy editor of the AfPak Channel on ForeignPolicy.com, where she writes the AfPak Daily Brief, a daily synthesis of the news from and about Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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