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AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE PROCESS: EVOLUTION, IMPACT AND GAPS

WOMEN AND PUBLIC POLICY JOURNAL • VOLUME 3

MARIAM SAFI

نهاد پژوهش و توسعه



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ORGANIZATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH
& DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Journal

WOMEN AND PUBLIC POLICY

ANALYSIS | REVIEW | RECOMMENDATIONS

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Edited by

MARIAM SAFI

BISMELLAH ALIZADA

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**National Endowment
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Contents

Preface	I
Editor's Note	V
Political and Economic Inclusion: An Assessment of Women's Participation in the Afghan Peace Process By Farhat Popal	1
Afghan Peace Process: How to Improve the Chances for Success? By Shahgul Rezaie	13
Peace Talks with the Taliban: Role of International Community By Fawzia Fazli	25
Legitimacy, Peace Processes, and the Role of Civil Society By Zarghoona Aslami	40
Compromise, Consensus-building and Trust: Missing Ingredients in Afghanistan's Peace Negotiations By Marzia Meena	49
Transitional Justice: A Prerequisite for Sustainable Peace? By Nazi Karim	62
Insecurity in Afghanistan: A Destructive 'Regional Security Systems' Approach By Naheed Farid	70
The Afghan Government's Failures in Empowering Women in the Peace Process By Mona Hossaini	80
A Key Gap in the Afghan Peace-building Process: Absence of Neuroscientific Techniques and Human Psychology By Nahid Shahalimi	86

CASE STUDIES:

Colombia's Peace Process: Lessons for Afghanistan	93
By Najiba Madadi	
Northern Ireland's Peace Process: Lessons for Afghanistan	101
By Farida Ghanizada	
Book Review: Talking to Terrorists How to End Armed Conflicts	109
By Tahmina Rassoli	

مقدمه

خرسندم که این شماره ژورنال به یکی از مهمترین مسایل و اولویت‌های افغانستان یعنی صلح و چگونگی دستیابی به آن، اختصاص یافته است. نزدیک به چهل سال است که در افغانستان جنگ جریان دارد. جنگ تأثیرات منفی و زیانبارش را هم بر شئون زندگی فردی و هم بر نهادهای جمعی، اعم از سیاست، اجتماع، فرهنگ و اقتصاد جامعه ما تحمیل کرده و می‌نماید. بیرون شدن از این وضعیت و رسیدن به صلح پایدار، اگرچه یک ضرورت فوری و حیاتی است؛ اما کار ساده و آسان نیست.

ما به تلاش‌های نظری و عملی زیادی در ابعاد گوناگون نیازمندیم تا هم زیان‌های ناشی از جنگ را ترمیم نماییم و هم صلح را به‌عنوان یک ارزش انسانی که طی آن هم‌زیستی مسالمت‌آمیز برای جامعه ما میسر می‌گردد، برقرار سازیم. بنابراین، صلح صرفاً یک توافق سیاسی نیست؛ بلکه استقرار یک وضعیت است. وضعیتی که در آن، «فرد» و «اجتماع» در تمام ابعاد و شئون زندگی‌شان، در فضای آرام، سالم و عاری از جنگ و خشونت، به حیات خویش ادامه می‌دهند. لذا برقرار ساختن صلح به مفهوم عام آن، به تنهایی از عهده حکومت و یا یک نهاد مشخصی مانند شورای عالی صلح بر نمی‌آید. صلح چنانکه اشاره شد، به عنوان یک پروسه فراگیر و دارای وجوه مختلف فردی و اجتماعی، به مشارکت همه نهادها و افرادی نیازمند است که از آن نفع می‌برند.

از این جهت، تلاش‌های مسئولان و فعالان مؤسسه تحقیقات پالیسی و مطالعات توسعه‌ی که این شماره «ژورنال زنان و پالیسی عامه» را با تدوین مقالات مهم و خواندنی، به موضوع صلح اختصاص داده، قابل قدر است. روشن است که پروسه صلح همگام و همزمان با تلاش‌های عملی، به تلاش‌های فکری و تیوریک نیز نیازمند است؛ زیرا تا زمانی که جامعه ما درک درست و روشن از چیستی و چرایی صلح نداشته باشد، امکان‌پذیر نخواهد بود که از تحقق و استقرار این ارزش اطمینان پیدا کنیم. روی این لحاظ، شماره حاضر ژورنال برای کمک به تحقق همین هدف، تهیه، تدوین و ارائه شده است.

پروژه صلح افغانستان که از سال ۲۰۱۰ بدین سو روی دست گرفته شده، تا کنون به موفقیت‌های خوبی نایل گشته است. نهادها و ساختارهای کارآ و مؤثری در چارچوب شورای عالی صلح، در مرکز و ولایات کشور ایجاد شده است تا هم بتواند صلح میان دولت و مخالفان مسلح را منعقد سازد و هم از صلح به عنوان یک تعهد، به صورت دوامدار حفاظت نماید. علاوه بر این، پروژه صلح در حال حاضر از یک استراتژی جامع، جهت دهنده و راه‌گشا، بهره‌مند است؛ استراتژی که چشم‌انداز روشنی را نسبت به توافق صلح و فردای پس از آن، ترسیم کرده است.

بر اساس این استراتژی باید به تمام جوانب و پهلوهایی صلح توجه صورت گیرد تا همه نهادها و طرف‌ها، به ویژه اقشار آسیب‌پذیر جامعه مانند زنان و قربانیان جنگ، در این پروژه، شامل گردند. بر این اساس، یکی از دغدغه‌های مهم ما تأمین مشارکت مؤثر زنان در روند صلح بوده است. رهبری جدید شورای عالی صلح تلاش دارد که نه تنها فیصدی حضور زنان در تشکیلات و نهادهای مربوط به صلح افزایش داده شود؛ بلکه زنان به عنوان نیمی از پیکر اجتماع، در تصمیم‌گیری‌های عملیه صلح، در تمام مراحل، نیز نقش ایفا نمایند. جای مسرت است که ژورنال زنان و پالیسی عامه در شماره حاضر، با بازتاب دادن نظریات، دیدگاه‌ها و نوشته‌های شماری از بانوان نویسنده و اهل نظر، به روند مشارکت زنان در پروژه صلح و غنای آن‌ها اشاره کرده است. امیدوارم که با این تلاش‌ها، پروژه صلح به‌عنوان یک پروژه ملی و همه شمول، بیش از پیش تقویت گردد. شورای عالی صلح انتظار دارد که چنین همکاری‌ها، گسترش یافته و نهادها و کانون‌هایی که با فکر و اندیشه سر و کار دارند، در فرایند صلح سهم بگیرند.

محمد کریم خلیلی

رئیس شورای عالی صلح جمهوری اسلامی افغانستان و معاون پیشین رئیس جمهور جمهوری اسلامی

افغانستان (۲۰۰۹ الی ۲۰۱۴)

قوس ۱۳۹۶

PREFACE

It is a pleasure that this issue of the journal is dedicated to peace, and ways to achieve it—which are some of Afghanistan’s most important priorities. Afghanistan has been grappling with war for nearly 40 years. The war has affected aspects of individual life and social institutions, including politics, society, culture and economy of our country, and has the potential to continue to do so. However, although putting an end to this situation and achieving a durable peace is urgent, it is not an easy task.

To repair the harm inflicted on us by war and to build peace as a human value through peaceful coexistence, we need theoretical and practical efforts on a variety of fronts. Therefore, peace is not merely a political agreement. Rather, it is that of establishing an environment in which an “individual” and the “community” can lead a peaceful life without war and violence of any kind. Thus, building peace, in a general sense, is not possible only by a state or an institution like the High Peace Council (HPC). As noted earlier, as a broad and multi-faceted process, peace entails the participation and involvement of all individuals and institutions who are its beneficiaries.

To this end, the efforts made by Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS), which has dedicated the 2017 edition of its flagship Women and Public Policy Journal (WPPJ) with its well-written and rich articles on peace, is appreciable. It is obvious that in addition to practical efforts for peace, the process also requires efforts in the academic and theoretical fields because peace-building will not be ensured unless our society has a deep and clear understanding of peace and why we need it. This edition of the WPPJ journal is prepared to serve this purpose.

Since its launch in 2010, the Afghan Peace Process has made some great accomplishments. Effective and practical structures and institutions

have been established under the framework of the HPC at the center and the provinces to facilitate peace between the government and its armed opposition as well as to safeguard peace as a commitment in a sustainable manner. Moreover, the peace process has a comprehensive strategy to guide it. This strategy clearly defines the vision for a peace agreement and its future.

This strategy requires that all aspects of peace be considered so that all institutions and parties, particularly vulnerable groups like women and victims of war, are included in the process. Therefore, ensuring effective participation of women in the process has been one of our major concerns. The HPC's new leadership tries not only to increase women's participation in the relevant institutions and structures, but also to ensure that women, who constitute half of the Afghan society, play a role in peace-related decision-making at all levels and phases.

It is a pleasure that this edition of the WPPJ reflects views, analyses and recommendations from several female authors and thinkers, on women's participation in the peace process and has helped to enrich the process. I hope such efforts can further strengthen the peace process as an inclusive and national process.

The HPC wishes for such efforts to be expanded and that organizations involved in research and producing thoughts participate in the peace process.

Mohammad Karim Khalili

Chairman, High Peace Council, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and former Vice President,
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan [2009–2014]

November 2017

EDITOR'S NOTE

In 2017, the unprecedented rise in insurgent related attacks, civilian casualties, and socio-economic deprivation consolidated the uncertainty that Afghans started sensing in 2014. At the June 2017 Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation, Afghanistan's incumbent National Unity Government (NUG) led by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah reaffirmed once again an "unambiguous" interest in achieving 'durable peace'. Ghani articulated that security, justice, jobs and democracy would be the foundations for such peace¹ and emphasized, that "since peace has to be a national discussion, we [the NUG] will hold a national consultation to develop a joint peace agenda that is representative of the Afghan nation and not the property of any one group."² However, till date neither his predecessor nor the NUG have made good on this promise, leaving the Afghan people wondering as to who, when, and what we are negotiating and ultimately at what cost such durable peace will be achieved.

Reconciliation attempts with the Taliban had taken place as early as in 2002. Many believe these attempts could have yielded positive results but the lack of international support, particularly that of the US, weakened the then Afghan President Hamid Karzai's approaches leading to *ad hoc* and failed processes. It was only much later when tired and skeptical of the possibilities of withdrawing on the basis of a military victory that the international community began changing its stance on peace talks as a means to end the conflict and justify its withdrawal.

1. Ghani, Ashraf. "President Ghani's Remarks At The Kabul Process Conference," June 06, 2017. <https://president.gov.af/en/SOKP>.

2. Ibid

At the 2010 London Conference, the international community endorsed former Afghan President Hamid Karzai's 'Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration' framework. Karzai's peace plan offered Taliban foot-soldiers money and jobs in exchange for laying down arms and reintegrating into society while the top-tier of the Taliban would be encouraged to negotiate with officials and develop a peace framework to ultimately end the conflict. However, Karzai pursued the peace process as a personal agenda that was to be the prerogative of his own and those of his closest aides', a mindset influenced by the growing distrust and paranoia that had set in him and the US during his last administration.

Karzai passed an Amnesty Bill in 2007, which entered the Official Gazette on 2 December 2008, ending any hope for transitional justice. Furthermore, he created a National Consultative Peace Jirga comprised of 1600 hand-selected participants by a planning committee headed by his most trusted cabinet members who endorsed a peace framework riddled with contradictions. He oversaw the development of the High Peace Council (HPC) - intended to be an independent body funded by the state - which had the mandate to oversee the 'Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme' (APRP), a program Karzai held executive power over.^{3 4} Ultimately, by the time Karzai left office in 2014, the peace process had little to show for its success. The Taliban refused to speak with the Afghan government, and increased its attacks on the Afghan people; meddling by international and regional actors led to the duplicity of efforts; and with no roadmap, Karzai's ever-changing tone towards reconciliation led to further ambiguity and confusion.

Four years after the NUG took over the peace and reconciliation process - and eight years after the previous government launched the Kabul still has nothing to show for their efforts, leaving the Afghan

3. Sari Kouvo. "After two years in legal limbo: A first glance at the approved 'Amnesty Law,'" 22 February 2010, Afghanistan Analyst Network.

<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/after-two-years-in-legal-limbo-a-first-glance-at-the-approved-amnesty-law/>

4. Safi, Mariam; Etemadi, L. Homayra; Farid, Naheed; Nasiri, Lailuma; Imtiaz, Sameena; Malik, Salma; Marri, Shazia; Roghani, T., Mehr. "Women, Peace and Security: Afghanistan-Pakistan Women's Policy Brief," January 2017, Diplomatic Courier.

<https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/women-peace-security-afghanistan-pakistan-womens-policy-brief/>

population disillusioned. The absence of a comprehensive peace plan with well-defined objectives, clear strategy, identified targets, genuine participation of regional actors, and most importantly, local grassroots level participation, have led to the erosion of the legitimacy and credibility of peace efforts. There is no doubt that the locals, the Afghan government, its international partners, the Taliban and even Afghanistan's hostile neighbor, Pakistan, wants peace in Afghanistan. However, not only does "peace" hold different meanings for each of these stakeholders, the way they define peace too is at times contradictory to that of each other. As a result, local feel increasingly squeezed between these various actors and view the process as elite-centric, top-down and exclusive.

Thus, Afghans have started to believe they are nothing more than pawns in yet another great game, the cost for which they pay in blood and livelihoods. Amidst the growing negative attitude towards the peace process, the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS) decide to explore this phenomenon in this year's volume of its flagship Women and Public Policy Journal (WPPJ). Through academic investigation into peace and reconciliation processes, this volume aims to identify what the Afghan government and relevant stakeholders can do to address these sentiments and improve the chances of a successful peace process in Afghanistan.

TRAJECTORY OF THE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS

Deliberation and thorough debate on the peace process has never been more important as they are today. There are three key reasons that underline the urgency for a systematic evaluation of the process. They include: the new US Strategy on Afghanistan and South Asia; the alarming rate of civilian casualties and an ever-growing theater of conflict with new spoilers and groups; and the dangerous precedent set by the so-called 'peace' agreement signed with Hezb-e-Islami.

First, the new US strategy sharply mirrors that of the former US President George W. Bush-led administration's early approaches that failed, i.e. prioritizing military over political might. More so, incumbent US President Donald Trump's strategy to push the Taliban to the negotiation

table by turning the tide on the battlefield while simultaneously remaining ambiguous regarding talks - as reflected in Trump's announcement of the strategy, in which he said, "nobody knows if or when that [reconciliation] will ever happen," - threatens to break down any trust thus far built with the Taliban while further provoking the insurgency to continue its fight.⁵

Second, civilian casualties continue to remain high mirroring the rise in insurgent-related attacks causing Afghanistan to rank second in the Global Terrorism Index 2017.⁶ The October 2017 UN civilian casualties report shows that 8,019 civilians including women and children were killed in the first nine months of 2017.⁷ While this marks a 6% drop compared to 2016, those killed by airstrikes have increased by 50% during this period.⁸

Third, hailed as the first major peace achievement of the past 15 years, the peace agreement signed between the Afghan government and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hizb-e-Islami insurgent group, set a precarious and dangerous foundation for negotiations with other groups in the future. The agreement with Hizb, albeit a good step towards ending the group's already diminishing influence on the battlefield, illustrated that the Afghan government was not interested in transparency, accountability or transitional justice. The agreement with Hizb-e-Islami was signed without paying heed to public opinion; calls to address the gross human rights violations committed by the group; the potential of Hekmatyar's role to exacerbate divisions within the government and Afghan society; and its impact on the future of democratic governance. A comprehensive peace process must be connected at three levels: it must include top-level negotiations, bottom-up level grassroots healing, and middle level organized civil society involvement. Yet, as demonstrated via the Hizb agreement, it appears that the Afghan peace process will remain the prerogative of the elite.

5. The White House. "Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia," 21 August 2017, Office of the Press Secretary.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia>

6. Samim Faramarz. "Afghanistan ranks 2nd Worst in the World on New Terrorism Index," 16 November 2017, ToloNews. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghanistan-ranks-2nd-worst-world-new-terrorism-index>

7. Karim Amini. "UN Report Shows Increase in Civilian Casualties Due to Airstrikes," 13 October 2017, ToloNews. <http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/un-report-shows-increase-civilian-casualties-due-airstrikes>

8. Ibid

While many experts acknowledge that at times, negotiations need to be carried out behind closed doors, the Afghan state is still obligated - as highlighted in the July 2010 Peace Jirga Resolution - to keep the public informed about the framework for talks so that the public understands what kind of agreement they are being asked to support.

WPPJ 2017

Since the end of the Cold War, dozens of peace agreements have been signed by combatants and states around the world, but only a handful of them have resulted in lasting peace. Most have either collapsed or have been followed by stalemate, economic struggle, and crime. This begs the question: why did the successful peace processes succeed, and what caused the failed ones to fail? The answer to this question may hold the key to the fate of Afghanistan's peace process.

To that end, WPPJ 2017 brings together nine compelling essays, each of which examine nine contemporary peace and reconciliation related indicators such as: design of power-sharing agreements; holding talks; trust-building and legitimacy; role of transitional justice; balancing bottom-up approaches with top-down approaches; timing and sequencing of events; the spoilers issue; the role of the international community; and addressing the critical question of what peace means for citizens.

To provide a yardstick for introspection and revision, two case studies involving peace processes of two different countries - Colombia and Northern Ireland - were studied and compared with the Afghan peace process. These comparative studies illustrate simple but significant factors that have a bearing on how and why peace processes succeed or fail. The case studies offer insightful observations on the similarities, differences, and patterns involved in the peace processes in Colombia and Northern Ireland, and identify what worked and what did not - important lessons that Afghanistan could draw from. For instance,

As explained above, since its inception, the Afghan peace process has been severely crippled due to the numerous policy challenges such as: failure to incorporate more bottom-up approaches; lack of local ownership; and

the absence of a clear roadmap for peace. Offering insights on ways to address these gaps, the essays and case studies in this volume draw on theory, practice, and lessons learnt from other contexts to provide a clear illustration of the evolution, impact, and gaps in the Afghan peace process, and offer recommendations for remedies and improvement. For instance,

Farhat Popal assesses the significance of including women in the peace process and its impact on the sustainability of the process and focuses on women's economic inclusion and empowerment and its impact on the peace process at the decision-making levels.

Shahgul Rezaei offers a critical perspective on the Afghan peace process and emphasizes on the necessity to rethink the entire process. She analyzes the policy-relevant factors contributing to the escalation and continuation of insecurity in the post-Taliban era and proposes practical remedies.

Fawzia Fazli assesses the role of the international community in legitimizing and supporting the peace process. She emphasizes on the roles regional and international actors can play in facilitating this process.

Zarghoona Aslami illustrates how the Afghan government can make the peace process inclusive and sustainable, and proposes ways to bridge the gap between the government and the public to build legitimacy for the peace process by including the civil society.

Marzia Meena explores core flaws in the approaches to peace negotiations in Afghanistan. Flagging mutual mistrust and weak mediation as the primary culprits, she identifies policy options to plug this gap.

Nazi Karim evaluates the role of transitional justice as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. Arguing that addressing the question of transitional justice might not be possible at the moment in Afghanistan, she recommends alternative methods to build an environment for civilians and war criminals to live together.

Nahid Farid assesses the importance of neutrality in Afghanistan's foreign policy and distancing Afghanistan from regional security systems. Drawing on the lessons from Belgium's experience in the 20th century and comparing Afghanistan's experience during the end of 19th century, she

outlines an alternative route to achieve peace in Afghanistan.

Mona Hossaini evaluates women's inclusion in the Afghan peace process and women's empowerment in their participation in the overall decision-making processes. Arguing that Afghan women's inclusion in all processes has been largely symbolic, she identifies the challenges for women's inclusion in the peace process and negotiations.

Nahid Shahalimi investigates the absence of neuroscientific techniques and human psychology - elements key to the Afghan peace process. She insists that in addition to conventional and technical pillars of peace-building, there is an urgent need to incorporate psychological aspects of peace-building.

Najiba Madadi evaluates Columbia's successful peace process that put an end to the 52-year civil war in the South American country. She highlights the factors that contributed to its success, and establishes some similarities and differences between Columbia's conflict and that of Afghanistan's, based on which she draws lessons for the Afghan peace process.

Farida Ghanizada reviews Northern Ireland's peace process and evaluates the Good Friday Agreement that ended a 30-year conflict in the country. She explains that the natures of conflict in the two countries are different, but that there still are lessons in Northern Ireland's peace process that are relevant for Afghanistan.

Tahmina Rassoli reviews Jonathan Powell's popular book: *Talking to Terrorists: How to End Armed Conflicts*, a handy account for those - especially youth - interested in mediation and peace building processes.

More importantly, every essay provides nuanced perspectives, evaluations on key aspects of the Afghan peace process, and policy recommendations for the Afghan government to help improve transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and potential for the peace process' success and sustainability.

To ensure that public opinion - especially women's voices - is not sidelined, and a broad-based and acceptable settlement is reached with national consensus, the 2017 volume of the WPPJ brings together in-depth and evidenced-based analyses by female authors on the subject. Most of all,

this volume is an effort to encourage and bolster a broader, inclusive, cross-sectional and comprehensive discussion on the pressing matter of achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan, in the policy circles and general public.

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**POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION:
AN ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
THE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS**

FARHAT POPAL¹

Afghanistan has been in a state of war for nearly 40 years. From the 1979 Soviet invasion, to the civil war of the early 1990s, the rise of the Taliban, and the current war since the 2001 US invasion, there has been no respite from violence. Women have suffered the most, with each period of conflict bringing its own set of challenges. The Soviet war resulted in one million civilian deaths and massive internal displacement, leaving women widowed and children orphaned; the Taliban restricted every aspect of women's rights and their access to public life; and recent insecurity has resulted in schools shutting down and limiting of women's livelihoods and freedom of movement. As a result, Afghan women have the most to lose from war, and the most to gain from peace.

There has been extensive research on the importance of women's inclusion in peacebuilding efforts—from improving the chances of a sustainable peace agreement being reached to the broader positive impacts on women's inclusion in decision-making. While the Afghan government and the international community have expressed their support for the role of Afghan women in negotiating peace with the Taliban, these efforts have not been implemented in a meaningful or consistent way. Nevertheless, women civil society advocates and women leaders at every level continue to fight for a voice in the process in formal and informal ways.

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The economic empowerment of women contributes to the effectiveness of post-conflict economic activities, and countries that do better economically and promote gender equality tend to be more peaceful and stable. Incorporating both women's ability to contribute to the Afghan peace process as well as recognizing their essential role in the economic prosperity of Afghanistan will indeed lead to better outcomes for Afghan society as a whole.

This paper explores why women's inclusion in peace processes and the economy is important, and how this inclusion is applied in Afghanistan at all levels of society. The paper concludes with recommendations for stakeholders involved in the Afghan peace process.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN'S INCLUSION IN PEACE PROCESSES

Empirical evidence indicates that women's inclusion positively impacts the process and outcomes of peace. A study of 40 peace processes in 35 countries over the last three decades found that women's inclusion and influence in peace processes result in greater instances of reaching a peace agreement, implementing that agreement, and in the agreement's sustainability over the long term.²

Women improve the process and outcomes of peace talks by promoting dialogue and trust, bridging divides and mobilizing coalitions, raising issues that are vital for peace, and prioritizing gender equality.³ Women comprised 20% of the delegates to the 2004 constitutional convention in Afghanistan, and successfully reached across ethnic lines to ensure a commitment to equal rights for all Afghan citizens. This included supporting efforts by the Uzbek minority to gain official recognition for its marginalized language.⁴

Indeed, women rebuild more peaceful societies by breaking the conflict trap—the risk that society will experience further violent conflict after war

2. O'Reilly, Marie. "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies." *Inclusive Security*, 2015.

3. *Ibid*

4. Bigio J, Vogelstein R. "How Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution Advances U.S. Interests." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2016.

has broken out—and by broadening societal participation.⁵ Research by the International Crisis Group in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Uganda indicates that during peace talks, women often raise issues of human rights, security, justice, employment, education, and healthcare—all of which are fundamental to conflict resolution and post-conflict rebuilding.⁶

Studies also show that women in politics are often perceived as more trustworthy and less corrupt.⁷ Women often operate outside existing power structures and generally do not control fighting forces; as a result, they are more widely perceived to be politically impartial mediators in peace negotiations, as compared to men.⁸ This perception that women do not promote or facilitate war exists in Afghanistan as well. In 59 interviews conducted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), respondents in Ghazni, Herat, and Jalalabad overwhelmingly expressed their perception that women are inherently peaceful and/or honest, and for some this meant that women had the potential to exert significant influence in the peace process.⁹

Thus, women's efforts to promote dialogue and trust; bridge divides and broaden societal participation; and operate with greater ease due to the perception that they are more honest brokers of peace, all point to the importance of their inclusion in peace processes.

THE LINK BETWEEN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND PEACE

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are strongly tied to prosperous and peaceful societies.¹⁰ An important way to enable women's participation in peacebuilding activities is to advance their economic empowerment. In a study on the roles of women in local peacebuilding in

5. O'Reilly, Marie. "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies." Inclusive Security, 2015.

6. Bigio J, Vogelstein R. "How Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution Advances U.S. Interests." Council on Foreign Relations, 2016.

7. O'Reilly, Marie. "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies." Inclusive Security, 2015.

8. Ibid

9. Hedström Jenny, Senarathna Thiyumi ed. "Women in Conflict and Peace." International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015.

10. O'Reilly, Marie. "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies." Inclusive Security, 2015.

Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone, women reported that they were unable to engage in peacebuilding activities because of the double burden of their domestic roles and income-generation activities as well as a lack of control over household income.¹¹

When women do control income, however, they are more likely to engage in civil society activity and contribute to inclusive governance.¹² The economic empowerment of women also greatly contributes to the effectiveness of post-conflict economic activities, and accelerates economic recovery; this is critical in breaking cycles of war and poverty.¹³ A report on the human development of the Asia-Pacific region notes that several of the world's fastest growing economies that have recently emerged from conflict owe their success in part to women's increased role in production, trade and entrepreneurship.¹⁴ By addressing discrimination, harmful stereotypes, patriarchal structures, and institutional exclusion that render women and girls vulnerable to violence and poverty, these economies took steps to enable them to participate meaningfully and effectively in public and private spheres, and become a driving force in the economy.¹⁵

FAILURES OF MEANINGFUL INCLUSION AND CAUSES: UNSCR 1325

The most widely cited policy framework for women's inclusion in peace processes is the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which was passed in October 2000. Among other things, it calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making.¹⁶ The Afghan government developed its National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 in June 2015. Most of the discussions of the role of women in

11. Cardona I, Justino P, Mitchell B, Muller C. "From the ground up: Women's roles in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone." Institute of Development Studies Womankind Worldwide, 2012.

12. Coomaraswamy R. "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325", UN Women, 2015.

13. Ibid

14. United Nations Development Programme, "Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific", Macmillan Publishers India Ltd. 2010.

15. Coomaraswamy R. "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325", UN Women, 2015.

16. Ibid

the peace process focuses specifically on the participation of women in the High Peace Council (HPC), Provincial Peace Councils (PPC), and Secretariats—the various mechanisms set up by the Afghan government to lead the peace process with the Taliban.¹⁷ The Plan describes a number of actions to be taken by the Afghan government to implement the Resolution, but it is unclear to what extent progress has been made since a concrete implementation plan has not been produced.^{18 19}

What Does Inclusion Mean?

While the UNSCR 1325 calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making including direct representation at peace talks, this is just one mechanism of inclusion. A study by the International Peace Institute found that women's inclusion takes place through a variety of mechanisms, including direct representation at the negotiating table, observer status for selected-groups, consultations, inclusive commissions, problem-solving workshops, public decision making, and mass action.²⁰ The study found that successful peace agreements always used a combination of different mechanisms of inclusion simultaneously and at different points in the process.²¹

How Have Afghan Women Been Included or Excluded from Decision-making?

In Afghanistan, women's inclusion and influence in the peace process is the most limited at the regional and national levels, and the most robust at the local and family levels. Inclusion of women at every level of society will be required to build peace in Afghanistan that will be sustainable.

17. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. "Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.", Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2015.

18. Ibid

19. Barr, Heather. "Afghanistan's Mysterious Vanishing Plan on Women and Peace Talks." Human Rights Watch. 2016.

20. Paffenholz T, Ross N, Dixon S, Schluchter A, True J. "Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations." Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative UN Women. 2016.

21. Paffenholz Thania. "Beyond the Normative: Can Women's Inclusion Really Make for Better Peace Processes?." Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding 2016.

Direct Representation

At the regional level, Afghan women have been almost entirely absent from delegations discussing peace and security in Afghanistan. In December 2015, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, US) was established to facilitate an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process, including the need for direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.²² Five meetings of the QCG were held between January 2016 and May 2016 with no indications of women participating in those meetings.²³ There is no mention of women being included in talks hosted by Russia in February 2017,²⁴ and only two out of 47 were included at the launch of the “Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation” in June 2017.²⁵

Inclusive Commissions

At the national level, Afghan women participate in inclusive commissions as members and as leaders. However, their role remains marginalized. A 2014 study by Oxfam found that in 23 rounds of peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban since 2005, one woman from the government was present on two occasions. Moreover, no women were ever included in discussions between international negotiators and the Taliban, and it is unclear if or to what extent women’s interests were represented by others.²⁶

Established in 2010, the HPC is the national level entity responsible for leading and supporting the peace process with the Taliban.²⁷ Currently, women comprise 11 of its 50 members, and after being restructured in early 2016, includes six new deputy heads, one of whom is a former Minister of Women’s Affairs and the first female provincial governor for

22. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. “The Kabul Process.”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2017.

23. Ruttig, Thomas. “In Search of a Peace Process: A ‘new’ HPC and an ultimatum for the Taleban.” 2016. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/in-search-of-a-peace-process-a-new-hpc-and-an-ultimatum-for-the-taleban/>

24. Mitra, Devirupa. “At Russia-Led Regional Talks, Afghanistan Says Talks With Taliban Can Only Be Held on Its Soil.” 2017.

25. Barr, Heather. “Women Excluded Again from Afghanistan’s Peace Talks.” Human Rights Watch. 2017.

26. Oxfam International. “Afghan women frozen out of peace talks, in danger of losing gains made since fall of the Taliban.” 2014.

27. Human Rights Watch. “Afghanistan: Accept Full Role for Women in Talks.” 2015.

Bamyan.²⁸ Additionally, there are two women on the new HPC Executive Board of Advisors—former government official, and the director of a well-known women’s civil society group.²⁹

Despite the inclusion of women both as members and leaders of the Council, it is unclear to what extent their participation is meaningful. The few women in senior positions in the HPC voice frustration over their marginalized role.³⁰ In addition, the problematic nature of the Council itself—given that it is comprised primarily of government-appointed former *mujahideen* leaders and warlords—and its limited role in direct talks means women’s voices and influence are limited by default.³¹

At the local level, Afghan women play a somewhat larger role in peace-building through their participation on the Provincial Peace Councils (PPC).

PPCs in all but one province include women, and the nearly 200 women who have worked to resolve conflict at the local and provincial levels are doing meaningful work that has the potential to contribute to broader peace.³² For example, in March 2015, the women members of the PPCs submitted a proposal to the Afghan government citing their continued contributions to peace at the local level, and calling for increased women’s formal representation in all aspects of the peace process, increased access to information, and a national dialogue on peace and reconciliation.³³

At the family and village levels, Afghan women perhaps have the biggest impact on promoting peace among family members and their community. Much of the literature on Afghan women’s role in peacebuilding states that women are most effective as participants in conflict resolution at the

28. Safi M, Etemadi HL, Farid N, Nasiri L. "Background: The Peace Process in Afghanistan", Women, Peace and Security: Afghanistan–Pakistan Women’s Policy Brief, 2017.

http://www.dropsafghanistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/DROPS-PEAD-WDN-Brief_FINAL.pdf

29. Ruttig, Thomas. "In Search of a Peace Process: A 'new' HPC and an ultimatum for the Taliban." 2016.

30. Human Rights Watch. "Afghanistan: Accept Full Role for Women in Talks." 2015.

31. Safi M, Etemadi HL, Farid N, Nasiri L. "Background: The Peace Process in Afghanistan", Women, Peace and Security: Afghanistan–Pakistan Women’s Policy Brief, 2017.

http://www.dropsafghanistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/DROPS-PEAD-WDN-Brief_FINAL.pdf

32. Human Rights Watch. "Afghanistan: Accept Full Role for Women in Talks." 2015.

33. The Institute for Women. "National Dialogue for Peace & Reconciliation: A proposal developed by the women members of the Provincial Peace Councils." Peace & Security, 2015.

family and village levels.³⁴ Women's role in conflict mediation, building trust and dialogue, educating children and counselling family members to not engage in violence are common themes across communities, and this role is recognized by male members of the community.³⁵

Consultations and Conferences

Afghan women-oriented civil society organizations have been vocal both in advocating for an increased role in peace talks, and for making their voices heard when they are being actively excluded. There is also evidence that when Afghan women are active participants in peace processes, they contribute to a more inclusive outcome. For example, the 2001 consultative forum set up by the UN that was held in parallel to the negotiations in Bonn comprised 35% female delegates, and successfully pushed for the inclusion of a legislative gender quota and for women's rights to be part of the agreement and implementation process.³⁶

NATO Summits since 2002 have included discussions on Afghanistan, with security—an issue that significantly and disproportionately impacts women—being one of the main issues discussed.³⁷ But the voices of Afghan women have either been completely absent or been relegated to side events addressing women's issues.³⁸ Whether through participation in a “shadow summit,” successfully advocating for inclusion in Afghan delegations, or organizing a protest outside the Summit, Afghan women leaders continuously fight for a place at the table.^{39 40}

34. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, “Women in Conflict and Peace.” 2015

35. Cardona I, Justino P, Mitchell B, Muller C. “From the ground up: Women's roles in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone.” Institute of Development Studies Womankind Worldwide, 2012.

36. Paffenholz T, Ross N, Dixon S, Schluchter A, True J. “Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations.” Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative UN Women. 2016

37. NATO. “NATO and Afghanistan.” 2016.

38. Oxfam. “Behind Closed Doors: The risk of denying women a voice in determining Afghanistan's future.” 2014.

39. LaFranchi Howard. “At NATO summit on Afghanistan, few women's voices heard.” 2012.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2012/0520/At-NATO-summit-on-Afghanistan-few-women-s-voices-heard>.

40. Amnesty International UK. “NATO summit: Afghanistan protest over absence of women.” 2014. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/pressreleases/natosummitafghanistanprotestoverabsencewomen>.

WHY HAVE AFGHAN WOMEN BEEN EXCLUDED?

Afghan women lack meaningful participation in the peace process for both internal and external reasons. First, social and cultural norms have played a role in the exclusion of women in decision-making processes.⁴¹ Stereotypes of women as victims and uncritical advocates for peace, combined with a strict division of labor in the public and private spheres, prevent women from entering official peace processes.⁴²

Some of these norms and attitudes can potentially be changed over time. In a study conducted by the UK organization, ActionAid, women and men devalued women's current or potential role in peacebuilding at the local level. However, where there was specific support and training on these links with both men and women in the community, including Afghan communities, there was a marked difference in women's confidence about being involved in conflict resolution and mediation, and more support from men for women's participation in decision making.⁴³

Another cause is the general lack of will or lack of priority placed on women's inclusion by the Afghan government and the international community.⁴⁴ On the Afghan government side, women are rarely involved in regional or national level peace delegations, as detailed above, despite rhetoric that emphasizes their importance.⁴⁵ The international community also regularly emphasizes the importance of women's inclusion in the peace process, but is willing to accept Afghan delegations without women during NATO Summits, regional conferences, or in talks between international negotiators and the Taliban. In surveys, Afghan women themselves indicate that social and cultural barriers and lack of political will result in lack of women's effective inclusion in peace processes.⁴⁶

41. Cardona I, Justino P, Mitchell B, Muller C. "From the ground up: Women's roles in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone." Institute of Development Studies Womankind Worldwide, 2012.

42. Reimann, Cordula. "Promoting Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and Peace Processes." GIZ 2014.

43. Cardona I, Justino P, Mitchell B, Muller C. "From the ground up: Women's roles in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone." Institute of Development Studies Womankind Worldwide, 2012.

44. Oxfam. "Behind Closed Doors: The risk of denying women a voice in determining Afghanistan's future." 2014.

45. Human Rights Watch. "Afghanistan: Set Out Concrete Plan to Involve Women." 2016.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/12/afghanistan-set-out-concrete-plan-involve-women>

46. Safi M, Etemadi HL, Farid N, Nasiri L. "Background: The Peace Process in Afghanistan", Women, Peace and

Direct political support for participation is necessary for women's meaningful inclusion. After the 1991 Paris Agreement in Cambodia, few political parties seriously invested in programmes to help women move out of their traditional gender roles despite commitments to do so. In Sierra Leone, elites discouraged women's participation in political leadership fearing a disruption of traditional politics. As a result, women's groups did not transition into a political force that would have leverage in the peace process. Because politics in conflict and post-conflict contexts often exclude those other than elites, it is important for the international community to fill this gap through political support.⁴⁷

IS ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INCLUSION A MORE FEASIBLE APPROACH?

Peace talks are currently on hold and the outlook is not positive. Talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in July 2015 failed after it was reported that the former Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had died.⁴⁸ In June 2017, it was reported that the Taliban are not interested in resuming peace talks with the Afghan government until all foreign troops leave.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, insecurity and attacks continue.⁵⁰

Given the current stalemate, advancing women's economic inclusion and continuing to support their informal role as advocates and mediators at the local level may be a more feasible approach to their meaningful participation in peacebuilding. 74% Afghans surveyed for the 2016 *Survey of the Afghan People* state that they believe women should be allowed to work outside the home.⁵¹ Additionally, Afghans who are supportive of women's rights are, on an average, more likely to say that female members of the family contribute to household income.⁵² This aligns with research

Security: Afghanistan-Pakistan Women's Policy Brief, 2017.

http://www.dropsafghanistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/DROPS-PEAD-WDN-Brief_FINAL.pdf

47. Conciliation Resources. "Accord INSIGHT: Women building peace." 2013.

48. Reuters. "Taliban disavows Afghan peace talks after leader declared dead." 2015.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-fighting-idUSKCN0Q40DW20150730>

49. Reuters. "Foreign Delegations Meet in Afghan Capital After Bloody Week." 2017.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-conference-idUSKBN18X0TE>

50. Ibid

51. The Asia Foundation. "A Survey of the Afghan People." 2016.

<https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/>

52. Ibid

in West Asia that indicates women's economic empowerment is connected to more egalitarian attitudes towards women in society.⁵³

Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 acknowledges the role that economic security plays in peace and women's inclusion, setting the foundation for this approach.⁵⁴ Advancing women's economic inclusion leads to more peaceful, stable, and gender-equal societies, and if a majority of Afghans are supportive of women working outside their homes, then this is one mechanism that has the potential to reap larger benefits for Afghan society.

CONCLUSION

There is extensive research on the importance of women's inclusion in peace-building efforts and the positive role they play—from improving the chances of a sustainable peace agreement being reached to the broader positive impacts on women's inclusion in decision-making. While the Afghan government and the international community have expressed their support for the role of Afghan women in negotiating peace with the Taliban, these efforts have not been meaningful or consistent. Nevertheless, women civil society advocates and women leaders at the national level continue to push for a voice in the process in formal and informal ways. Recognizing the impact that women's economic empowerment can play in building peaceful societies, and supporting these efforts may also contribute to better outcomes for Afghan society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Afghan government and the international community can take three concrete steps to ensure women's inclusion moving forward:

1. Include women leaders in regional and national level peace talks with the Taliban if/when they move forward. Ensure women are included in Afghan delegations to major international fora. Support their voices as leaders and advocates in peace-building rather than as victims.

53. Benstead Lindsay J. "Explaining Egalitarian Attitudes: The Role of Interests and Exposure." *Empowering Women after the Arab Spring*. 2016.

54. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015), 'Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325'

2. Advance women's economic opportunity and empowerment as one way to build a more inclusive Afghan society overall. Provide specific support and training on women's rights and the links between gender equality and peace-building.
3. Recognize that changes in social and cultural norms are important and necessary for women's inclusion in public life, and that these changes can occur over time with intentional effort to improve the status of Afghan women in society.

AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS: HOW TO IMPROVE THE CHANCE FOR SUCCESS?

SHAHGUL REZAIE¹

Given the current circumstances, peace is a dire need and a top priority for the Afghan people. People in Afghanistan fall victim to suicide attacks and explosions on daily basis even as the government allocates huge sums of its annual budget to check keep insecurity (see table1).²

As the urgent need for peace necessitates, the Afghan government has taken numerous steps over the past few years towards peace, such as (but not limited to): establishing the Institution for Consolidation of Stability; holding a Peace Consultative Loya Jirga; and other joint Jirgas among Afghanistan and Pakistan; and establishing the High Peace Council (HPC).³

Given the years of experience in the peace process, it is important to analyze the extent to which the process has been successful. The fact remains that despite the Afghan government incurring expenditure (monetary, human resources, and otherwise), insecurity has been on the rise.⁴

Given the current circumstances and the failed experiences of the past few years, there is a need to rethink and revise the approach to peace-making.

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2. National Budget. Report. Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Vol. 1396. Ministry of Finance.

3. Lamb, Robert D., Mehlaqa Samdani, and Justine Fleischner. "Afghanistan's National Consultative Peace Jirga." Center for Strategic and International Studies. May 27, 2010. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/afghanistans-national-consultative-peace-jirga>.

4. "Afghanistan Events of 2016." Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/afghanistan>.

To that end, this essay is an effort to first assess the key factors contributing to escalation and continuation of insecurity in the post-Taliban era; and based on the assessment, to propose grounds and solutions towards ensuring the success of the peace process.

table1

NATIONAL BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR 2017, PERCENTAGE (%) BY SECTORS	
SECTORS	(%) PERCENTAGE
Security	34
Governing	5
Infrastructure and Natural Resources	22
Education	13
Health	3
Agriculture and Rural Development	7
Social Immunity	6
Economy and Private Sector Development	2
Contingency and Miscellaneous Codes	8
Total	100

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONTINUATION OF INSECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

It is worth noting that in assessing the factors contributing to insecurity, this paper does not present the history of insecurity in Afghanistan, and instead focuses on key factors contributing to the escalation and continuation of insecurity over the past a decade and a half.

MINIMALISTIC APPROACH TOWARDS ADDRESSING INSECURITY

Afghanistan has for long been a victim of complex regional games and international terrorism, albeit domestic factors and the dominant socio-political structure of the Afghan society cannot be ignored.

In the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks, the international community deployed forces in Afghanistan believing in the notion that terrorism is an

international challenge and that defeating it requires global cooperation. Pakistan, despite being one of the main supporters of the Taliban and other terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan, was able to present itself as a partner in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and a long-term ally of the international community and the US, securing billions of dollars in aid every year, thanks to its active diplomacy.⁵

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime and with the establishment of the interim government in Afghanistan in 2002, cooperation in combating global terrorism was the dominant view providing a framework for the presence of international forces in Afghanistan and its relations with regional and other countries. This approach provided relatively good security for Afghanistan for the first five to six years following the international intervention. The Afghan constitution was drafted and ratified, state institutions were established, the first ever presidential, parliamentary and provincial council elections were held, and democracy was founded in a relatively secure environment provided due to the international community's intervention.

As time passed, the Afghan government proposed the Reconciliation and Reintegration initiative without considering its repercussions for the joint fight against terror in the broader context. Proposing reconciliation with the Taliban in the absence of defined, clear and well-calculated mechanisms not only led the war astray but also minimized the joint fight against global terrorism to merely an issue of disaffection of some groups in Afghanistan. In other words, this minimalistic approach to peace by the Afghan government provided the ground for a redefinition of global terrorism, supported and equipped by some neighboring countries, as disaffection of some local groups with the Afghan government. More importantly, this resulted in Pakistan once again gaining a pivotal position regarding securing peace in Afghanistan.

This process, which had its roots in the ethnic and emotional inclinations of top officials in the Afghan government's decision-making, led the global

5. "US quietly releases \$1.6bn in aid to Pakistan after thaw in relations." The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/19/usforeignpolicy-pakistan>.

fight against terror astray and made it less-intensified. Banning night raids are an excellent example for this. Using terms like “disaffected brothers” or “political dissidents” can be better understood in this context.⁶ Minimizing international terrorism and Pakistan’s intervention in Afghanistan to “unhappy brothers” literally means reducing the joint global fight against terror to a small domestic problem, a defective definition that in practice left Afghanistan alone in shouldering the fight against terrorism.

There is no doubt that peace is a top priority for Afghans, but such an approach once again placed Pakistan in a superior position (as far as peace in Afghanistan was concerned) and soon, it was able to take the lead in this respect. The consequence, unfortunately, was the further empowerment of the Taliban and opportune circumstances for other terrorist networks to consolidate their hold, resulting in escalation and continuation of insecurity in Afghanistan.

TRADITIONAL AND UNPROFESSIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE PEACE PROCESS

Another important aspect is the government’s overly optimistic and minimalistic view of insecurity. Afghanistan’s former president travelled to Pakistan 20 times to demonstrate goodwill; and the incumbent Afghan president visited and held discussions with the Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff during an official trip, breaking diplomatic protocol.^{7 8} While Pakistan’s subversive policy towards Afghanistan has its roots in an active diplomacy and its strategic view of the former’s defined long-term interests as a state, Afghan politicians look at the issue through a traditional lens, minimizing it to an internal dispute among small groups of Afghans.

The establishment of the HPC and its structure is representative of the myopic, shallow and traditional thinking dominating the decision-making apparatus in Afghanistan. Since its establishment, the HPC has been crippled

6. Gul, Ayaz. “Ghani Sees Taliban as His ‘Political Opposition’.” VOA. March 26, 2015.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/afghanistan-ghani-sees-taliban-as-hi-political-opposition/2695578.html>.

7. Pakistani Cleric Tells Ghani War Will Continue Until Foreign Troops Go.” November 14, 2014.

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/pakistani-cleric-tells-ghani-war-will-continue-until-foreign-troops-go>.

8. Gul, Ayaz. “Afghan President Ghani Visits Pakistan.” VOA. November 14, 2014.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/afghan-president-visits-pakistan/2519979.html>

due to a defective understanding of the peace process as a project and an opportunity to appease the opposition with fine offers rather than offering a professional analysis of insecurity and possible solutions to the problem.

The bitter fact regarding the peace process in Afghanistan is that whatever has been undertaken as part of the peace process has been anything but a genuine and meaningful effort towards peace. It is widely believed that had the Afghan government established a professional body for war and crisis analysis instead of the symbolic HPC, or had it re-directed the high costs paid for peace process in the arming and equipping of the Afghan Armed forces, it would have accomplished far more in terms of security.

WEAK SECURITY INSTITUTIONS AND DIPLOMACY APPARATUS

Despite the increasingly worrisome security situation after over a decade since the fall of the Taliban regime, the appointment of individuals in high ranking positions within security institutions have always been contentious because of dominance and prevalence of nepotism in these institutions.

This is demonstrative of the fact that officials lack the resolve and strong will to suppress the Taliban and other terrorist networks; and instead invest their efforts towards appeasing islands of small powers as opposed to focusing on the management of war. High ranking posts in security apparatuses are distributed as a privilege for ethnic groups and power islands despite the fact that the security situation over the last decade and a half necessitated designation of experienced and committed individuals to lead these institutions.⁹

Another aspect to this problem is the lack of attention to appointments in local administrations and the appointments of local security officials at the whims of individuals. Just as military ranks at the national level were bestowed based on personal relations, so were ranks for security officials in the provincial and district levels, providing an excellent opportunity for the Taliban and other terrorist groups to regroup, find bigger footholds and conscript in some of the provinces and districts across the country.

9. "Appointments To Security Bodies Again Questioned." Tolo News. October 11, 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/27755-appointments-to-security-bodies-again-questioned>

One of the issues that has received negligible attention has been identifying and dealing with individuals and groups that benefit from the ongoing war. The drug mafia and some private security companies' owners have economically benefitted from the war in Afghanistan, and for them, continuation of war equals continuation of their business.

Another fundamental challenge in this regard has been the ineffective diplomatic apparatus. Given that terrorism is an international challenge and that the war in Afghanistan is sponsored by some countries in the region, it would be better if Afghanistan's diplomatic apparatus has a more effective leadership, so it could convince the international community to exert more pressure on sponsors of terrorist networks alongside military efforts. Our diplomatic apparatus should have introduced sources and data on the sponsorship of the terrorist networks to the world and should have sought ways to exert necessary pressure on those parties. In short, along with efforts on the fighting front, the diplomatic apparatus of the Afghan government should have provided the theoretical justification for fight against terror headed by Afghanistan, and should have pushed for global cooperation and regional consensus for stability in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, both diplomatic and security apparatuses have performed feebly over the past decade and a half and represented weak management.

GROUNDINGS AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE PEACE PROCESS TO SUCCEED

Given the factors contributing to the continuation of insecurity and instability, and with the experience gained in this respect, a thorough analysis and assessment of grounds and possible solutions for peace is required. It should be noted that the games have become more complicated both in the regional and global level in 2017 and this fact, too, necessitates a different approach to the peace process compared to what it previously was. Now is the time to analyze failed efforts of the past and identify solutions. Some of them could be:

A Clear Definition of the Enemy and Parties to Negotiations

Afghanistan's experience demonstrates that one of the factors that led to

the failure of the peace process so far has been the lack of attention paid to identifying and defining the parties to negotiate with. The Afghan government has determined Pakistan as the party to negotiate with at times, but has taken recourse to opportunist individuals in the guise of the Taliban at other times. The incident involving a Pakistani shopkeeper who began a negotiation with the Afghan government in the capacity of a representative of the Taliban only to return to his business after receiving a large sum of money is a case in point.¹⁰ Over the past several years, other small groups too have received money under the label of peace process or reintegration, which provides yet another example of the failure of the peace process because this motivates similar groups to resort to similar activities to gain money.

Moreover, several imprisoned Taliban members who were released to demonstrate Afghanistan's goodwill in the peace process have joined the battle against the state again.¹¹ Mullah Dastgir from Badghis who reassumed the leadership of the armed opposition to fight the government after his release from prison is but one example.

Given all these and similar examples over the past years, the Afghan government should first clarify the party with which it will negotiate. It should also ensure that the party with whom it negotiates is a credible and legitimate representative of the terrorists. The Taliban's office in Qatar provides a valuable lesson in this regard. Opening an office in Qatar was more a political address for the Taliban rather than a good step towards peace, and more significantly, on a diplomatic level, it could amount to the pronouncement of a parallel government.

Recently, Gulbudin Hekmatyar, the chief of the Hizb-i-Islami—which has been an armed opposition group for over two decades—having claimed responsibility of many suicide attacks, joined the peace process after negotiations with the Afghan government that yielded him much

10. Filkins, Dexter, and Carlotta Gall. "Taliban Leader in Secret Talks Was an Impostor." *The New York Times*. November 22, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/23/world/asia/23kabul.html>.

11. Crilly, Rob, and Ben Farmer. "Freed Taliban prisoners return to fight." *The Telegraph*. February 10, 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9860539/Freed-Taliban-prisoners-return-to-fight.html>.

privilege.^{12 13} His joining of the peace process, however, has no tangible effects for stability in Afghanistan.

The main concerns regarding peace talks with the Taliban are similar. It is not untrue that the Taliban have become weak pawns for regional players in the game and therefore they now want to sell them out in the market of peace processes at a reasonable price. The Taliban have been refusing to claim responsibility for the recent attacks, which is demonstrative of other groups having substituted their role. The possibility that the former terrorist groups play double agents in both the peace process and the war front is not entirely unsubstantiated.

Based on these concerns, it is apparent that determining the negotiating party is the principal and initial step towards making a peace process successful. A key matter to be noted in this regard is the fact that only when an expert analysis of the current crisis, its roots and factors, its sponsors and origins, is undertaken does it become possible to identify the right party to negotiate with. It is obvious that one cannot identify the correct party to negotiate with unless the security crisis in Afghanistan is realistically and professionally analyzed.

Defining Peace Process Mechanisms

Over the past years, the peace process has been in progress without an acceptable and comprehensive strategy in place. Following the identification of a negotiating party, one should clearly define mechanisms and strategies taking Afghanistan's circumstances into account, based on which all the processes—from the beginning to end—should be clarified. Given the failure of the process over the past several years, rethinking existing mechanisms should be given a priority.

Regarding mechanisms for the peace process, the strategy as well as an entity responsible for following up on the process are the two key elements that should be taken into consideration. As explained above,

12. "Profile: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar." BBC News. March 23, 2010.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2701547.stm.

13. "Hekmatyar returns to Kabul after 20 years in hiding." May 4, 2017.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/hekmatyar-returns-kabul-20-years-hiding-170504145123325.html>.

the HPC demonstrates Afghanistan's traditional understanding of peace and is an institution for keeping jihadi and ethnic leaders busy, whereas the complexity of the security crisis in Afghanistan requires a more professional structure capable of devising plans, and developing and implementing strategies related to peace. Additionally, the strategy to achieve peace must clearly identify the cost Afghanistan will be willing to pay for peace.

Another important aspect is to set a timeframe for peace talks. The peace process should not be turned into an open-ended lucrative project for those who benefit from the process economically. The experience of the past decade and more demonstrates that the longer the war and the peace process continue, the more economic gains certain individuals and groups make. Even the practice of distributing money to the Taliban can serve as a motivation for other groups and individuals to join the armed opposition and then vie for economic gains by rejoining the government and handing over their worn-out weapons. Overall, the Afghan government's policy through the initiative of consolidating stability and the HPC has served more as a motivation for more groups to join the armed opposition rather than deterring them from doing so.

Trust Building and Preparing the Grounds for Peace

Another issue is trust-building and preparing the ground for peace. The Afghan government appears to have walked a one-way path towards peace and has unilaterally paid for it. It is therefore crucial that the preconditions and necessary grounds for peace talks are defined. We should clarify whether, principally, the Taliban or other opposition groups are ready for peace talks. If these terrorist groups who believe in violence and killing are not ready for peace talks, then the government better resort to leverage and coercive mechanisms instead.

The first step towards peace is the necessary trust building. Announcing ceasefire, putting an end to terrorist attacks and suicide bombings, and commitment to end killing civilians, can be among the principle preconditions of the Afghan government for trust building and in return, the government can also loosen matters from its end reciprocally.

The Role of the International Community and the UN

Another issue crucial for ensuring durability of peace in Afghanistan is the role of the international community, particularly those of the UN and countries such as the US, China, Russia and UK. There is no doubt that terrorism is an international challenge rooted in some of the neighboring countries to which, unfortunately, the Afghan people are more vulnerable. In the complex game of international terrorism, the war in Afghanistan can be explained as a proxy war fought on Afghan land for other countries. Therefore, the role of those countries who have a large say in the international games is justifiable. More importantly, with the inclusion of the UN in the process, Afghanistan can go beyond its traditional understanding of peace and *jirgas*. The minimum outcome of such a move will be that the settlements in this regard will go beyond simple consultations and will gain a binding status.

The Afghan government has failed so far in this regard. With the pleasant motto of the 'Afghanization' of the peace process, this process has gained nothing; on the contrary, the pressure on state sponsored terrorism has reduced.

Ensuring Durability of Peace

Another issue that needs consideration in this regard is that of durability of peace as a vital element. Afghanistan cannot accomplish lasting peace with violations of rule of law, pardoning criminals of war, and compromising on justice. Durable peace can be actualized only when all sides come to an agreement on necessary mechanisms with full respect to justice, human rights values, and rule of law. What has been done over the past years has been a wrongful definition of a process, which, in reality, cannot ensure durability of peace.

If integration of the armed opposition in the government is achieved through accommodation of values such as citizenship rights, justice, rule of law and the presence and participation of women, then Afghanistan can be optimistic about durability of peace. It is also worth mentioning that violation of values accepted by law and disrespect to values of collective

life in the modern world not only jeopardizes the peace process but also inflicts irreparable consequences in terms of public support. It is clear that the citizenry will deem such a move as an appeasement to terrorists and groups that bully.

Afghan people have sacrificed a lot over the past few years. From a legal perspective and a humane lens, neither the government nor any other institution is entitled the right to acquit these criminals. The only thing the government can do is to include the opposition groups into the power structure in accordance with the effective law and the principles of justice and international humanitarian law.

The events that have taken place over the past several years—including the release of criminals who have killed Afghans—have deepened the distrust in the government among people rather than helping the peace process. It is pertinent to ask these questions: will a peace that is achieved at the expense of rule of law and justice be durable? Or, more principally, is it reasonable to compromise justice, people's trust, and rule of law for potential peace?

It is especially important in the context of Afghanistan, given that the Taliban and other opposition groups are hostile to some social groups, ethnic groups and women. Therefore, in the strategy for peace, all the red lines that the government should not cross should be clearly written to ensure durability of peace. A strategy should be developed after taking into account all the concerns of women and social layers. In other words, to ensure durability of peace, all concerns of the all the citizens should be taken into account.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the minimalistic approach to security in Afghanistan; the minimalistic understanding of peace that represents the government's traditional and unprofessional view of peace; inefficiency of the diplomatic apparatus; and whimsical appointments to high offices in the security institutions are the factors contributing to the escalation and continuation of insecurity in Afghanistan. The situation necessitates the Afghan government, together with its partners in fighting terrorism and bringing

peace, to rethink their failed policies basing the new ones on realistic analysis of existing facts about the current war and complexities of global and regional politics to save Afghanistan from becoming a battleground for regional and global players.

As the game is becoming more complex in the regional and global levels now—and might continue to grow in these dimensions—the Afghan government should be wary of the fact that the country will become a battleground for proxy wars unless it changes its minimalistic approach to insecurity. As such, the Afghan government needs to take this scenario into consideration and base its policies regarding peace and stability on a deep and thorough analysis of the complexities of war and regional players, free of ethnic sentiments and interests.

The need for clearly defining friends and foes and devising and implementing well-calculated and smart strategies should not be neglected; and neither should the need for trust-building and ensuring durability of peace. Additionally, winning the citizens' trust in and support for the peace process is vital and this is possible only if the shared values of citizenship and justice are not compromised.

PEACE TALKS WITH THE TALIBAN: ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

FAWZIA FAZLI¹

Political settlement with the Taliban has been one of the most controversial issues in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban rule in 2001. Initially the Afghan government and the international community were reluctant about holding peace talks with the Taliban. However, after a short period of stability brought about via the Bonn conference, the Afghan government witnessed the resurgence of Taliban groups as a major security threat to Afghanistan. There are several reasons for the re-emergence of the Taliban, but one of the main causes is the exclusion of the Taliban as one of the opposition groups from the Bonn arrangement and the prohibition of their political participation in Afghanistan's newly established government.

Since 2005, the Afghan government and international community have undertaken several efforts to attract the insurgent groups to peace negotiations and make peace settlements with them, but their endeavours were unsuccessful. This is because every peace settlement needs a conducive environment, which is missing in the case of Afghanistan's peace process with Taliban. During the years of the Afghan government's negotiations with the Taliban, many Afghan politicians viewed the latter's inclusion in the Afghan government via power-sharing as the one of the probable solutions to achieve a peace settlement with the Taliban.

Despite such readiness from government's side, the peace process has not moved forward by much. In this context, this paper attempts to answer the following questions:

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1. Why is the pace of the peace process slow?
2. What kind of environment is required to make a peace settlement with the Taliban?
3. What are the potential positive and/or negative consequences of a peace settlement with the Taliban in Afghanistan?

POWER SHARING AGREEMENTS

Power sharing agreements are common ingredients of peace-making and peace-building efforts in most war-torn societies that are divided on the lines of deep ethnic, racial or religious differences. According Timothy Sisk, “Power Sharing is a set of principles that when carried out through practices and institution provide every significant identity group or segment in a society representation and decision-making abilities on common issues and a degree of autonomy over issues of importance to group.”²

Power sharing aims to reduce the risk of civil conflict guaranteeing potentially warring parties a role in a country’s government. Thus, it aims to reduce the stakes of political contestation. Usually, power sharing mechanisms balance state power among former adversaries by including multiple elites in decision making. Power sharing can occur along political, military and economic dimensions of state power.

Political Power Sharing

Political power sharing takes place when groups feel threatened by majority rule. Political power sharing can be designed to provide them with some guarantee of access to political power. Political power sharing institutions rely on proportional strategies that share political power based on demographic (ethnicity or race and religion) or political (party affiliation) principles.³ Consociationalism is a form of political power

2. “After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan.” October 2010.

<https://boydellandbrewer.com/after-the-comprehensive-peace-agreement-in-sudan.html>.

3. Nixon, Hamish, and Caroline Hartzell. “Beyond Power-sharing: Institutional Options for an Afghan Peace Process.” United States Institute of Peace. December 9, 2012.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/12/beyond-power-sharing-institutional-options-afghan-peace-process>.

sharing using several proportional measures to guarantee ethnic, religious, or cultural groups representation at the political centre. For instance, in Burundi, the Tutsis and Hutus agreed to share power at political centre by having the president assisted by two vice presidents—one from each ethnic group—as well as staffing the cabinet at ratio of 60% Hutu to 40% Tutsi.⁴

Military Power Sharing

Military power sharing takes place when the government wants to allay the adversaries' concern regarding a rival group's ability to use the states' security forces to threaten their (adversaries') interests. The state's coercive forces must somehow be neutralized or balanced. One way to achieve this is through military power sharing. Military power sharing calls for integrating rival factions' armed forces and reconstituting them as the state's security forces. Military power sharing arrangements have been instituted in Burundi where the state's security forces include equal numbers of Hutus and Tutsis groups.⁵

Economic Power Sharing

Economic power sharing takes place when there is an attempt to mitigate contending group's concerns regarding the state's control of resources. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan roughly divided net revenue from oil between North and South Sudan.⁶ The government of Sudan and the Sudanese people signed an agreement on wealth sharing in January 2004 (which is part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement also known as the Naivasha Agreement). It gave South Sudan significant economic independence during a six-year interim period. According to the Agreement, the government in South Sudan was to retain half its oil and non-oil revenues and give the other half to the Khartoum-based central government during the interim period. Each oil producing state is to receive 2% of the net oil wealth, while a national petroleum commission

4. Hartzell, Caroline. "Negotiated Peace: Power Sharing in Peace Agreements." May 5, 2016. http://www.saramitchell.org/hartzell_chapter.

5. Nixon, Hamish, and Caroline Hartzell. "Beyond Power-sharing: Institutional Options for an Afghan Peace Process." United States Institute of Peace. December 9, 2012.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/12/beyond-power-sharing-institutional-options-afghan-peace-process>.
6. Ibid

with representatives from both sides, was established to manage the oil sector.⁷

Variants of Power Sharing

Generally, there are clear variants in the *modus operandi* of power sharing. It could exist in the context of conflict resolution as a mechanism toward ending a civil war. An example is the implementation of a power sharing agreement among the major warring factions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The second variation could be in the form of an informal electoral law or agreement, aimed at enlarging the base for governance, which was implemented in South Africa, during the transitional period from apartheid.⁸ The third variation is in the use of power sharing as a permanent governance structure versus short term strategy. In Burundi, for example, the constitution permanently stipulates quotas for ethnic representation in political parties in its democratically elected national assembly. This type of power-sharing could be temporal or permanent. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Colombia and South Africa experienced temporary power sharing. The stipulation of quotas for ethnic representation in political parties in Burundi's National Assembly is an example of permanent power-sharing.⁹

Thus, power sharing exists in various formats. This paper focuses on the use of power sharing as a mechanism to reach a peace settlement among warring parties.

AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE PROCESS: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WITH THE TALIBAN

Afghanistan is a war-torn country, which has experienced over three decades of war since the onset of the conflict in 1979. During the conflict

7. "Wealth-sharing agreement gives southern Sudan economic independence." Sudan Tribune. January 8, 2004. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article1403>.

8. Nixon, Hamish, and Caroline Hartzell. "Beyond Power-sharing: Institutional Options for an Afghan Peace Process." United States Institute of Peace. December 9, 2012.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/12/beyond-power-sharing-institutional-options-afghan-peace-process>.

9. Otunba, Ganiyu Temitope. "The Impacts of Post-election Power-sharing Agreement on Horizontal Mechanisms for Political Accountability: A case study of Kenya 2008 to 2013." University of Gothenburg. August 14, 2013. https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/34106/1/gupea_2077_34106_1.pdf.

years of the 20th century, due to the existence of various impediments—and defective power sharing formulae proposed by the UN with the help of some regional countries—all attempts towards peace-building were fragile and vulnerable to reversal. After the ouster of the Taliban regime in 2001 by the international community via the US-led Global War on Terror (GWOT), the Bonn Agreement was signed by opponent groups and warring factions. The Bonn Agreement was a type of power sharing among warring parties to establish a new government, but it did not include all parties to the conflict, such as, for instance, the ousted Taliban. Resultantly, a massive reorganisation took place within the Taliban and by 2004, the group launched a full-scale insurgency in Afghanistan.

Since 2005, the Afghan government has taken several initiatives towards the peace process, such as the 2005 *Program Tahkim e Solh* (PTS); the peace and reconciliation process launched at the 2010 London Conference, followed by the 2010 peace assembly (peace Jirga) held in Kabul and the 2011 traditional Loya Jirga. The peace Jirga led to the development of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) and the creation of the High Peace Council (HPC) in October 2010.¹⁰ Since its establishment, the HPC has held several unofficial rounds of talks with the Taliban's representatives; and one official talk was held on 7 July 2015 in Murree, Pakistan, via the so-called Murree process, but unfortunately, all these peace initiatives have done little to lead the formal start of talks between the Afghan government and Taliban.

Despite the unsuccessful outcomes of power sharing as a mechanism of resolving disputes in the history of Afghanistan like the Bonn Agreement, the core focus of the current peace talks seems to be on the sharing of power and inclusion of insurgent groups into the Afghan government. In fact, the term 'power sharing' is not used by the Afghan government in their efforts toward the peace process. However, the latest peace agreement between Kabul and the Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan party of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Party's demand to become a government partner and seeking a position in civil and security institutions shows the

10. "Taliban Talks: Past, Present and Prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan." Danish Institute for International Studies. 2013. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/162384/RP2013-06-Taliban-Talks_web.jpg.pdf.

government's inclination towards power sharing with insurgent groups in exchange of peace deal.¹¹ The peace settlement of the Afghan government with the Taliban also requires sharing political power and positions with Taliban representatives in central or provincial levels; but due to the existence of suspicions and weak commitments from the Taliban, the Afghan government, and the international community (as facilitator), reconciliation with the Taliban seems very far away.

Apart from that, the required conditions and suitable environment to attract insurgents toward a peace settlement through power sharing mechanisms is also missing in negotiations with the Taliban. There have been serious flaws, which are responsible for the failure of the Afghan peace process. The key negative factors are: incoherent views of actors; lack of public support; ethnic disparity; unqualified mediators; unclear and vague demands of opposing sides.

Firstly, every peace settlement needs defined actors with clear and specified demands. Incoherent views among actors in the Afghan peace process severely complicate the orchestration of a positive outcome.¹² From the perspective of evaluating a peace accord, the Taliban is highly decentralized with relatively incoherent objectives regarding the terms of ending war. There are potential fractures within the insurgency's network of networks. So, the disagreement on objectives exists among the top leadership, first within the Quetta Shura and then between the Quetta Shura and its affiliated groups.

Moreover, also potentially influential could be the views of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), al Qaeda, and other transnational jihadist networks (such as those of the Chechens and Uzbeks) with roots in the lawless border regions.¹³ Kabul is also weak due to incoherent views. The Afghan ruling coterie (the powerful actors in current government including former warlords and local strongmen), benefitted from the

11. Ghanizada. "Gulbuddin's party wants 'power-sharing' with Kabul in exchange for peace." Khaama Press. March 23, 2016.

<http://www.khaama.com/gulbuddins-party-wants-power-sharing-with-kabul-in-exchange-for-peace-0428>.

12. Shinn, James, and James Dobbins. "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer." RAND Corporation. 2011.

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1131.html>.

13. Ibid

continued conflict in Afghanistan, and fears losing clout with significant reconciliation, and thus may sabotage any meaningful progress toward the peace process.¹⁴

These groups of people have a stake in continued conflict, foreign involvement and the flow of international funds into Afghanistan. Thus, incoherent actors are difficult and unreliable parties in any negotiation. The actors may change course midway; their terms are likely to shift and be retarded; and their commitment to implementation is always suspected.¹⁵

Secondly, the whole-hearted support of all Afghan ethnicities is necessary for the peace process to succeed. Afghanistan suffers from ethnic disparity and tribal divisions and it is an influential factor in the national reconciliation process. Claims of discrimination or unfair distribution of resources or power is a major cause of social unrest and an inclusive process should prevent this. There have not been any serious efforts or strategies to initiate a broad-based reconciliation process between the various fragmented segments of the Afghan society to ensure that an environment for a sustainable peace is achieved in the country. The politico-ethnic rivalry in Afghanistan has been a major source of the post 9/11 war and can threaten the Afghan social fabric unless addressed while pursuing a political settlement.¹⁶

Thirdly, neutral and qualified mediators are also necessary to engage and lead the peace talks—and the Afghan peace talks with the Taliban lacks this. The HPC is pursuing reconciliation efforts with the Taliban but its legitimacy and composition have been controversial.¹⁷ HPC members are appointed by the Afghan president and the body is viewed as a government institution rather than a neutral party capable of bringing the government

14. Khan, Raja Muhammad, and Ajmal Abbasi. "The Afghan Peace Process: Strategic Policy Contradictions and Lacunas." Islamabad Policy Research Institute. 2016.

<http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/art4w16.pdf>.

15. Shinn, James, and James Dobbins. "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer." RAND Corporation. 2011.

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1131.html>.

16. Khan, Raja Muhammad, and Ajmal Abbasi. "The Afghan Peace Process: Strategic Policy Contradictions and Lacunas." Islamabad Policy Research Institute. 2016.

<http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/art4w16.pdf>.

17. Ibid

and the insurgents together.¹⁸ While there are a number of former Taliban leaders in the HPC, there are also some members in the HPC who have a history of fighting with the Taliban, which lays doubt on their ultimate ability to negotiate with former enemies.¹⁹

Finally, for a successful peace negotiation, opposing parties must have clear ideas about their interests, objectives and limitations—and this is absent in the case of the Afghan peace talks. These factors cause roadblocks in the peace settlement in Afghanistan and negatively impact the prospects of success of the negotiations.

A review of the abovementioned impediments to peace settlements in Afghanistan begs the question: what are the least positive influential factors in the process of reconciliation with insurgents, and will these factors assist the process?

It is clear that the current top-down approach provides few opportunities for those who will be most affected by the peace agreement to have a voice in shaping the peace strategy. Both the Afghan government and the insurgents lack strong support among the Afghan people and neither is seen as a legitimate representative of public interest. So, any reconciliation process must include a broader array of actors and not just the incumbent Afghan government and the Taliban. The inclusion of civil society groups, potential political elites, public figures from the Afghan parliament, political opposition groups, academic circles and women is necessary to achieve a sustainable peace settlement.

Inclusion of civil society groups is highly significant in the Afghan peace negotiations. The presence of civil society groups in talks help move the approach from a government-centric one to a public centric one. Civil society groups seeking to expand the role of women in government and the economy, and those supporting human rights, free media and opposing corruption, will also view any peace process very sceptically. On the flipside, these groups are heavily dependent on the international

18. Galvanek, Janel B. "Supporting Negotiations for Peace in Afghanistan." Berghof Foundation. August 2014. http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Policy_Briefs/PolicyBrief04.pdf.

19. Ibid

donor community and will likely seek to exert their influence primarily through that community. It is also possible that civil society groups will fear becoming the target of state surveillance and selective violence.²⁰

In any peace negotiation, there will always be elements of the process that should be openly communicated to the public and those that should remain confidential. Without a certain level of transparency and dissemination of regular information and updates, citizens might assume that the peace process has lost momentum and that it is not progressing. In the Afghan peace process, public support is severely lacking and this has become one of the factors affecting the relationship between the government on the one side, and the civil society and Afghan citizens on the other.²¹

Another element that could facilitate the formulation of a peace settlement strategy is the use of Track II diplomacy in the current conflict in Afghanistan. Participants in Track II dialogues include academics, retired government officials, retired military and intelligence officers, local and religious leaders and selected civil society actors. All parties must agree upon the country, city and host institutions, where the Track II meeting will be held. There should be a channel between the members of the Track II forum and the actual decision-makers in the conflict, either in the form of government consultations, political influence, or scholarly exchange.²²

In an event the Afghan government arrives at a peace settlement with the Taliban via power sharing mechanisms, what will the positive and negative outcome/s of such a settlement be? Several positive outcomes will emerge by reconciliation with Taliban:

1. Reconciliation with Taliban, will inaugurate a new age of political stability, economic prosperity and security. Talking with the Taliban will provide chances of overcoming the growing threats of terrorist groups and ushering in political stability.

20. Shinn, James, and James Dobbins. "Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer." RAND Corporation. 2011. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1131.html>.

21. Galvanek, Janel B. "Supporting Negotiations for Peace in Afghanistan." Berghof Foundation. August 2014. http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Policy_Briefs/PolicyBrief04.pdf.

22. Ahmad, Aisha. "Talking to the Enemy: Track II and its Significance for Afghanistan." April 2008. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42909533>.

2. The establishment of a democratic government with the presence and support of opposite groups would strengthen peace and security across the country. The Taliban's participation in the elections as a legitimate political party and achieving political power through vote will not only bring stability, but will also become a model for other discontent and opposition groups to end their armed conflict and achieve power via legal means.²³
3. With the emergence of the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) –alternatively known as Daesh–in some provinces of Afghanistan as well as in the bordering regions, security challenges in the country will deteriorate. Therefore, a political power-sharing agreement with the Taliban will lead to reduction in conflict and strengthen the security and defence forces in Afghanistan to fight the ISKP. The Taliban can make an important contribution to countering the Daesh's presence and influence in Afghanistan.
4. One of the positive changes, which will be possible after the peace settlement with Taliban, is that Pakistan will largely lose control of the Taliban once they are reintegrated into the Afghan political process.²⁴
5. The achievement of an agreement with the Taliban would be a political problem for al Qaeda, which needs continued fighting to distract the US and to drum up Muslim support.²⁵ Reconciliation with the Taliban will be the best possible way to distance the Taliban from al Qaeda.
6. While the positive and desirable outcomes of a peace settlement with the Taliban should certainly be considered, its negative impacts should not be neglected while looking for possible solutions.

Power sharing requires concrete action. It is not just a political exercise involving signing agreements and shaking hands. So far, Afghanistan's current experiment in political power sharing between the two 2014

23. Moslih, Hashmat. "The Taliban and obstacles to Afghanistan peace talks." Al Jazeera. February 25, 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/02/taliban-obstacles-afghanistan-peace-talks-160225095920107.html>.

24. Dorransoro, Gilles. "Afghanistan: Searching for Political Agreement." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2010. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/searching_polit_agreement.pdf.

25. Ibid

presidential candidates—incumbent Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and incumbent Afghan Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah—has been a failure and there are severe disagreements at all levels. So, the chaos of the current model makes it difficult to imagine how power sharing with the Taliban in exchange for peace would be any easier. It is speculated that power sharing with the Taliban too will be met with wider chaos.

The establishment of a democratic power sharing political system is not possible in the absence of a strong core of moderate political elites and an effective civil society who seek pragmatic coexistence in Afghanistan's multi-ethnic society.²⁶ In the case of the Taliban leadership and Afghan government leaders, such an environment is missing.

There has been much speculation that the Afghan constitution will need to be amended in order to reach a final settlement with the Taliban. Therefore, there are strong apprehensions and fears that the government, potentially in the face of Taliban pressure, might sacrifice the rights of women and introduce stricter regulation.²⁷

ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE AFGHAN PEACE SETTLEMENT

One of the necessary elements of any peace negotiation is the support of the international community. In any peace settlement, the support of both the international community as well as that of all regional and internal power holders is a crucial element. For instance, Colombia's peace process had much support from international community and there were not many spoilers like in other war-torn countries.

Even the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (FARC) closest allies—Venezuela and Cuba—wanted peace between the government and the guerrilla groups. The role of the international community was more of

26. Arian, Farhad. "Could power-sharing build the consensus necessary for peace in Afghanistan?" Open Democracy. September 17, 2012.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/farhad-arian/could-power-sharing-build-consensus-necessary-for-peace-in-afghanistan>.

27. Galvanek, Janel B. "Supporting Negotiations for Peace in Afghanistan." Berghof Foundation. August 2014. http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Policy_Briefs/PolicyBrief04.pdf.

that of a facilitator for the peace talks. Its role was that of a guarantor and not the impetus for the talks.²⁸

Compared to the Colombian peace process, the role of the international community is extremely different in the case of Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the international community has not been in harmony on the issue of persuading the Afghan government and opposition toward peace talks. There was a growing competition, on the one hand between the Afghan government and the US, UK and the UN, and on the other hand between the Western allies themselves, as to who was to initiate decisive talks for power sharing with the Taliban. International actors engaged in proxy war towards their own geopolitical and national security interests and used the guise of peace-making.²⁹ Due to the existence of inconsistent views within the international community, they also failed to design a regional framework for stabilizing Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan is also intertwined with regional conflicts. Neighbouring countries could pull Afghanistan apart in a proxy war, such as the one in the 1990s. The trickiest issue in designing a regional strategy is finding a way to move Pakistan and India away from their confrontational position in Afghanistan using the country as a battleground in their border conflicts. Russia and the Central Asian countries are concerned about Afghan insurgents near their borders.³⁰ China and Russia's goals in Afghanistan are almost similar. China wants to get the US out of Central Asia. Meanwhile, both China and Russia, two great powers close to Afghanistan, have not been entirely displeased to see the US and its NATO allies being near Central Asia. China, unlike Russia, has no strong ties with any of the Afghan factions; it is not embittered by a previous defeat, and its primary objectives are to limit the spread of Islamist militancy throughout Central Asia and to advance its commercial interests, including its access to Afghanistan's natural resources. China also seeks to counterbalance

28. Sen, Ashish Kumar. "Lessons from Colombia's Peace Process." Atlantic Council. August 29, 2016. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/lessons-from-colombia-s-peace-process>.

29. Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou. "International Peacemaking in Tajikistan and Afghanistan Compared: Lessons Learned and Unlearned." Centre d'études et de Recherches Internationales, Sciences Po. April 2008. <http://www.sciencespo.fr/cei/sites/sciencespo.fr.cei/files/etude143.pdf>.

30. Jarvenpaa, Minna. "Making Peace in Afghanistan: The Missing Political Strategy." United States Institute of Peace. February 2011. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR267Jarvenpaa.pdf>.

India and support Pakistan via any direct involvement in Afghanistan. The Chinese are unlikely to exert themselves in support of a peace process, but are also unlikely to obstruct it as long as Pakistan is adequately included.³¹ Iran too has ambitions to be a regional heavyweight. It wants to maximize its influence over Afghanistan's future and minimize the influence of its enemies—particularly the US and Saudi Arabia.³² Although it finds a Taliban government undesirable, Iran tried to keep the US embroiled in Afghanistan by providing support to the insurgents, and may position itself to play spoiler in the peace process.³³

As mentioned above, the incoherence and ambiguous strategies of the international community are among the key impediments obstructing the success of peace negotiations. Since 2001, the US and NATO countries have been pursuing the GWOT and are parties to the war in Afghanistan.³⁴ After 9/11, the then US president George W. Bush said, “No nation can negotiate with terrorists.” The echo of this notion remained until March 2009, when the subsequent US administration led by now former US President Barack Obama proposed reaching out to the moderates among the Afghan Taliban.³⁵ The US' support of the initiative to reintegrate Taliban foot soldiers into the Afghan society was a counter-insurgency tactic to undermine the Taliban than part of a genuine peace initiative. During the 2010–2011 period, the US widened its focus from reintegration of foot soldiers to reconciliation with the Taliban leadership.³⁶ Despite leaning towards reconciliation with Taliban, the US remain reluctant and pursued the talking and fighting approach, which never emerged as a viable course of action to achieve peace.

The international community's role, particularly those of the US, UN and

31. Shinn, James, and James Dobbins. “Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer.” RAND Corporation. 2011. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1131.html>.

32. Jarvenpaa, Minna. “Making Peace in Afghanistan: The Missing Political Strategy.” United States Institute of Peace. February 2011. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR267Jarvenpaa.pdf>.

33. Ibid

34. Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou. “International Peacemaking in Tajikistan and Afghanistan Compared: Lessons Learned and Unlearned.” Centre d'études et de Recherches Internationales, Sciences Po. April 2008. <http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceiri/sites/sciencespo.fr/ceiri/files/etude143.pdf>.

35. “Taliban Talks: Past, Present and Prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Danish Institute for International Studies. 2013. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/162384/RP2013-06-Taliban-Talks_web.jpg.pdf.

36. Ibid

some influential regional powers like Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia too are significant elements in the peace settlement between the Afghan government and the insurgent groups. Some of the Taliban's peace conditions can be fulfilled via consent of the international community like the removal of foreign forces from Afghanistan; recognition of the Taliban by international actors as legitimate political actors; removal of names of Taliban leaders from the UN's blacklist; and the release of Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo Bay prison and elsewhere. So, meeting part of the Taliban's demands depends on the consent of the international community. Due to such a reality, they do not believe the Kabul government's commitment and are uninterested in talking to them. Hence, the role of external actors is a key factor in the peace settlement in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

The re-emergence of the Taliban as a growing political and military threat after their ouster in 2001 proved that insurgents cannot be defeated by military power alone. It became apparent to the Afghan government and the international community that there was a need to speak with the Taliban who are now stronger than ever. Despite several initiatives to bring the Taliban to the table for peace negotiations, various impediments - such as the unorganized groups of the Taliban; Afghanistan's weak government which lacks specific strategies; disharmony and ambiguous strategies among international and regional powers towards the Afghan peace process; the ethnic cleavage and lack of public support; weakness of the HPC; presence of unqualified mediators; and the vague and unclear demands of both the Afghan government and the insurgents—make the peace process more complex and controversial.

The following recommendations are made after a review of the abovementioned obstacles to Afghanistan's peace process, as well of that of probable positive and negative outcomes of the peace settlement with Taliban:

1. The previous efforts towards peace talks with the Taliban need to be considered before starting any peace dialogues.
2. The need for public support for peace must not be neglected. The inclusion of civil society representatives, women's rights champions, and local and religious leaders is crucial to the peace settlement. It will make the process clearer and prevent sacrifice of their legitimate rights by any probable peace settlement.
3. The weak points of the HPC must be addressed by the Afghan government, and its composition must be altered. HPC members should be selected from neutral influential leaders in the society and experts, who are acceptable to all parties.
4. The peace process needs the cooperation and support of neighbouring countries. The regional element of the war in Afghanistan, particularly the detrimental role of Pakistan, must be addressed more openly and honestly. The US, UN, China and Saudi Arabia must pressurize Pakistan to cooperate with Afghanistan in the peace process.
5. Regional talks about peace should be viewed as a separate but parallel process to the national reconciliation process. This is because regional powers are spoiling the process of national reconciliation due to their own interests. National reconciliation must not be in the control of any foreign country.
6. The appointment of an UN-endorsed facilitation to promote agreement among all the necessary parties to the Afghan peace process would be useful. The host country must be a neutral one and acceptable to both the Afghan government as well as the Taliban. Only Afghan parties should partake formally in the core negotiations regarding their country's future but all major external stakeholders, including India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and the US should conduct parallel, less formal discussions with a view to exercise convergent influence on the Afghan parties.

LEGITIMACY, PEACE PROCESSES, AND THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

ZARGHOONA ASLAMI¹

Legitimacy pertains to whether the contractual relationship between two entities—in this case, the government and public—is being fulfilled effectively or not. This paper investigates the role of legitimacy in Afghanistan's peace process and intends to identify factors related to legitimacy in the peace process in Afghanistan. Broadly, this study tries to explore answers to the following questions:

- How can the Afghan government have sustainable peace in Afghanistan?
- How can the peace process be made more inclusive?
- How can stakeholders in Afghanistan bridge the gap between the government and public and build legitimacy for the Afghan peace process?

Research for this essay was conducted in a questionnaire based interview format in the Afghan provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat. Those interviewed for this study belong to varied backgrounds, including from government service, general public, and civil society. Interviewees were selected based on gender, education and age. A total of 40 participants (15 female and 25 male) were interviewed, of which five were from Herat; 10 from Nangarhar; and remainder from Kabul.

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WHAT IS LEGITIMACY AND WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN PEACE PROCESSES?

The term ‘legitimacy’ comes from the Latin word ‘*legitimus*’ which means ‘according to law’. Therefore, legitimacy can be defined as the recognition and acceptance the citizens give their leaders to govern them. For a government to govern successfully, it must enjoy the support and popular acceptance of the citizens.² In a political context, legitimacy is generally understood as the popular acceptance of political authority. It refers to the social and political contracts that manage formal and informal relationships between the government and citizens, and between traditional or leaders and their constituencies and communities.³ It would thus be correct to deduce that legitimacy will play a vital role in achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan. The support of the public, the international community, and the civil society is a key factor for any successful peace agreement between the government and the opposite party/ies.⁴

Fundamentally, legitimacy is a subjective and a normative concept. It exists only in the beliefs of an individual about the rightfulness of rule. Legitimation is the process by which actors strive to create legitimacy for a rule or ruler. Actors and institutions constantly work to legitimize their power, and challengers work to de-legitimize it. The process of legitimization is often carried out by justifying the existence of rulers or their rules in terms of important normative principles of the society.⁵

With legitimacy, even unpopular decisions can be carried through over the objections of the ruled. Without legitimacy, even the most popular movements can be hampered and ultimately defeated.

2. “Concepts of Government– Legitimacy.” OldNaija. November 14, 2016. <https://oldnaija.com/tag/what-is-legitimacy-in-government-studies/>.

3. Ramsbotham, Alexander, and Achim Wennmann. “Policy Brief – Legitimacy and Peace Process: From Coercion to Consent.” 2014. https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/accord25PolicyBrief-ConciliationResources-2014_0.pdf.

4. Doyle, Michael W., and Nicholas Sambanis. “Building Peace: Challenges and Strategies After Civil War .” December 27, 1999. http://www.msu.ac.zw/elearning/material/1237744983building_peace_challenges_strategies_after_civil-war%5B1%5D.pdf.

5. Hurd, Ian. «Legitimacy.» The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination. <http://pesd.princeton.edu/?q=node/255>.

WHAT IS A PEACE PROCESS?

A peace process is a political process through which conflicts are resolved via peaceful means. It involves a combination of politics, diplomacy, changing relationships, negotiation, mediation, and dialogue in both official and unofficial spheres.⁶

THE ROLE OF LEGITIMACY IN A PEACE PROCESS

When political and societal actors, in addition to the primary conflict parties, are involved in peace negotiations, the resulting peace agreements are often more sustainable. The peace process should include both those in favor as well as those against. Therefore, participating actors could be all armed groups, political parties, civil society groups including faith-based organizations, special interest groups such as trade unions, professional associations, minority groups, women's rights groups, women, human rights organizations, and NGOs working in relief, development, peace, researchers and research institutions, traditional or indigenous groups. Depending on the situation, representatives from the business sector, too, can be included.

Eventually, all relevant groups must participate to reach a quality agreement that has a good chance of becoming sustainable.⁷ The findings of the interviews conducted for this essay suggest that in the Afghan peace process, not all abovementioned parties have been formally involved to support the peace process.

HOW CAN ALL PARTIES BE INVOLVED IN THE PEACE PROCESS?

Different techniques have been used to increase the participation of civil society organizations (CSO) in peace talks. Negotiating structures have been created to permit direct and indirect access to peace talks by various interest groups (e.g., the government and the Taliban). Civil society initiatives helped build trust between the parties for future political

6.Saunders, Harold H. "Prenegotiation and Circum-negotiation: Arenas of the Peace Process Prenegotiation and Circum-negotiation: Arenas of the Peace Process ." 1996.

7.Paffenholz, Thania. "Broadening Participation in Peace Processes: Dilemmas & Options for Mediators." 2014. <http://www.hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MPS4-Broadening-participation-in-peace-processes-July-2014.pdf>.

negotiations around the new constitution. While it is difficult to assess the exact influence of dialogue on the parties' acceptance of peace talks, the project proved the possibility of negotiation, built trust, and developed relationships among participants.⁸

Broadly, peace processes can be categorized into two types: top-down, and bottom-up.⁹

Top-down Peace Process

A vertical or top-down peace process is a governmental process based on authority and line management, and clear structures. They are the types of relationships we are likely to experience at a place of employment. Top-down peace processes and practices emphasize strictly on the participation of political elites and formal institutions. Although simultaneously the ideas of deliberation and face-to-face dialogue have been promoted, in a top-down process, governments follow up the process without public involvement.

Bottom-up Peace Process

A horizontal or bottom-up process is found in groups of people and other informal networks. These relationships are based on personal linkages, are informal, and rely on mutual interest.¹⁰ A bottom-up approach requires developing institutions from the grassroots level, developing local capacity for self-government, raising public awareness, promoting representation of all communities, and providing an ideal environment for the development of local administrative units as the basis for a decentralized government.

Given how outcomes of peace processes impact people and entities across the spectrum, a bottom-up approach, which is a comprehensive and community-centered long-term strategy, is better equipped to bring lasting peace in divided societies.

8. "Nine Models for Inclusion of Civil Society in Peace Processes." 2013.

9. "The Colombian peace process: Top-down peace agreement and bottom-up territorial peacebuilding." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2016. <https://www.sipri.org/events/2016/colombian-peace-process>.

10. Stuart, Graeme. "What are vertical and horizontal community engagement?" May 24, 2012.

<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2012/05/24/vertical-and-horizontal-community-engagement/>.

The bottom-up peace-process approach has previously been employed in the Caucasus, Malaysia, Somalia, Norway etc. This process had the potential to be used again and can be a solution to the conflict. The international community and the local and federal authorities were also involved in these processes.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PEACE PROCESSES

Civil society is not uniform; it comes in many organizational forms. It can have varying degrees of autonomy from the state, and sometimes it can even serve as a substitute for the state when governments fail to serve their population's needs.¹¹ Civil society comprises organizations, individuals and networks belonging to various streams of thought, and therefore embody multiple voices, providing a wide array of perspectives.

Civil society as a whole has a unique role and potential in peace processes but strengthening civil society does not automatically contribute to peace process. Interventions for peace by the civil society have not been rigorously evaluated. Civil society and donors need to identify strategic objectives and demonstrate the relevance of activities in which they propose to engage to their stated objective. Civil society groups can help bring greater public representation into negotiation.¹²

In the Afghan peace process, Kabul-based NGOs also can be very helpful in organizing spaces for discussion. Several of these NGOs have civil society networks throughout the country. They can help provide background information on different localities and the relevant actors; they can help organize initial consultations both locally and nationally.

AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE PROCESS

The peace process program in Afghanistan began in February 2003—a year and two months after the Bonn Conference (which decided a major course

11. Wanis-St. John, Anthony, and Darren Kew. "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion." 2008.

<http://www.american.edu/sis/faculty/upload/wanis-kew-civil-society-and-peace-negotiations.pdf>.

12. Iglesias, Sol. "The Role of Civil Society in Peacebuilding: Southeast Asia in Focus." European Peacebuilding Liaison Office. 2013.

http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/EPLO_CSDN_Background-paper_Role-Civil-Society-Peacebuilding.pdf.

of peace building in Afghanistan). The government began these processes under the aegis of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), DAYAK processes with the support of international community.¹³

In the interviews this author conducted, the interviewees stated that during the abovementioned period of negotiation with the Taliban, the Afghan peace process was a top-down or vertical process with involvement of international parties. The general public was not involved. The peace process strategy was not shared with public, albeit sometimes, people or their representatives were invited to the Loya Jirga to discuss the problems. However, those invited were individuals who were part of the government or some involved parties. Over the past few years, the government was unable to negotiate with some Taliban leaders because they were not based in Afghanistan.

It is critical for the government and peace-builders in Afghanistan to open the window for reconciliation with even core members of the Taliban because it is always important to show an “exit strategy” for these insurgents so that they can be a part of the government if they lay down their weapons and accept the constitution. Not giving an exit strategy would push them to the corner and make them fight back for a long time.¹⁴

Entities like the Taliban want to be involved in the government and policy-making and to have authority in central and local governance. However, so far, the Afghan government did not have such a mechanism to involve all parties in government and give them authority.

Those interviewed for this study stated that the Afghan government does not recognize the capacity of the Afghan people to resolve conflicts and build and sustain peace. Local leaders such as religious leaders and leaders of ethnic groups can be very helpful for peace process. When all parties are involved in the process, sustainable peace becomes plausible. The Afghan government should empower local people, raise public awareness, and ensure representation and participation of all sections of the community in the process.

13. Higashi, Daisaku. “Challenge of Constructing Legitimacy in Peacebuilding: Case of Afghanistan.” Japan International Cooperation Agency. September 2008. <https://www.jica.go.jp/story/interview/pdf/afghan.pdf>.

14. Ibid

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure that the peace process is viewed as legitimate, the Afghan government should consider the below standards to achieve sustainable peace. A comprehensive peace process takes place at three interconnected levels: top-level (political negotiations), bottom-level (grassroots healing processes), and the middle level (organized civil society)—the latter forming a bridge between the top and bottom.¹⁵

As mentioned above, there are two broad types of peace processes. The Afghan government should consider both types of peace processes—top-down and bottom-up—together. This is because the bottom-up approach is a people-centered approach that advocates peace from within the affected societies and requires convincing the hearts and minds of the local people to get them to work for peace and reconciliation wholeheartedly.¹⁶

People in Afghanistan overwhelmingly support the idea of reconciliation. In the survey conducted by this author, 70% of the respondents said reconciliation with insurgent groups, including the Taliban, is the first priority to establish peace in Afghanistan. However, credible reconciliation is extremely difficult in the current circumstances, especially because core members of the Taliban seem to have no incentive to make substantial concessions to the Afghan government, due to their ideological structures as well as due to them increasingly gaining control of territory in Afghanistan. Thus, the main target for reconciliation in the current situation is low and middle-level footsoldiers who fight for the Taliban because of their economic and social needs. In fact, they comprise majority of the insurgents.¹⁷

The findings of the survey conducted for this paper demonstrates that when local people in the provinces and districts are involved in the peace process, they can help the government by explaining how to support the families; or that their family member is in the Taliban; why they avoid the

15. Ramsbotham, Alexander, and Achim Wennmann. "Policy Brief – Legitimacy and Peace Process: From Coercion to Consent." 2014.

16. Netabay, Nuredin. "Bottom-Up Approach: A Viable Strategy in Solving the Somali Conflict." March 2007. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/casestudy/netabay-bottom>.

17. Higashi, Daisaku. "Challenge of Constructing Legitimacy in Peacebuilding: Case of Afghanistan." Japan International Cooperation Agency. September 2008. <https://www.jica.go.jp/story/interview/pdf/afghan.pdf>.

government; what they want; what is the reason they avoid the government etc. Some of the interviewees said several youths have joined the Taliban because they are unemployed and their families have low incomes; and that therefore, enlisting local people to play a role in the peace process will help the peace process because their participation will be more helpful towards weakening the Taliban forces.

For the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban or other parties to be legitimate, civil society plays a key role.¹⁸

Civil society can work for legitimacy and the peace process effectively and should be supported to increase its contribution and sustainability.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Civil society groups have often contributed effectively to the reduction of violence, the negotiation of settlements, and the facilitation of peace in post-conflict environments.²⁰ The role of civil society in peace process has gained increased recognition in the last decade. Today, the main question is no longer whether civil society has a role to play in peace processes, and instead about how it can realize its potential; what the roles of various actors are; what the critical factors and pre-conditions for their effectiveness are; and how external actors can best provide support.

Legitimacy paves the ground for the participation of people and people should wait for the forthcoming outcome. Similarly, some peace processes just focus on political and military sectors, ignoring business and non-governmental sectors. In several contexts, peace activists have come to realize that peace processes require the involvement of majority population from different sectors.²¹

Civil society has an important supportive role in peace process. However,

18. Clements, Kevin. "Legitimacy and peace processes: from coercion to consent." 2014.

<http://www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes/what-legitimacy-and-why-does-it-matter-peace>.

19. Paffenholz, Thania. "Civil Society and Peacebuilding." 2009.

https://www.sfcg.org/events/pdf/CCDP_Working_Paper_4-1%20a.pdf.

20. Ibid

21. Forster, Reiner, and Mark Mattner. "Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Potential, Limitations and Critical Factors." World Bank. December 20, 2006.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resource->

es/244362-1164107274725/3182370-1164110717447/Civil_Society_and_Peacebuilding.pdf.

a careful look at the engagement of civil society in comparison to the involvement of other actors reveals that the role played by the civil society is not necessarily decisive in building peace, but rather plays a supportive yet important role in most instances.

COMPROMISE, CONSENSUS-BUILDING AND TRUST: MISSING INGREDIENTS IN AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

MARZIA MEENA¹

Conflicts have unique regional, historical and cultural contexts. Past peace negotiations from other countries can provide a roadmap for Afghanistan. Shared strategies inform us about the processes, protocols, and practices that achieve results, including trust-building and the abandonment of strategies that have failed to achieve the promise of peace.

The governments of Colombia and El Salvador engaged strategies to attain peace amidst counterinsurgency efforts. In El Salvador, the peace process ended the war in 1992 through a political solution (a peace accord). Salvadoran insurgents demobilized and became a legal political party, while the government agreed to make changes in the social and political structures of the country, answering the key motivating demands that gave rise to the insurgency in the first place. A similar process achieved results in Colombia. Both cases offer insights into peace negotiations relevant to Afghanistan.

Negotiations have been ongoing in and outside Afghanistan since 2001. Mutual distrust between the Afghan government and the Taliban (the main anti-government element) has contributed to the failure to deliver results. Mediation has been generally weak and under-supported despite strong interests from regional and international partners. Attaining peace in Afghanistan has proven to be extraordinarily difficult. Afghan

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stakeholders and many international actors have differing interests. Multi-stakeholder approaches have unique challenges. The examples of El Salvador and Colombia demonstrate that various groups and players can work together to achieve real peace when insurgents lay down arms and become legal political entities in representative democracies. Both show that the process of seeking peace, rather than a singular focus on a final peace agreement itself, enhances trust, even with set-backs. This is particularly relevant to Afghanistan.

OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This paper analyses the Afghan peace process with an objective of identifying ways to make it more effective. The analyses, observations and recommendations are compiled from research activities that include interviews, secondary literature, and an assessment of local views, coupled with a review of the history of the conflict and past efforts at achieving peace. Interviews with a former White House and US Department of Defense official involved in Afghanistan's war and the reconstruction since 1980s contextualized the history of international activities and captured current thinking about Afghanistan. Interviews with select government officials, including both Afghan and former US officials who were previously involved in the peace process in Afghanistan, were undertaken. Ten interviews were completed between May 2017 and September 2017 to inform future peace negotiations.

PRESCRIPTIVE THINKING

1. To be successful, the Afghan government must attract genuine, authentic support from Afghanistan's citizenry, which enhances democratic ideals and ensures longer lasting peace with wider support.
2. Support must be attained from the wider international community and regional participants. Pakistan has influenced previous outcomes and fueled the intransigence of Afghanistan's insurgency with political support, safe havens, money, weapons and ammunition.
3. To merely label Pakistan as a spoiler is also wrong—the country is motivated by its own political and economic needs, which offers insights

into how to motivate positive involvement as a negotiating channel with the Taliban.²

4. The Taliban's key leaders are based in Pakistan and maintain open relationships with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), a staunch supporter and funder of the Taliban since its inception.³ This provides the ISI with significant influence.⁴

5. Alternative approaches based on trust-building can open the path to reconciliation. Trust is strongest when it builds slowly over time, proving each side as reasonable and predictable. Understanding the reasons for the present lack of trust are critical to peace.

6. Mediators can help parties to work together by allowing them to "tell their stories" and explain how they feel, which generates understanding and empathy, and breaks down barriers.⁵

7. Cessation of hostilities and voluntary partial disarmament can build trust, even if it is not usually a precursor to (but rather one of the outcomes of) negotiations. The benefits outweigh the risks. Positioning the Taliban to demand reciprocity and reducing pressure for outside military intervention. If peace is achieved, it is self-validating. If the talks fail, the Taliban could rapidly rearm anyway.⁶ The principle that the conflict is best fought on political, rather than military grounds should inform the parties. To transform an insurgent group into a political participant in the governance of Afghanistan, the Afghan constitution should codify negotiated changes that address the Taliban's demands.

8. The achievements of the Afghan constitution should not be readily sacrificed. Any debate to overturn some of the structures and rights of the democracy, by necessity, will be public, making any erosion of Afghanistan's democracy unlikely. These achievements are embedded in the national consciousness. The bullet is not more powerful than the vote.

2. Norland, Rod. "Afghanistan Signs Draft Peace Deal With Faction Led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar." September 22, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/23/world/asia/afghanistan-peace-deal-hezb-i-islami.html>.

3. Harsat. "The Prospect of Peace Talks with the Taliban." CPCS Peace Practitioners' Research Conference, 2012.

4. "Interview with Thomas Van Hare." Interview by author.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

9. The international view calls for the participation from all the factions of the Taliban and warlords, including those who served as spoilers in the past and those who profit from the conflict. This includes the Haqqani Network, the Quetta Shura, and the Peshawar Shura. There is still value in continuing the discussion even if some refuse to participate.⁷

10. Negotiations may take place behind closed doors, but true peace can only be achieved in the bright light of day. Final agreements must be made public to enhance Afghanistan's democracy.⁸

11. Negotiations with the Taliban must be without preconditions.

FACTORS UNDERMINING AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE PROCESS

Mutual Mistrust

Distrust is an obstacle to sustainable peace. Trust builds confidence, increases the willingness to compromise, and avoids the "security dilemma." It helps participants accept the outcomes. A successful peace process requires "that the protagonists are willing to negotiate in good faith, and that the negotiators are committed to a sustained process."⁹

In Afghanistan, mistrust abounds; the parties have not negotiated sincerely. Bad faith and the absence of positive intent compromise the peace process. The scale of the violence and atrocities in Afghanistan have fostered fresh hatred and broken relationships, even where good relations had previously prevailed. The Taliban continue to conduct "indiscriminate attacks, including killing civilians, torture, and destruction of houses rape and other forms of sexual violence and displacement of civilians."¹⁰

Furthermore, the Taliban is divided, diminishing trust between the Taliban and its own representatives and limiting good faith. Examples of this include Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, a former head of the Taliban's

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. J. Darby, Roger Mac Ginty. (ed)"Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Peace Processes and Post-war Reconstruction." Palgrave Macmillan UK. 2008.

10. Amnesty International. "Afghanistan: Harrowing accounts emerge of the Taliban's reign of terror in Kunduz." 2015.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/afghanistan-harrowing-accounts-emerge-of-the-talibans-reign-of-terror-in-kunduz/>

political office in Doha, Qatar; and Sohail Shaeen, the spokesperson for the Taliban's Qatar office, were the Taliban leaders whose names were removed from a UN sanction list in 2010 as an early step towards confidence-building in the peace process.

The international community and neighboring countries can assist in creating an effective peace process.¹¹ This includes offering incentives to participate and altering the risk–benefit analysis, encouraging the Taliban to come to a unified position. Pakistan's military and intelligence services provide the Taliban sanctuary and support, contextually related to its rivalry with India. The Taliban is an instrument for achieving this objective.¹² Negotiations require Pakistan's support; and if that involvement is excessive, India, Russia, and Iran may engage countermeasures.

Pakistan's participation may not be positive unless mediators recognize the country's security, political and economic needs. "Carrots and sticks" may encourage Pakistan to cease political and military support for the insurgency. Additionally, a diminution of India's presence in Afghanistan and a commitment to geopolitical nonalignment may assist.¹³ Finally, Pakistan only supports the insurgency in as much as it does not see open politico-diplomatic avenues to achieve its goals and despite great cost to its own national budget and even greater political costs vis-a-vis the international community.

Weak Mediation

Mediation provides opportunities to build trust and lays the groundwork for negotiations. Mediators can play a key determining role in the success or failure of any negotiation. However, in the past, there have been instances where mediation efforts have sometimes helped induce failure, owing to mediators pursuing their own national or other goals. External pressure does not always promote peace; it can even guarantee failure.

Afghanistan's conflict is made possible by external assistance, weapons,

11. Waldman, Matt. "Navigating Negotiations in Afghanistan." United States Institute of Peace. September 14, 2010. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2010/09/navigating-negotiations-afghanistan>.

12. Ibid

13. "Interview with Thomas Van Hare." Interview by author.

and intelligence support. Some factions seek to derail and complicate the peace process, and skew outcomes to their own benefit. Negotiations are neither Afghan-led nor Afghan-owned. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai flagged this at the 2010 London Conference. Mediators have used ineffective mediation strategies, failed to establish clear ground rules, or ignored the importance of confidence building measures (CBMs), thereby delaying peace.¹⁴ This has fragmented the Taliban, fostering disagreements among subgroups over disputed issues.

No unified, effective, or stable mediation strategy has emerged. Past models of the peace process (El Salvador and Colombia) offer little insight, since in those cases, even when differing factions within the insurgencies vied for power, the peace process was enabled by strong internal agreement on core goals. Minor disagreements were set aside for future consideration. The Taliban, however, has numerous splinter groups in vehement mutual disagreement, which often manifests violently, and is experiencing a renewed bickering over power.

Open-minded multi-party mediation can limit the influence of narrow outside interests. Disagreements among mediators should be resolved in discussions between the mediators, separate from the negotiations between the key parties.

The selection of mediators and a mediation methodology can form another trust-building component. Even discussing mediation failures can serve to build trust. Difficult issues are made easier when based on a foundation of agreements pertaining to the mediation process. Participants are less likely to “walk away” after investing in the establishment of a fair and structured mediation forum.

Third-party, non-combatant mediators would be preferable. When a mediator is also actively involved in military targeting of the Taliban leadership, a lack of trust is the natural outcome.

14. “CBMs aim to build confidence. Confidence is a psychological state, where actors make themselves vulnerable and ready to take risks based on the expectation of goodwill and positive behavior from a counterpart. Mason, Simon J. A., and Matthias Siegfried. “Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Peace Processes.” 2013. <http://mediationsupportnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Confidence-building-measures.pdf>.

PEACE NEGOTIATION

Peace negotiations involve compromises, consensus-building, and trust. They do not necessarily produce balanced outcomes and may capture and render existing power imbalances into final accords. They may not address all the underlying issues or the most critical dimensions of a conflict. Negotiations should begin with the genuine interest in achieving peace, not to seek tactical advantage for political, economic, or military gain. The goal should be to reach a long-term agreement through a willingness to compromise. This has been lacking in Afghanistan's case.

Neither side should expect to get everything it wants, even when objectives are modest. Good faith usually leads to fair solutions when negotiators represent the broader interests of the wider society. Where elites and external parties seek to derail negotiations that are based on good faith, an opportunity is presented to continue if the wider society supports it. People can be highly cooperative in long-term relationships. Inappropriate behavior will be punished in the future by eroding the strength of negotiating positions.¹⁵

A tradeoff between peace and justice always exists. Negotiations are different from tacit bargaining and other behaviors, providing a forum to declare success on political or economic factors, rather than the metric of military success. As Fred Ikle says, "negotiation is a process in which explicit proposals agree on an exchange or on the realization of common interest where conflicting interests are present."¹⁶

Afghanistan's peace process is complex, involving many political and social variables. Numerous factions compete for power and numerous personalities are involved. A multi-stakeholder approach rightly presupposes that these divergent groups could work together towards a common objective.^{17 18}

15. Aumann, Robert J. "War and Peace (Robert J. Aumann - Prize Lecture)." December 8, 2005.

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/2005/aumann-lecture.html.

16. Weibel, Robert. "A Negotiation Handbook." Center for European Negotiation and Decision-Making, 2012.

http://www.avalikteenistus.ee/public/Jurgen/Koolitusprogrammid/Robert_Weibel_Neg_Handbook_2012.pdf.

17. "Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention & Peace Build Manual", Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. 2015.

18. Bahrami, Abdul Ahad. "Kick-Starting Formal Peace Talks." Daily Outlook Afghanistan. July 9, 2015.

Negotiations are most successful when the intentions of involved parties are clear and representative of the actual values of their constituents. With honest commitment, Afghanistan can achieve peace. However, if stakeholders bear ill-intentions, peace will be elusive even if their supporters desire resolution. There is little chance for success if the negotiators do not represent their respective factions.

POWER-SHARING AS THE ENEMY OF PEACE

In the past, Afghan peace negotiations have suffered from a focus on power-sharing. Agreements were not developed as a “final peace,” but instead temporarily reflected the relative balance and/or imbalance of power among elites. Such agreements are naturally prone to renegotiation or abandonment—with a probable return to violence upon a substantive shift in the balance of power. Power-sharing is not a path to peace, but a temporary cessation of hostilities that allows participants to consolidate positions, rearm, and gain additional international support before returning to conflict. Essentially, it ensures the continuation of the conflict itself.¹⁹

Power-sharing negotiations are almost universally elite-driven and focused on dividing up governmental functions, responsibilities, control, and budgetary authority among competing warlord elites. The outcomes enjoy little public value, support, or ownership and, by design, address the interests of the elites alone, at direct odds with the principles of Afghanistan’s constitution and the concepts of democracy. Rather than focusing on how the fruits of peace might improve the standards of living of the Afghan people, power-sharing agreements focus on dividing territories; creating legal authorities for elite power; dividing national budgets among the elites; and solidifying elite power bases.

Since 2001, the Afghan government has functioned as a power-sharing arrangement among historic elites dating back to the Soviet War era, a natural result of the victors of the initial period of conflict “dividing up the pie” among themselves. Without a valid socialization strategy, the public is excluded from the negotiations and may not support or even be aware

http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=12556.

19. “Interview with Thomas Van Hare.” Interview by author.

of the agreements reached. As former US Department of Defense official Thomas Van Hare stated, “Until power-sharing is abandoned as a strategy for reaching a peace accord, there is little hope for peace in Afghanistan.”²⁰

Since power-sharing has been the past focus, the Taliban views current negotiations as being less oriented to peace and more to how the benefits of shared governance can be split among elites. Successful peace negotiations require both public affairs outreach and open, national-level debates among all factions and sides. Real peace stems from democracy, not elite rule. Without “grass roots” involvement, whatever peace is achieved is inevitably more a power-sharing deal than a democratic achievement. This begs the question as to what democratic preconditions must exist within Afghanistan to dissuade elite-driven power-sharing processes.²¹

Likewise, when power-sharing is the goal, resulting agreements cannot represent the full resolution of problems, but rather only address the narrow interests of elites. Elites stabilize their grip on power and profit from the situation; and coincidentally, this may be in the interest of the Afghan people. Power-sharing deals regularly terminate with renewed violence and conflict.

As Van Hare said, “Power-sharing agreements are direct adversaries to peace, not direct precursors and should be viewed with disdain. A valid approach to peace is one focused on disarmament, cease-fire, and the recognition of a democratic electoral process. This should be plainly obvious. Power-sharing agreements are anti-democratic and the enemy of the power of the vote; they tear down, rather than build up democratic institutions.”²²

A sustainable peace entails not only changing Afghanistan’s established patterns of governance (or absence of it), but also demands thorough revisions to its economic policies. This process often begins, rather than ends, once the peace accord is signed. Trust-building must be undertaken first if effective negotiations concerning economic policy are to follow.

20. Ibid

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This analysis of Afghanistan's peace process illuminates many issues; highlights core flaws in the core approaches to mediation and negotiations; and reveals that the intended outcomes, wrongly centered on power-sharing, fall short of true peace.

Top-Level Leaders: Negotiations involve the top-level leaders of each party or their direct representatives. However, high profile involvement is not always positive and encourages a focus on power-sharing. Granting powers as an inducement to join the government favors elites and erodes democracy, constrains negotiating positions, and curtails reasoned compromise. Top-level leaders cannot accept less than their publicly stated goals without risking their power. High status may confer the power and standing to negotiate, but reduces flexibility and corrupts the process. A balance can ensure the legitimacy of outcomes and that all sides respect the terms reached.

Mid-Level Leaders: Mid-Level leaders and field commanders influence top-level leaders in negotiations. Ideally, they hold strong relationships with their constituencies. They depend less on public profiles and enjoy greater maneuverability. Negotiating teams should include mid-level leaders with varied expertise and connections.²³

Building Trust: The government and the Taliban have a long history of interaction through ongoing conflict in the Taliban's heartland. Restoring, healing, and restructuring these relationships are at the core of a sustainable peace. Without a cessation of hostilities, trust-building has proven difficult. Recurring cycles of violence damage relationships, erode trust, and create revenge-based motivations.

The *Interpeace Methodology* helps divided communities re-establish trust through collaborative identification of problems and implementation of solutions to common concerns. Trust and communication must be built between the powerful and the powerless. The Afghan government cannot count on "shooting its way to peace"—and neither can the Taliban.

23. Smock, David R., and Amy L. Smith. "Managing a Mediation Process." United States Institute of Peace. August 1, 2008. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2008/08/managing-mediation-process-0>.

If peace is the true goal, the ascendant party must take the first steps to initiate peace, not the other way around. Peace is not a temporary lull in hostilities while the less powerful rebuilds its forces for the next round. Trust cannot be imposed, imported or bought. It is built slowly through collective engagement and commitment to a common vision.²⁴

Building trust is the most difficult and crucial aspect of peace-building. More than the revitalization of the country's infrastructure or the economy, trust is that intangible ingredient that prevents a relapse into conflict. Trust gives institutions lasting legitimacy and helps individuals and groups remain engaged in the long and arduous process of building lasting peace.²⁵

Trust can be achieved through repeated cycles of negotiations over small matters that benefit each party. These repeated cycles help lay the foundations for renewing ties, expanding relationships, understanding, and deeper trust. This concept is drawn from the pioneering work of the Nobel Prize recipients Robert J. Aumann and Thomas C. Schelling. Dr. Schelling's work previously involved applying game theory to international arms control negotiations between the US and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Dr. Schelling's key contribution is the application of the "stag hunt" to global peace negotiations. The "stag hunt" is a model in game theory where opposing tribes learn to hunt cooperatively and divide the limited resources of the valley separating them. The motivation to cheat on each for greater short-term advantage gives rise to long term cooperation for greater mutual benefit.²⁶ Dr. Schelling postulates a cycle of multiple encounters and small agreements to reach a natural and inevitable outcome of full cooperation.

Applying this theoretical framework to Afghanistan reveals the fallacy of expecting a full and final peace accord amidst an apparent lack of trust.

24. Brandt, Michele, Jill Cottrell, Yash Ghai, and Anthony Regan. "Constitution-making and reform: Options for the process." Interpeace. November 1, 2011.

<http://www.interpeace.org/resource/constitution-making-and-reform-options-for-the-process-2/>.

25. Ibid

26. Schelling, Thomas C. "Reciprocal Measures for Arms Stabilization." American Academy of Arts and Sciences. 1961.

Trust is the critical precursor to peace. By applying Dr. Schelling's model, one can refocus not on the single, final agreement, but on multiple small agreements along the path to peace. When small agreements are broken, it constitutes another step along the way; and violations, even the most violent ones, are opportunities to build trust, rather than the opposite. This approach is deeply connected to the cultural landscape of Afghanistan, where ties develop over time and violence is an accepted expression of socio-political interest with established rules for resolving conflicts. While Dr. Schelling's game theory concepts were proposed for negotiations for the superpower arms race, they apply well to the Afghan context. The "stag hunt" postulates a tribal society structure in the first place.

Notably, initial arms control negotiations were ineffective until Schelling openly described the "stag hunt" to the Soviet negotiators. This led to a breakthrough and formed the starting point to build trust.

Clear Ground Rules: Amy L. Smith and David R. Smock in their work, "Managing a Mediation Process Tool Kit," address fostering peace by clear, consistently applied ground rules for negotiations. Involving participants in designing those ground rules builds trust. International mediation is conducted informally, often with only one partner and without rules or guidelines. When serendipity presents opportunities, mediators should adjust strategies. Ground rules should be public and widely supported. As disputes arise, resolutions can include a renegotiation of the ground rules themselves.

Manage Spoilers: Smith and Smock argue that those who block settlements do so when their own interests are not met. To give a seat to a spoiler may appear as rewarding bad behavior; risks alienating other participants; and can taint the talks. Yet, participation is important because outright exclusion creates resistance and may remove the very actors and issues that are required for resolution. Mediators can find ways to undercut the most radical demands, while addressing valid inputs. In extreme cases, spoilers can be invited to participate without conferring public standing until they abandon a spoiler role, thus proposing negotiated terms that entice them to abandon their spoiler role.

Including Marginalized Groups: To strengthen negotiations, all interested stakeholders, including the marginalized, should be included. Women are among the most marginalized stakeholders in Afghanistan. Peace negotiations offer a unique opportunity for women's political empowerment, as supported by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and reinforced by Afghan policy. However, women remain largely excluded from peace negotiations, and participate through NGOs and international organizations, and, rarely, as elected officials.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: A PREREQUISITE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE?

NAZI KARIM¹

After the Taliban regime was ousted in 2001, a transitional government was established with Hamid Karzai as head of the interim government. Over the past three decades of war, Afghans have suffered tremendously. They have lost homes, lands, security, and most importantly, their family members. Despite the shortcomings of the 2001 Bonn Agreement between former warring groups to lay down their arms and re-build Afghanistan people were very hopeful that this landmark agreement would bring crucial changes and a legitimate government.^{2 3} In order to avoid breaking the temporary and fragile peace that had been built in after the fall of the Taliban regime—and to not upset leaders of different factions who were key stakeholders in the Bonn process and themselves among those who had been accused of war crimes during the civil war (1992–1996)—the new Afghan government and its international backers insisted that raising the issue of transitional justice would upset the uneasy peace. As a result, the United Nations (UN) dropped the issue of dealing with war crimes and human rights violations that had occurred prior to 2001.⁴

Transitional justice, refers to short-term and often temporary judicial and non-judicial mechanisms and processes that address the legacy of human

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2. Afghanistan Justice Organization, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. *Transitional Justice in Afghanistan: "We should not repeat old issues?"*. Oct 2013.

3. Winterbotham, Emily. "The state of transitional justice in Afghanistan". *Actors, approaches and challenges*. April, 2010

4. *Ibid.*

right abuses and violence during a society's transition away from conflict or authoritarian rule. The main aim of transitional justice is to bring closure and heal the wounds of individuals and society. It provides justice to victims of conflict and war by making the perpetrator and violators of human rights accountable, restoring rule of law, reforming institutions to promote demarcation and human rights, and ensuring that human rights violations are not repeated.⁵

The steps taken after 2001 towards building peace in Afghanistan did not address the question of transitional justice. Furthermore, the measures undertaken by the independent human rights commission and the action plan were without any positive contribution to transitional justice process, and thus, were a failure. For instance, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) was created in 2002 with a mandate of addressing the issue of transitional justice. The first step taken by the AIHRC was to “undertake national consultation and propose a national strategy for transitional justice.”⁶ Their first report, the 2005 ‘A Call for Justice Report’, which covered the last two last decades of war, includes 5000 respondents who have claimed that they have experienced human rights violation, or at least a member of their families has been victim of war.⁷ Almost half of the respondents were in favor of war criminals’ prosecution. The AIHRC adopted the National Action Plan for peace, reconciliation and justice in Afghanistan, aiming to address the issue of past crimes and establish a culture of respect for human rights and accountability; and mainly to answer to the report which was never published. Unfortunately, the plan was put to an end in 2009 without achieving its goal.

On another hand, while failed attempts were made to build peace, the question of transitional justice went unnoticed even in peripheral activities. For instance, the Afghanistan New Beginning Program (ANBP); the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program; and the Programme Tahkim-e-Sohl (PTS) were failures, since it did not meet

5. Anderlini, SN. Camille, Pampell Conaway and Lisa Keys. 2004. Transitional justice and reconciliation.

6. Afghanistan Justice Organization. “Transitional justice in Afghanistan.”

7. Ibid

any needs of the people, which were and are regarding building peace in country.⁸ The prime focus through all these processes have been towards building peace, while completely ignoring the significance of transitional justice, and its role in peace-building.

AMNESTY LAW: END OF HOPE FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE?

In 2007, the Afghan parliament passed the amnesty law, granting general amnesty (which covers all crimes committed by criminals and war lords during the war period) to all political factions and hostile parties who were involved in one way or another in hostilities before the establishment of the interim administration before 2001.^{9 10}

This law, which extended to the Taliban as well, was a disappointment to civilians who were accepting some kind of trial for war crimes committed by insurgents and other armed government opposition groups. There was only one provision in this law that gave individuals the right to file claims and seek justice against those who committed crimes. However, implementing the same was complicated because most individuals involved in war crimes—such as former *mujahideen* leaders and militias—were then part of the Hamid Karzai transition government.^{11 12} If violators of human rights are in government, and forgiven, others like the Taliban too should be forgiven. The DDR process was about reintegrating those Taliban members who submit to the Afghanistan constitution and lay down their weapons. In this case, if it is all about forgiveness and amnesty to perpetrators and violators, what happens to the victims of war and war crimes? What will be the future of transitional justice?

That Afghan women have seen different kinds of violence and torture during war period is undeniable. Their vital role during conflicts as combatants, protectors and peacemakers is of great importance. Moreover, after the Taliban regime fell, there were 50,000 war widows in Kabul alone, and

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Rubin Barnett R. "Transitional Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan". *International Affairs*, Vol.79, No.3(2003)

12. Ibid.

an estimated two million across the country.¹³ These are women who have been violated and tortured, and those who have lost their husbands, brothers, and fathers in the wars and are now left to fend for their families by any means possible. These are the women who seek justice.

Meanwhile, over the years, several mass graves have been discovered in different parts of Afghanistan. As recently as 2015 and 2012, mass graves were found in Kabul's Bagrami district and in the army compound northern Afghanistan respectively.¹⁴ ¹⁵ These are only few examples of mass violations of human rights during the war period. Families of those whose remains have been found in these mass graves, and families that still do not know the whereabouts of their relatives etc., and they all expect some form of transitional justice.

After former Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah's government fell in 1992, the country entered a phase of lawlessness, and ethnic antagonism took an extreme form. Thousands were killed; captured; locked in containers to suffocate in the heat; civilians were robbed by armed robbers; and looting, and destruction took place on the streets in daylight as well as at nights.¹⁶ With the emergence of the Taliban, the conflict escalated. The Taliban imposed severe punishments in areas under their control.¹⁷ Given all these crimes against humanity, can peace be built without addressing past crimes? This question has remained unaddressed in Afghan people's minds.

In 2003, Afghanistan became member of International Criminal Court (ICC), and acceded to the ICC the jurisdiction for war crimes committed in Afghan territory from 01 May 2003 onwards.¹⁸ However, due to the same old reasons of not wanting break the unstable peace by raising the issue of transitional justice, it was not very affective. As former President

13. Manchanda Rita. "Women's Agency in Peace Building: Gender Relations in Post-conflict Reconstruction". *Economic and Political weekly*. Vol.40, No.44/45(2005).

14. Unknown. "Mass Grave Found in Kabul District." *Tolo news*. Nov.26,2015.
<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/mass-grave-found-kabul-district>

15. Unknown. "Mass grave found in Afghan army compound: officials" *Reuters*. Jan.4, 2012.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-grave-idUSTRE8030KG20120104>

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. Afghanistan Justice Organization. "Transitional Justice in Afghanistan".

Karzai in a 2003 interview to BBC's Lyse Doucet said, "Peace is necessity and justice is a luxury that Afghanistan can't afford right now."¹⁹ This sentiment is mirrored in the ICC's actions, which have not been effective in Afghanistan since 2003 and the Court has not charged any individual or group for torture, killing, bombardments and other violence against humanity.²⁰

The only trial held was conducted not through the ICC but in a regular court in UK in 2005. This was the trial of Abdullah Shah for beating, robbing, shooting civilians and violations of human rights.²¹ He too was only expelled from UK a few months back and deported to Afghanistan.²² However, one good thing about his case was that he admitted that he regretted his past abuses and violations, and has also paid for his past deeds by spending over 10 years in prison.²³

The recent return of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the head of Hezb-e-Islami (HIG) to the Afghan capital seems unpleasant and shocking at the moment to almost all Afghan families who lost members of their family due to his rockets and bombings during the civil war (1992-1996). With the symbolic deal between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government and the HIG, sanctions against Hekmatyar (which included a freeze on his properties as well as restrictions on his international travel) were dropped, and he was granted political rights for the future. However, his return was met with mixed reactions from Afghan civilians. Some believe that Hekmatyar's return can have a positive impact on peace building in the country while others are concerned about the future of stability in Afghanistan.²⁴ Mostly, people are thrilled by his speech, where he spoke about forgetting the past without asking for an apology for his crimes as they see it as a step towards peace.

19. Barnett R. Transitional Justice and human rights in Afghanistan.

20. Ibid

21. Laville, Sandra. "UK court convicts Afghan Warlord" Gurdian. July 19, 2005.

22. Ibid.

23. Joyenda, Mir Abed. "Ex-Warlord Faryadi Regrets Committing War Crimes". Tolo news. Dec.27,2016.

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ex-warlord-faryadi-regrets-committing-war-crimes>

24. Qazi, Shereena. "Gulbuddin Hekmatyar appears at Hezb-i-Islami meeting." Aljazeera News. April, 29, 2017.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/gulbuddin-hekmatyar-hezb-islami-afghanistan-170428223239094.html>

As per the peace deal, he has agreed to accept the Afghan constitution and give up violence; but nothing has been said about his past crimes during the war period. This is in contrast to former Afghan warlord (and incumbent first Vice President), General Abdul Rashid Dostum, a former Uzbek militia leader accused of human right abuses, who in October 2013 stated that he regretted his past actions and apologized for his negative policies due to which the Afghan people had suffered in the past.²⁵

Hekmatyar's return has been without an apology and due to this, Afghan civilians who have been victims of his attacks find themselves in an uneasy position where they find it difficult to believe in the government and the transitional justice process.

CONCLUSION

The process of transitional justice began with the 2002 AIHRC report which was never published. The adoption of an Action Plan was put to an end during former Afghan President Hamid Karzai's tenure in 2007. Only small attempts have been made, which have been unable to deliver transitional justice in Afghanistan. Furthermore, in Afghanistan, after 2001, the new-interim government was set up with the primary objective of building stable peace in the country—without taking into consideration the issue of transitional justice. Several government projects like DDR, PTS etc. were initiated for peace but not for transitional justice. The amnesty law passed in 2007 was the death knell for the question of transitional justice since it granted general amnesty to all human rights violators who committed related crimes before 2001.

This means no perpetrator, no former *mujahideen* leader who had violated laws during the war period, will be prosecuted or asked to apologize for their crimes. The fact that past violations have not been addressed properly, and the perpetrators have not been held accountable for their deeds, have nurtured a spiral of violence and human right abuses that are ongoing. The strategy of “forgive and forget” has not been a success so far. For instance, while government was working towards peace building with

25. Bezhan, Frud. “Former Afghan Warlord Apologizes For Past Mistakes” Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. Oct 08, 2013. <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-dostum-warcrimes-apology/25130594.html>

the Taliban via peace talks and reconciliation programs. The insurgents on another hand were planning and attacking civilians more. A few examples are “large scales of attacks, including more than 80 suicide that year. An increase in such attacks killed 374 civilians in 2007 and more than 500 in 2008.”²⁶

Besides, it was extremely challenging for the government to raise question of transitional justice while most of its government members were those *mujahideen* leaders who had in one way or another committed crimes during the three decades of war. Hence, it seems like paving way for transitional justice in Afghanistan by holding trials or prosecuting law violators is not an option at least not now given how the government is facing political and economic instability. The ICC cannot be a good option, and it has not been very effective. On the other hand, it is not fair to expect victims and their families to completely abandon the issue of transitional justice. Transitional justice is a necessity for the peace-building process and for building a strong democracy in Afghanistan. To establish a good and peaceful environment, the issue of transitional justice—even if via small steps—should be considered. It seems impossible for victims and those who were abused during the war period to live alongside those who have violated their rights and subjected them to violence. Hence, if peace is of importance in re-building Afghanistan, transitional justice is a necessity to maintain that peace, and to provide justice to war victims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At present, it might not be possible to address the question of transitional justice in Afghanistan via trials, punishments and hard transitional justice. However, it is crucial to approach the issue via alternative methods:

1. A realistic environment should be built where civilians can live peacefully with those who have committed war crimes. This can be possible only if violators of past crimes face some form of trials, or at least to heal the wounds of those victims, apologize for their past crimes and state that they have wronged them. And those violators and

26. Gossman, Patricia. Kouvo, Sari. 2013. “Tell Us How This Ends” Transitional justice and prospect for peace in Afghanistan. Afghanistan Analyst networks.

criminals should not be cherished as “heroes.” Instead, they should be pushed aside and away from public view to respect the pain and suffering they caused to the victims.

2. Proper documentation of war crimes should be taken up seriously. The AIHRC has carried out documentation in past but needs more investigations, and inquiries are still required to provide proper and reliable accounts of past crimes and violations.
3. Cases of disappeared victims should be considered, and research and investigations must be carried out to find out about those victims who disappeared during conflicts and wars.
4. Laws and regulations should be formulated and made applicable to deter future violations and crimes against Afghan civilians. For this purpose, violators of law should not be given any important position in the government unless they give a commitment that past crimes will not be repeated and that they regret their past crimes.
5. A memorial museum should be established to keep the memories of those civilians who have been killed, tortured and have been gone missing, to remember and honour those innocent civilians who were killed during the war in Afghanistan. Some examples of such initiatives are the Tower of Faces at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, or the National World War 2 memorial in Washington, DC.
6. A memorial site, like a bridge or a road should be named after those innocent war victims. For instance, a bridge or a gate like India Gate in New Delhi can be built with the names of those civilians and victims who have been killed or have gone missing, to keep them alive in the hearts and minds of Afghan citizens and the future generations.
7. Mass graves discovered in different parts of Afghanistan, should be protected and kept from destruction.

INSECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN: A DESTRUCTIVE 'REGIONAL SECURITY SYSTEMS' APPROACH

NAHEED FARID¹

Insecurity and conflict paralyze societies, destroy lives, shrink foods, jobs, and investments and threaten the world order. The World Bank reports that currently two billion people live in countries where development outcomes are affected by major conflicts.² By 2030, the share of the global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected situations is projected to reach 46%, up from 17% today.³ Conflicts drive 80% of all humanitarian needs of the world.⁴ 95% of refugees and internally displaced live in developing countries, originating from the same 10 conflicts since 1980. This includes Afghanistan, with the most number of displaced people and longest experience of continued violence.⁵ This paper focuses on the root causes of Afghanistan's security crisis by focusing on various political wills and different players who contributed to the crisis, and finally, makes recommendations towards some practical steps as the way forward.

Afghanistan's conflict began in 1987, when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took power in a military coup, known as the Saur Revolution. Since then, most of the Country's subsequent experiences of conflict and disorder were caused by Soviet occupation, civil war and proxy rivalries.

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2. World Bank Group, *Fragility, 2017 Conflict and Violence Overview of World Bank* (Washington DC: World Bank Group), April 2017

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

The solution to Afghanistan's war remains unidentified and needs to be identified promptly. The adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) respond to the fact that no conflict-affected country—including Afghanistan—could achieve a single framework acknowledged by UN in the past 14 years. Development affected by war and conflict led to poverty, hunger, migration and displacement—a situation that undermines the peace and stability of the country. Admittedly, Afghanistan has experienced a deadlock in most of its peace and reconciliation efforts in the last decade. But it repeatedly accuses external actors of sustaining the insecurity in the country. Of course, many internal political aspects destabilize Afghanistan, but the supposition is that the situation in the country would have improved significantly had the conflict not been revitalized from beyond its borders.⁶

A range of stakeholders are involved in Afghanistan's conflict. Alongside the US and other NATO countries, Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and some gulf countries, all play important roles in this pattern. International military forces and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) are also significant actors on the national level. Vis-a-vis Afghan stakeholders, the Afghan government as well as government security forces and the National Directorate of Security (NDS) are key players on the pro-government side.

On the other hand, the Afghan government affirmed that 20 militant extremist groups are actively involved in Afghanistan conflict.⁷ The Taliban and the Haqqani Network remain a major threat to Afghanistan's stability; Afghan officials frequently accuse Pakistan's military and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of helping maintain insecurity in the country.⁸ Additionally, recent developments in West Asia, especially defeating the Islamic State (IS) and the rise of insurgency in Central Asian countries changed the dimensions of war in the region. Therefore, different sectarian and insurgent militancy groups stormed towards territories with less or no control in Afghanistan.

6. Corinna Vigier, *Conflict Assessment: Afghanistan*, American Friends Service Committee, pp. 6–8

7. ToloNews. 20 Terrorist Groups Fighting Against Afghan Government. 26 February 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/20-terrorist-groups-fighting-against-afghan-government>

8. The Inter-Services Intelligence is the premier intelligence agency of Pakistan

The Afghan National Security Forces is the key party defending Afghanistan's security after the 2001 US military intervention. The withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent transition of authority to the Afghan security forces occurred between 2011 and 2016. A Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) was signed between the US and Afghanistan allowing a small number of NATO troops to remain in an advisory and counter-terrorism capacity after the withdrawal of international troops in 2014.

Despite worldwide effort, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated and significantly impedes its development potential. As stated in the UNAMA's 2017 Peace and Security Report, conflict in Afghanistan spread in geographical scope and security incidents increased to as high as 23,712 throughout 2016 and into 2017, which is the highest number in a single year ever recorded by UNAMA.⁹ While violence remained particularly prevalent in the five southern and eastern provinces, a sharp rise in insecurity in the northern provinces has also become a reality now.



Meanwhile, at the national level, the country is entangled in a wide variety of different problems that impede its development potential. Issues such as poverty, competition over control of power, ethnic and ideological issues, and backwardness have caused instability and insecurity in Afghanistan.

NEIGHBORING SHADOW SECURITY SYSTEMS

At present, Afghanistan is surrounded by various and relatively stabilized "Shadow Security Systems" in the region.¹⁰ The Central Asian countries that are relatively inhibited by diverse energy resources, from significant

9. General Assembly, Seventy-first session Agenda item 36 The situation in Afghanistan, March 3, 2017

10. This term used for the first time by Prof. Faramarz Tamanna, Dean of Afghanistan University. He referred to a set of organized principles that stabilizes different players in the region.

reserves of oil, gas and hydropower, and Russian influence formed a relatively alleviated security system in the north.¹¹ In the South Asian security system, Indo-Pakistani nuclearization prohibitively reduced conflict risk and prevented disputes from blossoming into full-scale war.¹² To Afghanistan's west, Iran's willingness to expand vast resources in West Asia and its capacity for expeditionary warfare towards supporting the war in the region influenced the formation of another security balancing mechanism or shadow security system in Afghanistan's western neighborhood (Iran). Neither of the mentioned systems would allow Afghanistan to dissolve into their balance of dominance. Evidently, they would prefer a deteriorated situation in Afghanistan if they deem that necessary to sustain their security.

Distractive actions of neighboring shadow security systems is rooted in Afghanistan history. Though, for centuries, Afghanistan was the hub of the flow of commerce and cultural exchanges across the ancient Silk Road, for the most of 19th and 20th centuries, its neighbors and regional powers unceasingly used its territory to maintain their interests. An example of this is the 19th century "Great Game," between Britain and Russia over Afghanistan, which subsequently resulted in the First Anglo-Afghan War; the First Anglo-Sikh War; the Second Anglo-Sikh War; the Second Anglo-Afghan War; and the annexation of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand by Russia.¹³ Historians consider that the Great Game ended in 1895 with the signing of the Pamir Boundary Commission protocols as Russia proposed Afghanistan as the neutral zone.^{14 15}

Many countries in the world experienced similar regional disadvantages due to the existence of different shadow security systems around them. For instance, from the 16th century until the Belgian Revolution in 1830 when

11. Faramarz Tamanna, "Afghanistan Regional Reintegration." Interview by Fawzia Ehsan. VOADARI, 2015

12. Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, *India, Pakistan and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia*, (Columbia University Press, 2012), 24.

13. Martin Ewans, *The Great Game: Britain and Russia in Central Asia, Volume 1, Documents*, (Routledge Curzon, Oxon, 2004), 92.

14. M. G. Gerard, *Report on the proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission (1897)*, Digitized Afghanistan Materials in English from the Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection. Paper 25.

15. Seymour Becker, (2005), *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005)

Belgium seceded from the Netherlands, the Belgian territory served as the battleground between many European powers, causing it to be dubbed the “Battlefield of Europe,” a reputation strengthened by both world wars.¹⁶

Today’s devastating insecurity in Afghanistan is the result of extremely intense and serious rivalries between the shadow security systems by which it is surrounded. Pakistan’s prolonged enmity with India and its fundamentalists’ lost dream of establishing a state based solely on Islam in Pakistan led it to be heavily involved in Afghanistan. Moreover, the US’ longest war to counter terrorism has continued in Afghanistan since 2001 and is opposed by neighbors including Russia, China and Iran on different levels, forms and aspects.

Russia involved itself in a relatively passive manner in Afghanistan’s post-2001 era, after nine years of direct occupation (1979–1989). To sustain the Central Asian security system and to contest the US’ presence in the region, Russia practically opened new chapter in US rivalry. Its cultivating of links with the Taliban in Afghanistan, support of separatists and military incursions in Ukraine, and its direct involvement in the Syrian civil war added new dimensions to the tensions in the region.¹⁷ Russia’s stated primary goal is to protect its own strategic interests in the Central Asian security system by managing the insecurity in the nearest possible territory, i.e. Afghanistan.

AFGHAN GOVERNMENT APPROACH

The Afghan government constantly claims that external support to the different militant groups in Afghanistan caused irrecoverable damages to the country.¹⁸ Its lobby at international fora like the UN articulates the fact that external support to the Taliban and other terrorist groups is primarily motivated by regional rivalries, driven by excessive and unnecessary anxiety and suspicion of one state over another. The Afghan government has denounced regional rivalries that result in unsavory policies of using

16. Bernard Cook, *Belgium. A History*, (Journal of the Fachhochschule, 2003).

17. Eltaf Najafizada and Henry Meyer, *Russia Opens New Front in US Rivalry with Taliban Support*, (Bloomberg Politics, 2017), 11.

18. Afghanistan Permanent Mission to United Nations at Security Council Debate in Afghanistan, 10 March 2017

violent proxies in pursuit of political objectives. Afghan officials argue that this situation created a significant trust deficit between Afghanistan and its neighbors and provides “oxygen for terror to breathe.”¹⁹

Afghanistan’s bilateral relations with neighbors is not ideal either. Challenges like border and water disputes and refugee crises are the subject of various disagreements with its neighbors. While these issues fuel insecurity inside Afghanistan, conveners of the security ‘systems’ in the neighborhood find it useful to keep these disputes unresolved and to keep Afghanistan as a site of a proxy war. They prefer a destabilized Afghanistan that has no control on challenges influenced by external variables. This allows them to maneuver their interests in the Afghan soil without any destruction to them.

Economically, Afghanistan is changing its security-based narrative by transforming itself into the crossroad of two emerging economic hotspots—South Asia and Central Asia—in the coming decades, through energy transition, trade, and transit. The region is rapidly changing, and Afghanistan plays an important role in that direction. China is set to invest \$46 billion in the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor linking Kashgar to Gwadar through its Belt and Road Initiative.²⁰ India will invest \$500 million in Iran’s Chabahar port.²¹ Other regional connectivity projects include the Five Nations Railway corridor (linking China to Iran via Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan); and regional energy integration projects, including the CASA–1000 electricity transmission project, the TAPI (Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India) natural gas pipeline, and the TUTAP (Turkmenistan–Uzbekistan–Tajikistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan) electricity transmission line. All abovementioned initiatives envision significant geo-economic shifts in the near future for Afghanistan.²² It also purports favorable conditions for Afghanistan to connect the two emerging economic hotspots based on its security

19. Statement by H.E. Mahmoud Saikal Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations Plenary Session on the Situation in Afghanistan, 30 November 2015

20. Kiani, Khaleeq (30 September 2016). “With a new Chinese loan, CPEC is now worth \$62bn”. Dawn.

21. India to invest \$500m in Iranian port of Chabahar, The Guardian, Retrieved 23 May 2016

22. Zabihullah Mudabber, Zabihullah, Afghanistan’s Role in the Central Asia–South Asia Energy Project, The Diplomat, 2016, 12–16.

narrative of reintegrating into its neighboring security systems and to lift itself out of political and economic fragility.³²

THE WAY FORWARD

The route to Afghanistan's stability can be what ended the Great Game in the 19th century, i.e. recognition of Afghanistan as a neutral zone.

For instance, the post-war government of 1948 transformed Belgium from being Europe's battlefield to becoming its geopolitical crossroad. Belgium was one of the first countries to sign the UN Charter. In 1950, it joined NATO. Inspired by the desire of realizing an end to the recurring wars between the security systems in its neighborhood that were more often than not fought on its soil, Belgium became one of the pioneers of European unification.

In the long term, what guarantees Afghanistan's peace and stability is that it becomes a "secure economy-centered society" for the region.²³ Convergence and regional cooperation is an essential way of achieving peace in Afghanistan. It should harness the interests of the countries of the region to some extent, including the fact that insecurity in Afghanistan damages their economic stability. For instance, Afghanistan's active role in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO); the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); Observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and stimulating practical energy transmission projects through Afghanistan remain crucial aspects of efforts in its reintegration direction.

THE ROLE OF THE US IN AFGHANISTAN'S REGIONAL REINTEGRATION

Afghanistan's reintegration lacks a credible third party to intervene with an impartial view. Scholars believe that the "lack of an overarching authority" that can enforce a political settlement in war means that parties cannot credibly commit to making peace, either in the short term or in the long term.^{24 25}

23. Global Peace Index 2015, Institute for Peace and Economics, September 2015

24. Stephen John Stedman, Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes, *International Security*, 2012, 5-53.

25. Ibid

The US is a prominent third-party player influencing regional stakeholders to elevate Afghanistan to a secured economy-centered country because its relations with two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, is relatively ideal.²⁶ While the US is a major supporter of the Afghan security forces and development since 2001, according to a 2016 report in *The Guardian*, Pakistan too has been among the top recipients of the US aid. Since 1948, the US has spent over \$39 billion in direct aid to the country.²⁷ However, since al Qaeda Chief Osama bin Laden was discovered and killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan, the US administration has increasingly come under pressure to justify its aid spending in Pakistan. The US-India relationship is fairly decent. According to Gallup's annual World Affairs survey, India is perceived by Americans as their 6th favorite nation in the world, with 71% of Americans viewing India favorably in 2015.²⁸

Afghanistan's regional reintegration must be initiated as a mutual benefit for its neighbors. The most appropriate approach for Afghanistan in that regard is to facilitate energy transmission from Central Asia—an energy rich region—to South Asia. The energy shortage challenge is common for most countries in South Asia. In 2012, India experienced two major power breakdowns, simultaneously. The annual energy demand in India is growing at 4% while official figures show a shortage during peak hours of approximately 10%.²⁹ Pakistan's energy crisis poses serious risks to its development process. Chronic power shortage costs the Pakistan economy \$2 billion (7% of its GDP) in 2016, and over 140 million Pakistanis either have no access to the power or suffer over 12 hours of load-shedding daily.³⁰ In Bangladesh, only 30% of rural households have access to the electricity grid and about half the total population live without access to electricity. Nepal faces power outages of about 20 hours during the dry season. To preserve mutual benefit, Afghanistan and the region should mutually safeguard secured transmitted electricity to light up South Asian homes.

26. Carl Levin & Howard P. Buck McKeon, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, June 2016, pp34

27. *The Guardian* Data. 2016, "Sixty years of US aid to Pakistan: Get the data", found at: www.theguardian.com

28. "Americans' Most Favored Nations". Gallup.com. 2015-03-13. Gallup

29. Zainab Ahmed, *Energy Crisis in South Asia: A Matter of Regional Cooperation*, *South Asian Voices*, 24 July 2015

30. *Dawn Newspaper*, 2016

CONCLUSION

Regional spoilers used to damage the development process of the country and tried to undermine its ongoing peace process. The Afghan government accused Pakistan for allowing the 2014 assassination plan of Burhanuddin Rabbani—Afghanistan’s previous peace process leader—on its soil. Since Afghanistan’s virtue of vicinity and sovereignty has never been respected by Afghanistan’s neighbors, the only counter is the transformation of the existing narrative (requiring neighbors to respect its security) to an approach that builds benefits for surrounding security systems. This will create an economy-centered society around Afghanistan that will definitely be destroyed if peace in Afghanistan is disturbed and vice versa. Therefore, this paper suggests the following recommendations as devices that can facilitate Afghanistan’s foreign policy towards becoming an active actor in the region:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Afghanistan must introduce a novel consensus for its surrounding security systems to ensure its long-term peace and stability
2. Afghanistan should review its security-based strategic narrative from being a vulnerable state towards becoming a key player in the regional broader perspective
3. Energy crisis in South Asia is an area of potential regional cooperation. Therefore, Afghanistan’s facilitation of energy flow from Central Asia to South Asia is crucial for them and constructive for Afghanistan’s stability
4. Shadow security systems around Afghanistan should consider the reality that insecurity in Afghanistan will not safeguard their security in the long run and it provides oxygen for terror to breathe in their own territories.
5. The US as an influential force can play an important third-party role in introducing Afghanistan as a secure economy-centered country to the region

6. The Afghan government should ensure internal stability by focusing more on promoting strategic reforms, providing jobs and investment opportunities
7. To achieve development goals, the world should reconsider its strategy towards the motivation of the security systems in Afghanistan's neighborhood

THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT'S FAILURES IN EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS

MONA HOSSAINI¹

The contemporary history of the South Asian region nearly always had a substantial component of conflict. Some examples include the India–Pakistan conflict over Kashmir that has been ongoing since 1947; the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war; civil war and rise of insurgency and conflict in Nepal; and the ethnic conflict and insurgency in Sri Lanka, among others. In all these and other conflicts, women have been the most affected in terms of human rights violation, loss of social and political rights, and loss of dignity. There have also been some initiatives to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. Although peace processes have been initiated, women have not truly been part of it and often, their concerns remained neglected or unaddressed.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan has experienced different political changes and conflict and understanding the situation of women in different periods in Afghanistan could provide a comprehensive understanding on the overall status of women. This paper explores the status of women during different periods of political changes in Afghanistan, and women's concerns regarding the peace process.

AFGHANISTAN: STATUS OF WOMEN SINCE 2001

In the 2001, Taliban regime was ousted, and Afghanistan began moving towards a democratic form of governance. The Bonn conference resulted in the guidelines for peace, security and reconciliation in the country.

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One of the key concerns voiced during this conference was on the issue of ensuring human rights. In addition to democratic values, upholding women's rights, too, was identified as a core component of the new government. Therefore, the Afghan government should assure women's participation in political and social spheres. The international community asked the Afghan government to be commitment towards its promises. As Maria Vilellas Ario noted in 2010, the inclusion of women and bringing gender issues within different levels of the government were due to external pressure rather than due to the will of the local government.²

1. The Bonn Conference

The Bonn conference laid the foundation of peace initiatives in Afghanistan. Although the Bonn conference was foundation of peace-keeping in Afghanistan, women's participation and role was not mentioned in this initiative. Given how women as part of the society were equally affected by war and conflict, they have a right to be part of the peace process and peace negotiation.

2. Constitutional Loya Jirga

The Bonn conference followed by the 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga. The Loya Jirga is the traditional grand assembly in Afghanistan and is convened to deliberate and decide on matters related to national interest. The Constitutional Loya Jirga was convened to ratify the new Afghan constitution. Although the constitution allows women to become the president, the constitution is also based on Sharia law, which restricts women.

3. First Presidential election

In the 2004, Afghanistan held its first presidential election, and eventually women have begun to take active part in the election (voting, evaluating the process etc.). Women's activities during elections showed that they were undertaking efforts to play an active role in decision making. As the

2. Arino, Maria, and Maria Vilellas. "The Participation of Women in Peace Processes: The other tables." Institut Catala Internacional, 2010.

result of the first election Hamid Karzai won the first presidential election in Afghanistan. And after taking office, he initiated reforms to endorse and protect women's rights, and the establishment of ministry of women affairs was one of his government's achievements.

4. International Conference on Afghanistan in London

This conference was held in 2010 to address and discuss the Afghan peace process, but reportedly, there was negligible participation by Afghan women in an official capacity. Unfortunately, they were brought in merely to share their experiences as women in a conflict-ridden country but their suggestions and recommendations were not solicited for the peace process.³

5. Composition of Women in the Consultative Peace Jirga

In June 2010, the Afghan government convened a Consultative Peace Jirga (CPJ) to identify the framework for the reconciliation process. Afghan women were successful in getting themselves included in the CPJ, albeit the women comprised just 20% of approximately 1600 participants.⁴ In September 2010, Karzai unveiled his 70-member High Peace Council (HPC), the composition of which attracted much attention and the HPC members had more experience with war than with peace.⁵

6. Brussels Conference on Afghanistan

In the 2015, 75 countries and 26 international organizations participated in this conference, and the government of Afghanistan and civil society activists stressed on the key role of women in development, justice and peace and continued commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of women. This includes tangible support for the new National Priority Program on Women's Economic Empowerment and the Afghan government's funding for the National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, as well as the commitment to ensure participation of women in all peace processes.

3. Ibid

4. Ibid.

5. Schirch, Lisa. "Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process for Afghanistan." United States Institute of Peace. 2011.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/09/designing-comprehensive-peace-process-afghanistan>

7. The Kabul Process Meeting for Peace and Security

This conference was hosted by Afghanistan and held in Kabul in June 2017. Over 25 countries and international organizations participated in this conference for peace and security cooperation. This process was aimed to strengthen and facilitate an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and attract regional and global support in this regard. Women's participation in this conference appeared to be significant.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AND PEACE PROCESS: EFFORTS BY THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Article 22, Article 43 and Article 83 of the Afghan constitution guarantees women's rights. The Afghan government has sought to demonstrate its support for women's rights by endorsing different international conventions such as: The Elimination of Violence Against Women In Afghanistan (EVAW) Law; the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (which addresses women's participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building).⁶

Despite the government's efforts, so far, women's participation remains very low in the decision-making and public spheres. The Afghan government is yet to produce a comprehensive strategy that can solve women's problems at the grassroots level and reduce the number of marginalized and excluded women throughout the country.⁷ This situation suggests that mere commitments are inadequate to protect and boost women's rights if the government itself does not believe in the associated principles and values. The Afghan government assured women's participation under different strategies and plans:

1. The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), which envisages a peaceful and progressive country where women

6. PTRO. "The home front: the role of women in Afghanistan's peace and reintegration program." PTRP, 2014.

http://www.ptro.org.af/site_files/13990989651.pdf

7. Levine, Corey. "A women's place is at the peace table." Peace Build Paix Durable, 2011.

and men enjoy security, equal rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.⁸

2. The National Action Plan (NAP 1325) on women, peace and security is one of the significant achievements of the incumbent National Unity Government (NUG). Incumbent Afghan President Ashraf Ghani supported this document as one of the Afghan government's budgetary documents for women's empowerment and participation in peace and security processes. Due to this action plan, the number of women increased in the HPC and other decision-making bodies of the government.⁹

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND NEGOTIATIONS

1. **Structural Challenges in the HPC:** In the HPC, the numbers of women are lesser than those of men. All HPC members are nominated by the president, and president nominated only elite women in this council. The elite women who never experienced war cannot be the representatives of unheard voices of women who lived in war and conflict. On the other hand, the female members of the Provincial Peace Councils (PPC) are not yet systematically involved in the reintegration process. Therefore, dominant patriarchal structures at the community level caused women's participation in peace activities and even decision-making processes to remain symbolic. However, as the prospect of negotiations with the Taliban draws closer, many women fear that they may pay a heavy price for peace. Reconciliation with the Taliban, a group with misogynist policies, has raised serious concerns regarding the possibility of peace.¹⁰

Besides social norms that limited women's participation in the peace process, women were systematically excluded from major peace discussions.¹¹ Another challenge, which was identified by women

8. National Action Plan For The Women Of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007- 2017.

9. "Progress report on Women's status and empowerment." National Action Plan 1325, 2016.

10. Levine, Corey. "A women's place is at the peace table." Peace Build Paix Durable, 2011.

11. Arghandiwal, Miriam. "Women on Afghan peace council say they are sidelined."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-women/women-on-afghan-peace-council-say-they-are-side->

from the PPCs, is the lack of national consensus on the peace process. There is a continuous negative propaganda about the peace process, which makes people, including women, lose hope.

2. **Female security and challenges of social norms:** Women's participation in the PPCs is not the same in all provinces in Afghanistan. In some provinces dominated by extremists, women have limited options due to social barriers, lack of capacity, religious barriers (issues related to *Mahram*), existence of tribal codes under which women do not have access to their own fundamental rights etc.¹² Meanwhile, female members of the PPCs face different types of violence and threats from insurgent groups.
3. **Institutional challenges:** The HPC itself is struggling with different challenges and problems such as a lack of qualified and educated HPC members for solving problems. The HPC members are not professionally trained in this regard, and therefore do not have the capacity to deal with the challenges and solve problems.

CONCLUSION

Women as part of the society can play an active role in the peace process, and through this research we have mentioned the struggle of women for their rights in the peace process. Because women do not want their rights to be traded away during negotiation with insurgent groups, therefore they want to be involved in this process. Despite the position of Taliban is unclear for this peace negotiation, according to latest news Taliban are changing their intentions for peace process over times. Therefore, it is the responsibility of government to support and protect the women's participation in the peace process and decision making for aiming a sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

lined-idUSBRE82L0FP20120322, 2012.

12. Hussaini, Reza. "Women's participation in peace process and negotiation table." UN Women, 2010. <https://www.slideshare.net/HRRACConsortium/women-participation-in-peace-process>

A KEY GAP IN THE AFGHAN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS: ABSENCE OF NEUROSCIENTIFIC TECHNIQUES & HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

NAHID SHAHALIMI¹

In 1976, Johan Vincent Galtung, the highly acclaimed Norwegian sociologist, mathematician and the founder of peace and conflict studies, described the concept of “Peace building” in his article, titled ‘Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping [the dissociative approach], Peacemaking [the conflict resolution approach], and Peace building [the associative approach]’.² To achieve sustainable peace, one of the factors Galtung pointed out in this essay, was not to only confront the “root causes” of a conflict but also to support peace building formations and frameworks in order to escape relapsing into violent conflicts.

Former Secretary General to the United Nations (UN), the late Boutros Boutros Ghali, in his 1992 ‘Agenda for Peace’ report, introduced the concept of peace-building to the UN.³ He outlined the concept of peace-building as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”

Although many have tried to garnish new elements to the original concept of peace-building put forth by Galtung, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon’s Policy Committee’s definition best complimented the original concept in 2007, as “a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all

1. Nahid Shahalimi is an initiator and organizer of COEXIST–Stand Up For Unity project, and a human rights advocate

2. Galtung, Johan. „Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding.“ 1976.

3. Secretary-General. “An Agenda for Peace:Report.” UN Documents, 1992.

levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development.”⁴ It stated further that “peace building strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership and should comprise a carefully prioritized sequenced, and relatively narrow set go activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.”

One of the more neglected aspects to the above concepts of peace–building, is that today’s newly recruited professionals called peace–builders, must know quite a bit about human behavioural psychology based on neuroscientific research. A change in the mindset and/or changing the psychology of the actors and/or stakeholders involved in the Afghan peace process is a highly crucial factor which needs to be elaborated on, when negotiation or potentially inking a peace agreement with the insurgency –with heavy emphasis laid on elements customized specifically for the traditional and cultural umbrella of Afghanistan.

Peace–building and reconciliation can dramatically backfire if major factors of human psychology, backed by neuroscientific techniques and studies are overlooked especially when it comes to individual and group behaviour, which according to psychologists will eventually lead directly to group identity—a theme which is discussed later in detail.

While looking closely into the fabric of various traditions within Afghanistan’s multi–ethnic groups, zooming into and understanding the cultural ‘nitty–gritties’ of each multi–ethnic group and their subtle cultural differences could potentially be highly beneficial when negotiating peace agreements within Afghanistan. Therefore, understanding the core fabric of the mentality or the mind–set of a specific insurgent group and/or their group identity is important.

Psychiatrist and psychotherapist Lord Alderdice, the experienced political leader, negotiator in the peace process of Northern Ireland and later speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, he describes the “frustration of pathways for change, and humiliation, shame and rage” as key factors

4. „UN Peacebuilding: an Orientation.” Peacebuilding Support Office, September 2010. http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peacebuilding_orientation.

in “triggering regression into political violence.”⁵ He further states that “containment, respect and group psychological process,” when dealing with individual or “group mind,” are identified as highly necessary in peace-building processes and the creation of a “healthy state.” He suggests that application of such tactics may potentially open a “more psychologically sophisticated” ways of tackling issues with insurgencies in the West Asia and other places.

According to the key findings of a summary report of a 2015 conference organized by the El-Hibri Foundation (EHF), Beyond Conflict (BC) and the Alliance for Peace building (AfP) in Washington, DC, the US, when evaluating the psychological aspects of peace building and reconciliation, “a revolution is currently taking place...understanding how the brain processes experience in ways that shape tendencies toward cooperation or confrontation,” again, based on great amount of neuroscientific research.⁶ Peace-builders, neuroscientists, experimental psychologists, policymakers and those interested in the studies and techniques of neuroscience affecting the human brain and how its functions play a major role in peace-building, and identity formation, took part in this very important conference, where they presented their years’ long research of innovative and non-conventional methods. According to the end summary report of the conference, world leading neuroscientists with the use of new technology, “are putting the most sophisticated tools available to the task of understanding how the brain processes experience in ways that shape tendencies toward cooperation or confrontation.”

The horrors of mass killings in World War 2 (WW2) is a useful case study. Historian Christopher Browning explains how in many contemporary and historical accounts of mass killings, soldiers or executioners, although not given the order to execute, nevertheless generally chose freely to slaughter anyway.

Browning mentions a Nazi unit in WW2, called Reserve Police Battalion 101, in his book *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101* and the

5. Alderdice, Lord . . ., “The Individual, The Group And The Psychology Of Terrorism.” *Int Rev Psychiatry*, June 2007.

6. . ., “Neuroscience and Peacebuilding: Reframing How We Think About Conflict and Prejudice.” January 2015.

http://www.beyondconflictint.org/2014/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Neuroscience-and-Peacebuilding_v1.pdf.

Final Solution in Poland.⁷ A few members of this group killed from the start and they did so without any remorse, which could mean that they could have potentially had psychopathic impulses, as some psychologists would suggest. However, no member of this specific unit was ever forced or ordered to execute. What is astonishing about this sequence of events is that soon a “group identity transformation” took place and greater members of this particular group started behaving as brutal and barbaric as the original inhumane few. Browning labels it in his book as “routinized” soldiers, i.e. the killings became habitual. In other words, it simply became a habit for the soldiers once they began slaughtering, regardless of the cruelty of the actions.

Another important “key finding” of the Washington conference was on major factors, which include human behaviour “largely driven by emotions;” the importance of “humanization and dehumanization” of individuals and/or groups; how “social norms strongly influence human thought and behaviour;” and most importantly, “group identity formation,” which potentially could be used in favour of peace-building and its pillars, of course, under the right circumstances. The neuroscientists proved with evidence based research that “group identities are simultaneously lasting and malleable.” In other words, humans are very quick to form group identity, by expanding the concept of “we” within a group.⁸ Therefore, the human nature will fight and compete for the “we” within a group against another group, often discarding the whereabouts and eventually being loyal to the collective purpose, whatever it may be—often through habitual rituals of the group in question.

Although individuals are all somehow influenced by their deeply rooted “blueprints,” as strategist and motivational speaker Tony Robbins often states in his numerous bestselling books and workshops around the world, these “blueprints” are highly sacred to the individuals and groups. These “blueprints” often have nothing to do with one’s religious or political

7. Browning, Christopher. „Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland.“ January 01, 1992.

8. „Neuroscience and Peacebuilding: Reframing How We Think About Conflict and Prejudice.“ January 2015. http://www.beyondconflictint.org/2014/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Neuroscience-and-Peacebuilding_v1.pdf.

beliefs. Robbins states that the collective core family, cultural, traditional and social values and rituals (habits) mainly influence our “blueprints” and not necessarily our conscious individual minds and thoughts. Robbins argues that nevertheless, “these rituals can be changed at any time.”

In findings of the researchers and neuroscientists who participated in the Washington DC conference, they stated, “In conflict situations, understanding how communities and individuals define their own “sacred values” are crucial.”⁹ Therefore, these so-called “sacred values” or “blueprints” as Robbins labels them, could potentially be flexible and workable, under the right circumstances. In other words, this means a strategy based on such neuroscientific studies could potentially not only diminish violence and aggression, and thereby conflicts, but could even be reversed into elements of peace-building and reconciliation, also often referred to by psychologists as “reverse psychology.”

In the case of Afghanistan, these factors “blueprints,” “rituals,” “sacred values” and/or “group identity” etc., play a major role while negotiating a peace process. As mentioned above, Lord Alderdice points out in his essay, titled ‘The individual, the group and the psychology of terrorism’, the importance of “humiliation, shame and rage” as main “triggers of regression into political violence” when speaking of “group identity formation,” thus could also potentially be reversed.

If one takes a step back from the individual and take a more focused look into the group and “group identity formation,” “them” is separated from “us” due to a different “mindset.” It also presumes that only individuals with so called “faulty” minds are capable of wrongdoing, when in fact everyone given the right or wrong situation potentially has that capability, as discussed above in the case of Browning’s study of WW2 group. In other words, if the gap between “them and us” or “right” or “wrong” is shortened through psychological process, campaigns and activities aimed to change the core “mindset,” it may open new and more psychologically healthy ways of addressing issues with the Afghan insurgency groups.

9. Ibid

Stanford University psychologist, Dr. Carol S. Dweck, in her highly acclaimed book *Mindset: the new psychology of success*, explains best the two sets of “mindsets”: “fixed mindset” and “growth mindset.”¹⁰ According to Dr. Dweck, in a “fixed mindset”, “people believe in their basic qualities such as intelligence or talent as “fixed traits” which does not need any developing or effort. People with the “growth mindset,” on the other hand, highly believe in hard work and are dedicated to learning. This in turn creates motivation; productivity and above all, people with the “growth mindset” believe that brain and talent are “just the starting point.” They are open to new creative ideas and believe in growth and productivity.

Thus, if beliefs are formed through “sacred values” or “blueprints,” changing these “blueprints” or manipulating these “sacred values” would mean changing the “mindsets”—a formula that could potentially be used anywhere under any circumstance, regardless of the situation. Often stepping back and analyzing the “root causes” as Johan Galtung had explained in his concept of peace-building over four decades ago—in other words, going back to the basics of human psychology—may be something to consider thoroughly when dealing with any insurgency group within Afghanistan or elsewhere.

The abovementioned findings and significance of neuroscientific research sheds new light to an uncharted territory with a new “blueprint” when speaking of peace-building and reconciliation, specially within Afghanistan. Laying the focus more on the “group identity formation” of the insurgency groups while pushing for “reverse psychological” techniques and ways of approach, as Galtung has described, points to the importance of going back to “root causes” of conflict. Application of such insights as that of Lord Alderdice’s, Tony Robbins’s and Dr. Dweck’s decades of research on the importance of the psychology of “mindsets,” are key findings to open new, more psychologically mature and practical ways of tackling issues with the Afghan insurgent groups.

Thus, while keeping conventional and technical pillars of peace-building

10. Dweck, Carol. „Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.“ 2006.
<https://mindsetonline.com/thebook/buythebook/index.html>.

process is highly important, taking into account the psychological aspects backed by specific neuroscientific techniques and studies used in peace-building research, may be the missing key elements we should look more at in depth when dealing with the actors/stakeholders associated or connected to the Afghan peace-building process.

COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS: LESSONS FOR AFGHANISTAN

NAJIBA MADADI¹

ABSTRACT

In 2016, Colombia finally signed a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), an insurgent group which was active in the country for decades, thus ending a festering conflict that lasted half a century. What were the salient features of the Colombian peace process and its development, which were responsible for the realization of the peace deal? It is pertinent to note the actors involved and how domestic politics and regional dynamics played into the process. For at least a decade, many players, primarily the Afghan government and its American supporters, have tried to negotiate with the Taliban. So far, these efforts have not resulted into a negotiation. On the contrary, the conflict has become more complicated and the prospect for peace, gloomier. How is the Colombian peace process relevant to the Afghan peace process, especially in the wake of the US new strategy for Afghanistan? Can the lessons learnt in Colombia be applied in Afghanistan?

Colombia is the third most populous country in South America after Brazil and Mexico, with the fourth highest GDP after Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. Since the mid-1940s, Colombia has also been one of the few countries in the region with a constructive economic progress. Though the country had experienced steady economic growth, its political history and status contradicted the stable economic performance, which was spoiled due

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to prolonged war and narcotics trafficking. The Colombian armed conflict was one of the longest ones in South America. It began in the mid-1960s and was a war between the Colombian government, paramilitary groups, crime syndicates, and left-wing guerrillas such as the FARC, the largest left-wing guerrilla's groups, and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Besides, each group engaged in this war had a different purpose to fight. The FARC claimed to maintain social justice and defend poor people against the violence of the government. The Colombian government was fighting to protect the rights of its people and bring order and stability in the country. Additionally, the paramilitary groups fought to respond to perceived threats of rebel movements.

Moreover, actors involved in the conflict have been accused of numerous human rights violations such as drug trafficking and terrorism. Primarily, a group of Americans began to traffic marijuana from Colombia to the US during the 1960s and 1970s.² Most drugs manufactured in Colombia were consumed in the US and in Europe.³ Drug trafficking between local marijuana producers in Colombia to dealers in the US was growing in 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently, the Colombian government dismantled many of the drug cartels that were active in the country during the 1980s. Paramilitary groups restarted some of their drug-trafficking activities and resorted to blackmailing and kidnapping, which in turn cost them public support.

Guerrillas and paramilitary groups spent the money they earned through these illegal activities on buying guns and other weapons. Sometimes the weapons were used to attack military and civilian targets. During the 1974-1982 period, locals supported guerilla groups such as the FARC, the ELN and others with the slogan of "greater quality through communism."⁴ However, from mid-1980, the Colombian government strengthened its position by granting larger political and economic autonomy to local governments, thus changing the balance of power.

The Colombian conflict came at high human cost for the country.

2. Richani, Nazih. "Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia." March 2002.

3. Ibid

4. Ibid

Additionally, violence increased in the past few years, impacting the regional countries' security. The conflict and violence spilled over into Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Panama, and threatened the regional and international security.

Various types of law-breaking and crimes such as cross-border military invasions, illegal import of weapons and narco-trafficking were occurring on daily basis, expanding the extent of the conflict and involved actors. Most American government organizations, multinational associations, and politicians were competing to find something to capitalize on in Colombia by 2000, specifically when Colombia became the third top recipient of international assistance.⁵

COLOMBIA'S PEACE PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW

Colombia experienced 52 years civil war since the 1960s, which resulted in the deaths of 220,000 civilians and displacement of over 7 million. Negotiations for peace began in 2012 in Havana, Cuba. On 24 August 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC signed an accord to end the violence. The four-year negotiation focused on five main pillars: rural reform; political participation; ceasefire; transitional justice and compensations for the victims; and drug trafficking.⁶

On 02 October 2016, the accord was subjected to a public referendum. It failed to win majority support by a narrow margin, with 50.2% voting against it and 49.8% voting in favor.⁷ Later, on 24 November 2016, the Colombian government signed a revised peace deal which was directly sent for ratification by the two houses of the parliament. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives passed it on 29 and 30 November respectively, marking an end to the conflict.⁸ The peace deal was followed by specific goals to end the history of violence and criminality as well as bringing social justice in Colombia.

5. Ibid

6. Carasik, Lauren. "Will Peace Bring Justice to Colombia?" *Boston Review*. September 7, 2016. <http://bostonreview.net/world/lauren-carasik-colombia-farc-peace-accords>.

7. Ibid

8. Massé, Frédéric, and Philippe Le Billon. "Gold mining in Colombia, post-war crime and the peace agreement with the FARC." August 11, 2017. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23802014.2017.1362322?journalCode=rtwt20>.

The key point is that a peace deal can undeniably finish a violent era and maintain justice or at least diminishes the levels of crimes and bring peace and security in some aspects. Evidence demonstrates that the peace agreement alone cannot fully end the violence in this country. The agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC was a strong supportive step towards peace. However, there are many other factors that can define and influence the outcome of a peace deal.

One of the aspects of the peace agreement is reduction in the crime rate and illegal economic activities. Studies show that illegalities could continue, if not rise, in a post-war period.⁹ Additionally, non-state armed actors must be disarmed after the peace agreement. It is not always possible to completely bring peace and security and guarantee success after any deal. However, even getting a significant number of non-state armed groups off the battlefield is vital for the peace process to move forward. Yet, history shows that it cannot fully ensure peace, because criminality and violence will continue in some ways.¹⁰ However, although signing an agreement cannot bring security, peace, and justice, it can minimally remove and disarm many rebel groups, which in turn can aid in speeding up the process of peace building.

Public support is another crucial factor that can decide the fate of any peace agreement. Although the level of public support for the accord often depends on how much they were directly affected by war and especially the circumstances they endured during the conflict - studies show that people who lived in areas most affected by violence are likelier to be more supportive of peace agreements compared to those who lived in areas less affected by violence.¹¹ People in safer areas are not directly impacted by war, and will therefore be less optimistic about an agreement or will be less convinced about the importance of the success of a peace accord being an option for ending the war. Colombia's peace process is a good example of this case. The results of referendum show that large numbers of YES votes

9. Ibid

10. Farah, Douglas. "Emerald Wars: Colombia's Multiple Conflicts Won't End With the FARC Agreement ." *Small Wars Journal*. December 8, 2016. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/emerald-wars-colombia%E2%80%99s-multiple-conflicts-won%E2%80%99t-end-with-the-farc-agreement>.

11. Krause, 2017

came from rural areas. In Colombia, it was the rural areas that bore the brunt of the insurgency.

Furthermore, children and youth play a significant role in the peace building process. Various children and youth peace building initiatives let young peace builders to become more attentive toward peace process; reduce discrimination, and violence; and support vulnerable groups.¹² The results expose the importance of increased recognition of, and investment in, children and youth as peace builders. Thus, supporting the young generation and providing opportunities for them to participate in the process of peace building is essential, which agreement has failed to consider.

Approximately 7 million people were displaced, most of whom moved from rural areas to urban areas, which in turn caused socioeconomic problems and a reduction in agriculture production, inevitably increasing poverty and crime rate. Thus, another aspect of the peace accord is to introduce basic reforms in local lands to encourage displaced populations to return to their homes and work for expanding economic performance in non-developed zones that cause rapid changes in the agriculture of areas which were previously under control of non-state rebel armed groups.¹³

LESSONS FOR AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE PROCESS

Afghanistan has also been a battlefield for several decades and various local and international actors are engaged in the conflict. The Colombian conflict and the Afghan conflict share various similarities and differences. One of the key lessons from Colombia's case and previous studies on peace building processes is that reaching a peace agreement and achieving peace and stability is a long process. In that duration, it is possible for violence to become part of a society's culture; and changing that takes time. In this long process, different factors such as government stability and authority,

12. McGill, Michael, Claire O'Kane, and Annette Giertsen. "Evaluating Children and Youth Participation in Peace-building in Colombia, DRC, and Nepal: Lessons Learned and Emerging Findings." *Conflict, Violence and Peace*. March 7, 2017.

https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-981-287-038-4_29.

13. Negret, Pablo Jose, James Allan, Alexander Brackowski, Martine Maron, and James E.M. Watson. "Need for conservation planning in postconflict Colombia." May 9, 2017. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12935/full>.

the role of the youth, and international assistance can play an influencing role on the peace process and the way that a peace deal can bring positive results.

The war in Afghanistan is geographically and politically much more complicated than Colombia's. However, what can be analogous is the fact that the conflicts in both countries have both political and criminal aspects. Most parties engaged in the Colombian conflict were also involved in criminal activities such as narcotics trafficking and terrorism. Narcotics consumers were indirectly involved in the Colombian conflict, because they were supporting the paramilitaries by providing them with revenue to purchase weapons by participating in the drug trade. The Afghan conflict threatens people's security and is becoming a tool for other parties, such as countries/superpowers who want a role in this country, for profiteering. The extremist and radical groups such as Taliban and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Afghanistan are not defined and specified. Yet other profiteers use the same name and identity benefit from the chaotic situation in the country. For example, there have always been arguments among politicians as well as people about the identity of Taliban. Are they Arabs or Afghans? There are even claims that the Taliban are people supported by the US to cause chaos in Afghanistan in order to help the US to achieve its political goals in this country.

Yet, not every aspect of Afghanistan's and Colombia's peace processes are similar. Afghanistan's geographical location causes key actors to fight and dominate it, because an insecure Afghanistan cannot develop in any way and will suffer from human resource drain. The horrible situation will provide the opportunity for international superpowers to use Afghanistan's natural resources and benefit economically as well as politically. This is the key aspect where Afghanistan's case is different from that of Colombia's, making the process of reaching any agreement more difficult for Afghanistan; and, given this dynamic, one can claim that there is a long way to go before Afghanistan can experience peace.

The strength of the government, too, played an important role in Colombia's peace process. The government was not powerful in the

beginning, but in time, it gained authority and strengthened its position to defeat the insurgent groups and dismantled most drug cartels. Meanwhile, the Afghan government is unable to ensure stability and balance of power. Afghan citizens no longer trust politicians and leaders and the latter are losing public support each day for failing to deliver on their promises and fulfilling their duties. One of the main reasons for this is large-scale explosions, and security problems threatening people's lives, particularly those of the young and educated generation, which imposes a heavy human cost to the Afghan community. Therefore, it is vital that to ensure rule of law and good governance, the government must be strong, accountable and act responsibly to usher in peace.

One of the essential factors in reaching a ceasefire is continuing the fight till the time that one side gets weak and finally collapses. This is a lesson that can be drawn from Colombian conflict and as an option for Afghanistan to end the long era of conflict. Having a more stable and powerful government is necessary to ensure that other radical groups such as Taliban or ISKP are not able to succeed and gain power.

CONCLUSION

Colombia as a country which, despite the many challenges, signed a peace accord after decades of conflict is a good example for Afghanistan to learn and get lessons from its peace process. Colombia's peace process took a long time; and the agreement was not successful at first because people did not accept it. However, the Colombian government got stronger each day by ensuring rule of law and good governance.

Moreover, a peace agreement by itself does not mean peace, in the absence of disarming groups, ensuring rule of law and good governance etc. Unlike Colombia, Afghanistan is geo-strategically important but politically and economically weak; and this makes the peace process too slow and too difficult to achieve.

Considering Colombia's situation, Afghanistan needs a stable economic and political situation as well as good governance to be able to achieve a peace deal. Good governance will increase people's trust in politicians and

the government that makes the country stand stronger against insurgencies. Another lesson for Afghanistan is to decrease the crime rate and human cost of conflict while bearing in mind that peace processes take time to succeed.

NORTHERN IRELAND'S PEACE PROCESS: LESSONS FOR AFGHANISTAN

FARIDA GHANIZADA¹

For over 30 years, Northern Ireland reeled under conflict, resulting in the deaths of over 3500 civilians. This conflict began when the country gained independence from Great Britain. The Loyalists wanted to remain a part of British and the Nationalists wanted to unite with the Republic of Ireland. A march by Nationalists for equal opportunities led to many years of conflict in Northern Ireland. Several actors were involved in the conflict, such as the British, Unionists and Nationalists. There were efforts by the British government and third parties to end the violence and arrive at a tangible solution. Several documents such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Belfast Agreement, and Downing Street Declaration were inked in this regard. Each had its own set of consequences and was met with different reactions by both internal actors, Unionists and Nationalists. Besides the agreements, there were back-channel talks and interventions by third parties to bring the situation under control. The Good Friday Agreement was a realistic and successful step towards bringing peace to Northern Ireland. This Agreement was welcomed by a majority from both sides of the conflict and addressed a wide range of issues, taking into account the interests of the actors involved.

Northern Ireland's peace process is a conflict resolution model for countries that face similar types of violence. The Good Friday Agreement

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can be a good model for Afghanistan to learn from and to use for making the Afghan peace process a success.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICT

The spate of violence between the Unionists and the Nationalists in Northern Ireland that once seemed irreconcilable abated over the last 19 years. Today, violence has significantly weakened in the region and parties are sharing power.

The history of the conflict goes back to the time when Ireland was divided by the Government of Ireland Act, 1920. The North remained under British control, and the Republic of Ireland formed an independent republic and joined UN in 1955. The Loyalists who were two-thirds of the majority and were mostly Protestant wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of Britain, but the Nationalists were mostly Catholic and in favor of uniting with the Republic of Ireland. In 1921, the parliament in Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland was dominated mostly by Unionists and during the decades of 1920s to 1970s, there was a visible discrimination against the minority Catholics. This inequality contributed to the rise of Sinn Féin and other Catholic Nationalist parties. It also resulted in increasing aggression between the Protestant and Catholic communities, because the political institutions were failing to address issues of injustice. During the 1960s, Catholics stood up to campaign for equal rights, and Protestants felt that their dominance over Northern Ireland was threatened. The British government sent troops and violence spread throughout the country. The brutality lasted for years and the paramilitary groups from both sides were deadly. There were several actors involved in the conflict and there was a need for a peace agreement to calm the situation.

The involvement of different actors further complicated the situation. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was a paramilitary group whose goal was to get the UK out from Northern Ireland and unite it with the Republic of Ireland. It began its operations in 1919 and was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people. State forces such as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the Royal British Army and the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR) were deployed to fight the IRA. On the other hand, there were some

paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) from the Loyalists camp, aiming to stop the Republicans. 3500 civilians from both sides were killed in the violence that ensued.

The period of severe conflict, which was also known as “the troubles,” reached its peak in 1972. 480 people were killed in that year alone, and 30 January 1972 is still known as the deadliest day of the conflict. It began in response to the British Army’s killing of 14 marchers who raised their voice against imprisonment without trial of 2000 people, 90% of whom were Catholics. As a result, tensions escalated further, particularly when the Republicans intensified their campaigns resulting in the killings of 100 British soldiers. The British government opened direct talks and the IRA called for a ceasefire. No political agreement was reached, and the IRA only wanted a united Ireland. By 1973, there was no sign of the conflict ending.

In 1972 and 1973, relations between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain developed significantly because secret talks to bring the situation under control were taking place. Several mutual agreements were reached to stop the bloodshed. In 1973, the Sunningdale Agreement was signed, with both parties outlining power-sharing between Loyalists and Nationalists and making a Council of Ireland to develop cooperation.

This agreement faced negative reactions from the Unionists who were against power-sharing with the Nationalists, which was a sign that the conflict was not ending, and killings continued. The Anglo-Irish agreement gave the advisory role to the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland and like the Sunningdale Agreement, it too faced opposition. It was followed by another agreement in 1993, called the Downing Street Declaration, which mentioned the people’s right to self-determination and that Northern Ireland could unite with the Republic of Ireland if the majority of its people would be in the favour of this decision.

BACK CHANNEL NEGOTIATIONS AND THIRD PARTIES

Besides agreements and open talks, talks took place away from the attention of the media and the general public. The aim was to end the violence and come to a correct solution. These back-channel negotiations were between the Republic of Ireland and the British government and they proved helpful. From the nature of conflict, it was visible that peace was not possible without the intervention of a third party. The role of third party is to facilitate and find a ground solution for the existing conflict. Such a facilitator was then US Senator, George Mitchell, whom the UN sent George Mitchell to Northern Ireland as an effort to bring peace or decrease the level of tensions.

He introduced six principles, known as the Mitchell Principles. It outlined ending the violence democratically; disarming paramilitary organizations; obeying all terms of the agreement by parties' negotiation; and take measurable actions to stop killing and violence. Various accounts of the ways in which the deal between the disputing parties was brokered at the highest level have emerged over time. This includes back-channel negotiations between representatives of the IRA and the British government prior to official talks taking place; and the involvement of third parties, the nature and roles of which have had a significant impact on the outcome.

THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT: A PATH TO PEACE

The Good Friday Agreement was signed 10 April 1998 by British and Irish governments and involved other parties such as the Ulster Unionist Party, the Ulster Democratic Party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Sinn Féin, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labor Party. The Good Friday Agreement covered numerous issues such as criminal justice and policing reforms. The Northern Ireland Assembly and a consultative Civic Forum was established. The agreement was divided into three parts. The first part talked about institutions; the second talked about the north and south ministerial council; and the third talked about British and Irish inter-governmental conferences. Apart from that, it also discussed rights, security, and equality of opportunity, police, justice, prisoners and more.

There were many factors which made this 1998 Agreement possible, uniting involved groups. Several efforts had been made previously to establish peace but had failed because at least one party would disagree and had its own views and opinions. For instance, the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was unsuccessful because Sinn Féin rejected it. So for peace to be possible, an agreement should be one that would unite every group together so that they could find a common ground. The Good Friday Agreement was a success because it was approved via a referendum in the Republic of Ireland (94.39%) and in Northern Ireland (71.2%).²

DOES THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT HOLD LESSONS FOR AFGHANISTAN?

Nearly eight years have passed since the Afghan peace process began but the situation remains dire even today. The efforts for peace talks dates to early 2001. During former Afghan President Hamid Karzai's presidency, many efforts were made to begin talks with the Taliban and achieve reconciliation through a joint program. But despite being president for two consecutive terms, he failed to make a breakthrough with the Taliban. The increase in the Taliban's activities since 2015 is worth mentioning. On 01 January 2015, "NATO successfully transitioned from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission to the non-combat Resolute Support mission, and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) assumed full responsibility for Afghanistan's security nationwide."³ The transfer of power in the country and the withdrawal of the ISAF provided the Taliban the opportunity as well as an incentive not only to increase attacks but also to challenge the ANDSF. The fight between the Afghan security forces and the Taliban in 2015 is known to be one of the bloodiest since 2001. The security situation has worsened consistently throughout the country since then. Besides carrying out suicide attacks on various important locations, the Taliban has focused on controlling territories across Afghanistan.

2. "The Good Friday Agreement - An Overview." Democratic Progress Institute. June 2013. <http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Good-Friday-Agreement-An-Overview.pdf>.

3. «FACT SHEET: NATO's Enduring Commitment to Afghanistan.» Obama White House Archives. July 09, 2016. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/09/fact-sheet-natos-enduring-commitment-afghanistan>.

In 2014, the presidency was transferred from Karzai to Ashraf Ghani, but efforts for peace talks remained crucial and important for the Afghan government. The peace talks were important for Ghani to stabilize the situation in the country. On different occasions, he urged the Taliban to join the peace process and stop fighting. Hezb-e-Islami (HIG) was one of the parties involved in the conflict, whose leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was blacklisted by UN and was known as a global terrorist. After several negotiations with the HIG, finally, an agreement was signed in September 2016 between the Afghan government and HIG. The agreement includes commitments by both parties and specifies the term and conditions. For example, the Afghan government is obligated to recruit eligible HIG commanders into the ANDSF, grant an honorary title to Hekmatyar for his struggle for peace in Afghanistan, and provide him finance and security for his residence. In exchange, the HIG is obligated to declare an end to the war, stop its military actions and ensure the ceasefire. It has been a year since the agreement was signed and the expectation was that the absence of HIG would decrease the level of violence and motivate other Taliban to join the peace process.⁴

When one compares the case of the peace agreement with Hekmatyar in Afghanistan and the Good Friday Agreement in Northern, one can conclude that in Northern Ireland, several major parties were involved and agreed to sign the deal. Whereas in Afghanistan, major insurgent groups are absent, and only one party signed the peace deal. To take a realistic approach in making the Afghan peace process a success, the Afghan government will need to take several issues into account:

First, the argument that military operations can force the Taliban to join peace talks should be treated with caution because Afghan forces do not have that capacity to fight the Taliban. So far, the Taliban is not only increasing its attacks but also expanding its territorial control, which is a clear sign that the Afghan forces remain weaker against the Taliban and that the Afghan government must look for better alternatives to bring the Taliban to the table.

4. Osman, Borhan. «Peace With Hekmatyar: What does it mean for battlefield and politics?» Afghanistan Analysts Network. September 29, 2016. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/peace-with-hekmatyar-what-does-it-mean-for-battlefield-and-politics/>.

Second, there is lack of commitment among elites in the government to take the peace process seriously. Karzai initiated the peace process but he failed to accomplish it and his presidency was accused of corruption in the institutions. Upon the establishment of the incumbent National Unity Government (NUG), there were some efforts to work on the peace process but till now, no visible action exists which could provide hope, and the Taliban's attacks have been at its peak in 2017.

Third, opening a political space for all involved parties is highly important, which means all the involved parties should clearly state their interests and decisions must be made based on that.

Fourth, both sides should have the capacity to negotiate. This means that both sides should have good leadership and identify solutions where both parties would prosper.

Fifth, the US' role is extremely important in facilitating the peace process. US President Donald Trump's policy in Afghanistan seems to be clear regarding Washington's position in Afghan politics. Trump mentioned that "it is up to the people of Afghanistan to have control over the future of its government, and to achieve peace. We are a friend and a partner and we will not dominate Afghan people." In the case of Northern Ireland, Britain was an important actor but only wanted to achieve peace and the US is the same. If Trump acts on the US' strategy and supports the Afghan government in fighting terrorism, it will be a demonstration of positive action.

CONCLUSION

Both Northern Ireland and Afghanistan have undergone 30 years of war and conflict. While the nature of conflict is different in both countries, fighting the conflict has been complicated for both. In Northern Ireland, the conflict was historical, and it was mainly regarding territory because the Catholics did not leave Northern Ireland and fought with the Protestants. But in Afghanistan, the war is mainly on Islam. After several agreements, Northern Ireland succeeded in coming up with a solution. However, Afghanistan is still in the process of finding a realistic solution.

There have been shortcomings in the discussed strategy of all actors that have undermined the Afghan peace process. All actors have spoken about the political resolution of the conflict but the endgame for each player is varied, with everyone seeking for a win-win formula without conceding much.

It is important not to underestimate the conflict and the peace process. The commitment of involved parties such as the Afghan government, the Taliban, the US and the international community is an important step to achieve a political resolution together. The Northern Ireland peace process model is an example that finding a solution that would benefit all the involved parties is difficult but not impossible.

Realistic expectations must be set, and the interests of all involved parties should be considered. Finally, the importance of good leadership should not be ignored while implementing the peace process in Afghanistan.

BOOK REVIEW

TAHMINA RASSOLI¹

Title of book: Talking to Terrorists How to End Armed Conflicts

Author: Jonathan Powell

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In the book, *Talking to Terrorists How to End Armed Conflicts*, author Jonathan Powell says governments always decide to talk to terrorists very late, and that they always forget the lessons learned from previous talks. Drawing from historical experience, he argues that to make men with IEDs, guns, and chemical weapons cease doing so, the governments will eventually have to talk to them. He identifies different stages of the negotiation process such as on establishing contact with armed groups; building a trust channel; how the governments should engage; how a third party can help; and finally, on how to begin a negotiation—making the book very useful as it provides a clear idea about peace processes.

Powell draws from experiences of previous peace processes including those from Sri Lanka, South Africa, Indonesia, and Northern Ireland, and provides a commentary on when and how they ended, and on their successes and failures.

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Why must terrorists be spoken with? Revisionists who study the previous and current political situations put forward a series of practical arguments to suggest that talking to armed groups can, in certain cases and at certain times, be counterproductive. The first argument is that the offer of talks may make the terrorist believe that the government is weak and if they escalate the violence they can succeed. The next argument by the revisionists is that by agreeing to hold talks with terrorists it gives them the legitimacy and publicity they crave. The third argument posed—such as by Seamus Mallon, the leader of the moderate Catholic Social Democratic Labor Party (SDLP) in Northern Ireland—is that by dealing only with terrorists, the government undermines the moderates. Mallon complained that the British government was talking to Sinn Fein of the republican party rather than to them because the republicans had guns. But as Saudi foreign minister Saud bin Faisal pointedly asked—the person to whom he posed this question is unclear in the book—when making the case for engaging with Hamas, if we do not talk to them, how do we convince them they should change their attitude towards peace?

Afghans need to talk to them to change their minds. The decision to talk to terrorists also depends on how powerful the armed group is. For instance, in this author's point of view, in peace process with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, he agreed to negotiate because of his lack of control of territory and due him feeling weakened. In the peace process with the Taliban, the office in Qatar was established but they have been refusing to acknowledge that they have officially started the negotiations.

Powell says it is difficult and dangerous to make contact with a clandestine armed group. They deliberately operate in a covert manner, often based on a cell structure, and do not advertise headquarters where one can drop by and introduce oneself. Finding them, persuading them to meet, and doing so safely requires skill, courage and luck, and this is why building a channel can make a different impact. For instance, Norway's Erik Solheim's political curiosity led him to meet politicians, and he was approached by representatives of the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—an armed insurgent group that was active in Sri Lanka during the 1990s and 2000s. Balasingham (the partner of LTTE chief Prabhakaran)

suffered from diabetes, and Solheim arranged for him to be brought to Oslo for a kidney transplant. This built a lasting relationship of trust between Solheim and Balasingham. Balasingham formally asked Solheim to become the facilitator between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. After Vidar Helgesen became Norway's state secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he told Balasingham that the government would have Solheim as a negotiator. Solheim and Helgesen demonstrated how third parties can make the difficult first contact between an armed group and a government possible by building trust over a long period, by being prepared to listen to their grievances and show respect. They won over the LTTE and made themselves indispensable to both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government.

Powell says that in case of third parties, small NGOs can operate under the radar, unlike high profile mediators, and can make contact with covert armed groups and facilitate quiet discussions in a way the UN or a government cannot. However, this author contends that Afghanistan's internal and external problems are more complicated and that they can only be handled by an international high profile mediator; and that it is also important to find an impartial mediator—one whom Afghanistan has not found yet. While making contact, there is a chance that the armed group could be welcoming as most of them want someone to listen to them. When Martin Griffiths, the founder of the Henry Dunant Center in Geneva, reached Hasan di Tiro, the leader of Indonesia's Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), he was welcomed by di Tiro. While making contact, building a trust channel is important.

Negotiations can never begin after one has just introduced oneself. Trust can be earned by listening and respecting the armed group. Personal relationships are important if talks are to work albeit this does not necessarily mean becoming friends. The process of building a channel and trust should involve people who would really want peace and do not work solely for their own benefit or power. After the channel is built, the government should engage with the armed group.

Governments sometimes have to take the security risk to move forward at

a crucial moment and start initial private talks, for example, by stopping military operations, observing and monitoring armed groups and their territory etc. Being harsh to terrorists, killing them, posing sanctions etc. can never end a conflict, and in fact gives them the sense of victimhood. The government's aim in initial private contacts is often to persuade the armed group to enter into a ceasefire so that public negotiation can begin. Governments of neighboring countries can have greatest impact in case of security cooperation. If armed group has havens there from which it can launch attacks and withdraw, it can continue indefinitely.

To make negotiations easy, it is important to have a third party. The author says governments with internal conflicts always wants to keep the third party out citing reasons such as sovereignty, losing control and facing compromise. In Nepal's peace process, India persuaded Nepal to veto the participation of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) in talks and contended there should be no foreigners at talks. Similarly, the Britain resisted internationalizing their conflicts with Northern Ireland. Sometimes it can be good to keep the third party out. For instance, the strength of the South African peace process was that it did not require or seek foreign mediation. On the other hand, in some cases, without a third party, it can be more difficult to reach an agreement. The third party can be an effective referee and remove road blocks. The two sides—the government and the armed group—have differing opinions about the role a third party will play. The third party should know its goal, and decide which side they need to take. They should anticipate the result and not be just a listener.

Although it may be correct to talk to terrorists, any time is not a good time to begin negotiations even after a channel has been constructed and confidence built. Certain conditions need to be place if a negotiation is to succeed. Internal and external changes and transition always impact negotiations. For instance, the 2004 tsunami allowed the Indonesian government to enter into talks with the GAM as a response to a humanitarian disaster, and it allowed the GAM to represent it as a decision to help Acehnese people rather than arising out of their own weakness. This author contends that US President Donald Trump's Afghanistan strategy has affected the Afghan

peace process as he has been engaging in tougher military operations with the Taliban. As former US President John F. Kennedy said, "It is never too early to try; and it's never too late to talk." Sometimes, fighting and talking can occur simultaneously. The armed group should be well informed on the substance of negotiation and if not, the talks will freeze. It should be ensured that they have access to trusted advisors, albeit this book does not cite examples of advisors.

Powell says there should always be a plan and the parties to talks must continue talking so that the conversation never ends. Ways to ensure that either side does not stop talks must be identified. The aim of the peace process is to remove the blockage that the armed group feels has prevented them from pursuing their aims. After identifying what the other side wants, the government can find a solution for it. Beginning a negotiation is far easier than ensuring it concludes successfully.

Powell also speaks about spoilers and says they can bring down the negotiations at any time. Even though there may be a third-party negotiator and talks continue in the negotiation process, there could be always a problem of spoilers. Powell argues that in the peace process in the Middle East (the book does not specify who the spoilers in that region are) every time there is suicide bombing in Israel or the occupied territories, the Israelis break off talks. It is the reaction of the government and the armed group to the spoilers that determines whether they succeed. The solution for this is that the leaders should warn their supporters of the peace process in advance that such behavior is possible. After beginning negotiations and continuously talking to terrorists, it is important to decide whether one wants the negotiations to be ambiguous or clear. The negotiator needs to be creative and identify suitable ideas to forward the peace process and to ensure that neither side feels diminished.

Powell argues that Robert Cooper writes that the function of diplomacy is often to find a formula frequently an ambiguous form of words on which everyone can pretend to agree while they wait for something to change... which may make the problem easier to solve. Clarity in the negotiation is not necessarily a desirable goal as it can undermine long term prospects for

peace. If carefully orchestrated, precisely worded agreements can spark additional conflict. In Nepal, for example, the Maoists wanted a republic but the congress party would not accept the word 'republic' in twelve-point agreement. In 2005, after they agreed to a neutral term, the problem was solved and ambiguity helped.

The fundamental argument of the book is to convey that one must talk to terrorists and that there is no other way. However, in armed conflicts, a time comes when these groups eventually will stop. For the future, there is always a question as to how one can know whether these groups are merely engaged in destruction for its own sake or are prepared to negotiate. The provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were considered absolutist groups, eventually, they negotiated. There is no insoluble conflict, no matter how bloody, different or ancient.

A conflict can only get to an end when there is only a single armed group, both sides know what they want, and when there is a good mediator in between. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, the armed groups are divided into many groups and are being supported by the supposed mediators themselves, which makes the peace process a challenging one—one whose successful conclusion appears difficult.

Overall, this book is a good read for those who have broad background knowledge about the peace processes mentioned in the book that took place in the past. However, the partial way in which Powell explains and refers to the previous peace processes can be confusing and ambiguous for an uninitiated reader, making it uninteresting and a tedious experience. Powell himself says he has carried out broad based research and studies on all the peace processes mentioned in this book. Reading parts of the previous peace processes in a partial way cannot provide a clear idea to the reader about the processes or about what the author is trying to convey.

Powell strings one incident after another to illustrate his point, or mentions some incidents in different parts of the book repeatedly. For one who does not have much background knowledge of those incidents it becomes frustrating. *Talking to Terrorists How to End Armed Conflicts* is

therefore recommended for those who seek to gain an overall idea about the negotiation processes but can be a tedious read if the reader does not have a general familiarity of the past peace processes the author refers to throughout the book.

PEER REVIEWERS

Homayra Ludin Etemadi is an advisor to the former President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, H.E. Hamid Karzai, whom she served as Deputy Chief of Staff for seven years. Prior to joining the president's office, Mrs. Etemadi was based in Geneva, Switzerland, where she pursued a career in the development and humanitarian fields. Working with the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Mrs. Etemadi negotiated and managed private sector partnerships in support of various disaster prevention and response programs of National Societies in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

She was a co-founder of the first international NGO coalition lobbying with governments and international organisations on the rights of refugee women and children. As Chair of the International Working Group on Refugee Women, she directed input on refugee women to the Beijing Platform of Action; convened the first international conference on Muslim Refugee Women; and served as the coordinator of the refugee women's and Muslim women's caucuses at the 1995 International Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing, China. Bringing women's voices to peace efforts was an important aspect of her work on behalf of refugee women. Mrs. Etemadi's work on women's issues finds its roots in her work with the Afghan National Commission for UNESCO, where she collaborated closely with the Afghan Women's Society, which today has been replaced by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Mrs. Etemadi holds BA and MA degrees from the University of Cambridge, England.

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EDITORIAL

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