

The Peace Negotiations and the Prospects for Political Stability in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, Afghanistan has made positive social, political, and economic progress. However, the country still faces many challenges, including conflict between the Taliban regime and the opposition parties, corruption, and ethnic problems. To end the political conflict and bring sustainable peace and stability to Afghanistan, the essential way forward requires the Taliban Government to negotiate with the opposition parties. Otherwise, there will be little possibility of ending the long hostility between the two sides and establishing a stable and secure government. It has been more than two years since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, and they have not changed their policy to allow girls to go to school and women to practice their political rights. However, on May 4, the Taliban regime announced during an international conference in Doha, the capital of Qatar, that their government would be willing to talk with the international community and build trust between each other. Nevertheless, the Taliban government rejected the international power's demands to talk with the opposition groups and establish an inclusive government. In contrast, the international community did not demonstrate a willingness to recognize the Taliban administration as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Therefore, the Taliban regime is facing an internal and international legitimacy crisis. To move forward and solve the problem, inclusive negotiations are necessary, where they agree to ensure women's rights and pursue the unconditional release of elders, the disabled, and sick inmates. This call for a paper describes the prerequisites for the conflicting parties before improving negotiations with each other. Failure to address and fulfill these prerequisites to ensure the chances of a successful outcome are maintained. No such talks should be undertaken unless three conditions have been addressed and acted upon. The three conditions are below organizing National dialogue, solving the ethnicity problems in Afghanistan, and establishing a framework for peace talks.

Keywords: Peace Negotiations, Political Stability, Peace Talks, Taliban Regime

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Introduction

The paper seeks to examine the peace negotiations and prospects for political stability in Afghanistan. The subject of peace and political stability remain central for meaning development of Afghanistan and framework for building strong diplomatic and economic ties with countries across the globe. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the options available for building peace and promoting political stability.

1) Holding the National Dialogues

“National dialogues typically involve a diverse range of participants representing various stakeholders, such as political parties, armed groups, government officials, civil society organizations, professional associations, religious leaders, tribal chiefs, and influential individuals” (J. Fung, 2021, p.100). To address the problems and find a political solution for Afghanistan, it is crucial for the Taliban regime and other parties to engage in national dialogues, which can foster trust and resolve conflicts. National dialogues provide an opportunity for both

sides to address multiple national issues and seek peaceful solutions. The objective of national dialogues is to provide an equal platform for participants from different organizations to express their opinions on national issues and propose political solutions. Therefore, national dialogues are not exclusively designed for political elites; they should also include diverse groups to address the problems and find solutions. National dialogues serve as effective negotiation mechanisms to resolve conflicts between conflicting parties in post-war situations. However, organizing national dialogues and inviting different parties and organizations to participate requires the involvement and cooperation of third parties. Since the Taliban took power through military force, there have been expectations that they would hold a national dialogue to discuss the legitimacy of their government and initiate negotiations with opposition parties to resolve disputes and promote peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the Taliban has not shown the political will to engage in national dialogue or hold discussions with stakeholders regarding the possibility of negotiations with political opposition to resolve conflicts and promote peace. In this context, regional players can take the initiative to organize national dialogues to explore the possibility of finding a political solution in Afghanistan and achieving stability. However, before regional players consider national dialogues as a means of conflict resolution in Afghanistan, they need to establish regional consensus through a framework to address the problems. Without a general agreement among regional players on how to resolve the conflict, organizing national dialogues for Afghanistan's issues may prove challenging.

2) Reducing the ethnicity problems in Afghanistan

Historically Afghanistan is a country of ethnic groups divided into tribes. These organizations command the loyalty and identity of all of their respective leaders. No matter what government position they hold, they owe their allegiance to their ethnic group and then to the national interest. As a result, when it comes to government positions and policies, they tend to favour their group regardless of qualifications. If you are not in the favoured group, you will manage to recent this tradition. Afghanistan is nearly the size of France, with a population of 33 million, and it needs a civil service that is chosen by merit regardless of ethnicity. Following the fall of the Taliban's "government" in 2001, Hamid Karzai made the country's president with the Americans' backing. While most would agree, his administration had numerous shortcomings. It was rightly criticized, to his credit, Karzai at least recognized that ethnic politics was at the root of the country's internal woes. Ethnic dissension was, for him, the fundamental reason Afghanistan had failed to progress or to keep pace with the achievements of other Third World countries. He understood that if Afghanistan were to have any hope of building a stable, successful society, the concerted effort of all would be needed, especially an effort that coalesced around a policy reflective of shared national interest. Armed with this belief, he pursued initiatives to establish a more unified nation. However, despite his effort, ethnic dissension continued to undermine his vision for a united country.

Nevertheless, he was able to build the framework for a National Unity government, one that enabled him to work with a number of leaders from across the country. In doing so, he was able to secure a level of public unity. Former president Hamid Karzai could reduce ethnic tension, and he attempted to build trust between each ethnic group to become a strong nation. In 2014 when President Ashraf Ghani and his political rival Dr. Abdullah Abdullah (serving as Afghanistan's Chief Executive) were elected. The people of Afghanistan hoped the two leaders would work together to bring needed reform and prosperity to the nation. Unfortunately, the two leaders could not work together and failed to agree on a strategy to move the country forward. "Disagreement on power-sharing and the formulation of a cohesive political agenda generated tension and needless challenges, all of which jeopardized, even negated any chance for meaningful improvement in the national condition" (Arif Sahar, 2016, p.1). Regretfully, it was a situation that prevails to this very day. Beyond disagreement between two leaders regarding

sharing political power, there was a remarkable mistrust between each ethnicity; therefore, they couldn't work together to bring more stability to the country. Furthermore, despite the unsuccessful previous experience in sharing political power between two leaders once again, Afghanistan is right now exercising another coalition government. Although democracy in Afghanistan did play a positive role in many areas, such as the development of civil society, women, youth, and marginalized groups were empowered. However, when it comes to political transformation based on elections, democracy did not have a good record and function. For instance, the Afghan presidential elections in 2014 and 2019, due to technical issues for the sake of transparency, didn't have a clear outcome. Therefore, President Ashraf Ghani and their rival Dr. Abdullah Abdullah claimed victory in the election. After the 2019 election, power divided the country into two parts, and there was potentially a possibility to happen another internal war between the two sides due to a power dispute. After significant efforts and mediation by the United States and domestic political leaders, a deal was eventually reached between President Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, resulting in a power-sharing arrangement. According to the agreement, President Ashraf Ghani leads the government while Mr. Abdullah Abdullah assumes the role of the High Council for National Reconciliation, responsible for leading peace negotiations with the Taliban. Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 and the establishment of their Islamic Emirate, they did not engage in power-sharing with other political parties, hindering trust-building among ethnic groups and impeding political stability. Consequently, numerous educated and influential individuals from various ethnicities who previously held government positions under the previous leadership found themselves unemployed. To address these challenges and initiate negotiations between the Taliban and other political parties aimed at achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan, it is imperative for the Taliban government to alter its policies and engage in power-sharing with other parties. By establishing an inclusive government that offers opportunities for individuals from all ethnicities to participate, the Taliban can significantly reduce ethnic tensions and foster political stability within Afghanistan. Without a nationally representative government that actively works towards reducing ethnic tensions, the prospects of improving political stability in Afghanistan remain limited.

3) Framework for peace talks

The third essential involves an understanding by all parties that the negotiations will take place within a framework that supports and reflects the previous hold attributes and values of Afghanistan, including democracy, elections and its system of justice, and fundamentals in the area of international relations, trade, and commerce. Without a clear goal and framework, there is no guarantee of having a good outcome in peace negotiations with the Taliban. "Negotiation to end the conflict is never Simple. They involve compromises, consensus-building, and some level of mutual trust" Narghai, p.2). It is essential to think about a long process for peace negotiation to build trust and find out what the other party is looking for in their future. Once we make a certain level improving to understand each different attitude and principle, consequently, we will have more chances to make peace with other sides' experiences, suggesting that there are likely to be universal patterns in most conflicts. Agreement or understanding may be worked out directly between some parties in the early stages relevant; the deal may have been negotiated with strong international involvements. Such cooperation may constitute the significance of one side that will run counter to what the other side asks for. In particular, human urgency needs to balance with the need for a carefully designed agreement. "Too loose a framework can easily lead to ambiguity in the negotiation process or may defer difficult choices" Wallenstein and Eriksson. p. 23). In the case of Afghanistan, experience showed that international involvement was not successful in convincing the Taliban group and bringing them to the negotiation table. Therefore, it may have been worked out to talk with the Taliban directly without international involvement. However, it is essential to consider the regional actors' rule and engagement, such

as Russia, Pakistan, China, and Iran, in a peace negotiation with the Taliban. To create a robust framework for peace talks, we need to make a national consensus between different political parties before starting peace negotiations with the Taliban. Over the past two decades y, from the previous government under the Hamid Karzai administration and the National Unity govern government, the high peace council of Afghanistan failed to sign a peace agreement with the Taliban. There are many reasons why the previous government and, most notably, the high peace council of Afghanistan could not end the conflict and achieve their goal. When a country is looking to make a deal with its enemy and find a solution, they need to make a national consensus for its purpose. Otherwise, without having a national consensus, it is hard to solve the problems and sign an agreement with the other party. The Taliban leaders must accept the reality, whether good or bad, that there is ethnic politics inside the government in Afghanistan, when it comes to peace negotiation and agreement with the political parties, they should manage and reduce ethnic politics before entering the peace process.

Conclusion

Demonstrating the political will and commitment are essential in confronting realities and promoting peace and political stability in Afghanistan. Right decisions and policies must be made and implemented for the interest of the citizens.

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