



DESIGNING A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE PROCESS FOR AFGHANISTAN

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report, sponsored by the Center for Conflict Management at the U.S. Institute of Peace, draws on comparative research literature on peace processes to identify lessons applicable to Afghanistan and makes recommendations to the international community, the Afghan government, and Afghan civil society for ensuring a more comprehensive, successful, and sustainable peace process.

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[Peace processes that include a wider range of voices are more likely to lead to success, legitimacy, sustainability, and democratic governance.]

Summary

- Current negotiations to end the war in Afghanistan fail to build on lessons learned from peace processes in other countries. Exclusion of key stakeholders, especially diverse sectors of civil society, and exclusion of key issues underlying the current conflict create a recipe for failure. In addition, the exclusive focus on either top-down negotiation between armed groups or bottom-up reintegration based on financial incentives is insufficient.
- Half of all peace agreements fail in part because too few people support them. History shows a peace process is more likely to succeed if it includes a wide spectrum of armed and unarmed actors. Building a national consensus to transition from war to peace in Afghanistan requires participation by diverse stakeholders.
- Current negotiations focus on a narrow agenda on conditions for the Taliban to lay down their arms and for the United States to leave Afghanistan. This agenda does not address significant root causes of the current conflict, such as government corruption and ethnic tensions.
- A comprehensive Afghan peace process would orchestrate work in three areas: developing a politically negotiated settlement, increasing legitimacy for the Afghan government, and building a national public consensus on the future relations between diverse groups.
- An Afghan peace process requires creating, coordinating, and sequencing a set of structured mechanisms, forums, and negotiation tables for participatory deliberation and decision making involving diverse stakeholders, regional countries, and all levels of Afghan society. A successful peace process combines high-level negotiation with “vertical” processes that link high-level negotiations with public dialogue processes in a way that is transparent, impartial, and inclusive.
- A comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan requires a much more deliberate design than currently exists. The hope of a quick and tight negotiation process is as illusory as the fantasy that firepower will achieve victory for either side in Afghanistan.

From “Peace Talks” to a “Comprehensive Peace Process”

The transition from war to peace in Afghanistan requires much more than high-level negotiations and low-level reintegration efforts. The current negotiation agenda between U.S. and Taliban representatives holds potential for establishing conditions for an end to the war. Yet it does not lay a foundation for a sustainable peace. The current approach muffles other critical conflicts that are obstacles to peace in Afghanistan and the region and overlooks Afghan civil society’s capacity to support a national peace process. The June 2010 National Consultative Peace Jirga called for the creation of a National Peace Council and a redesign of reintegration efforts in the new Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program (APRP). Noting concerns about the lack of democratic representation first in the Peace Jirga and later in the National Peace Council, civil society leaders continue to flag the exclusion of public interests in current peace talks.¹ Public participation in a comprehensive peace process is an essential component for successful transition from war to a stable peace.²

Half of all peace agreements fail—and once they fail, the underlying conflicts have an even greater chance of becoming intractable. In the history of successful transitions from war to peace, one lesson is clear: go slow to go fast. Rushed peace processes that limit or exclude public participation and interests are more likely to fail than those that build a solid foundation for a sustainable peace. Too often international diplomats seem to throw all of their eggs in one basket with high-level peace negotiations to achieve a quick settlement. When these efforts fail to produce immediate outcomes, the stakeholders return to the battlefield convinced that diplomacy was tried and exhausted. Peace agreements thrown together quickly often unravel in a way that results in an even longer process, less trust among key stakeholders, more costs to the international community, and more death and destruction on the ground.

The jumble of terminology in Afghanistan fogs the complicated landscape of peace efforts. (For purposes of this report, the definitions found in box 1 are used.) In Afghanistan, the concept of “reconciliation” often refers to high-level negotiations between the Taliban, Karzai government, and international forces.³ But in other contexts, such as in South Africa, reconciliation has traditionally referred to a national civil society–led process following official, political negotiations. More recently, media reports signal that there are high-level “peace talks” under way. Peace talks aim to reach a “peace agreement,” a statement that would lay out the conditions and steps for a transition from armed struggle to a politically negotiated process. The term “reintegration” refers to low-level disarmament efforts to entice foot soldiers with jobs programs and other economic incentives. And at the same time, Afghan civil society calls for a national “transitional justice process” with an agenda contrasting from that found in the formal peace talks. All of these terms and processes have a place within an Afghan *comprehensive peace process*.

A “comprehensive peace process” is distinct in that it includes a much wider array of activities, actors, and forums aimed at achieving peace.⁴ Comprehensive peace processes are multilevel, dynamic efforts to build a public consensus around a shared future. A peace process may or may not lead to a peace agreement. In Afghanistan, for example, a comprehensive peace process could help address root causes of the conflict whether or not a peace agreement between the country’s armed, political, and ethnic groups ever materializes. Building a national consensus on the country’s future among civil society could aid in achieving a political settlement between armed groups. A comprehensive peace process requires a careful look at *who* participates in a peace process, *what* issues are on the table, and *how* the process is structured. In short, a comprehensive peace process requires creating structures for wide participation and

Box 1. Definition of Terms

Reintegration refers to low-level efforts to offer incentives to disarm and return armed individuals to community life.

Reconciliation refers to a process between conflicting groups to understand core grievances and identify mutually satisfying solutions with the goal of ending fighting and normalizing political relationships.

Transitional justice refers to a process of building a culture respectful of human rights by repairing justice systems, healing social divisions, and building a democratic system of governance.

Peace negotiations or “peace talks” refer to discussions aimed at reaching both reconciliation and a peace agreement.

A **peace agreement** is a negotiated cease-fire and road map for participatory governance in a divided country.

A **peace process** is a multilevel, multiphased effort involving armed and unarmed stakeholders in a conflict to both bring an end to armed fighting and lay out a sustainable political, economic, security, and territorial agreement. It involves top-level negotiation between the armed groups, plus diverse forums for public dialogue and engagement to foster a broad consensus on the future direction of the country.

deep discussion of underlying interests and grievances that fuel conflict. Only a *wide* and *deep* multilevel, sequential process, using principled negotiation techniques, will enable the country to build a national consensus on the way forward.⁵

The pool of human experience in fostering national peace processes in divided countries is still shallow. Not enough people are thinking through what a comprehensive Afghan peace process, based on lessons learned in other countries, could or should look like. This report seeks to fill that void by distilling key elements of designing peace processes from historical case studies, and looking at the unique challenges and opportunities for a culturally attuned, comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan. This report first makes the case for a comprehensive peace process. It then examines who should be involved in a comprehensive peace process, what types of incentives, negotiation strategies, and issues should be brought to negotiation tables, and how inclusive mechanisms for public input and mediation, technical support, and coordination teams can structure a comprehensive peace process. The final section of the report provides policy recommendations for Afghan civil society, the Afghan government, and the international community.

The Case for a Comprehensive Peace Process

Research comparing attempts to transition from war demonstrates the difficulties facing all routes to peace. A military victory leading to a durable peace in Afghanistan is extremely unlikely. Only a small percentage of wars end because one side wins and another loses. Most wars end in stalemate, with neither side claiming victory.⁶ And of those wars that are won, those with a rebel or insurgent victory tend to have more stable outcomes than others.⁷ Moreover, attempts to end wars by inflicting pain on opponents require a great deal of time and destruction of relationships, lives, and infrastructure thereby making it all the more difficult to build a sustainable peace after attempts at such an unlikely victory. A survey of research on war termination concludes external efforts to push stakeholders to negotiate through violent punishment or war rarely work if the stakeholders believe they will not achieve their goals through negotiation.⁸

Current enemy-centric “kill-and-capture” International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) policies endanger negotiation by removing leaders who have a political agenda and maturity to make deals. The remaining lower-level leaders of armed insurgent groups tend to be more extremist in their views and are more likely to continue fighting at any cost.⁹ Attempts for the international community to financially buy their way out of the war by supporting the Afghan and Pakistani governments look equally doomed to fail. Ironically, the international community’s greatest leverage in Afghanistan lies neither in imposing a hurting stalemate onto armed insurgent groups nor making military and financial commitments to prop up the Afghan government and Pakistani military and intelligence agencies that the public widely sees as illegitimate. The military and financial “intravenous drip” keeps the current dysfunctional system in place, allowing these governments to forgo the hard work of earning public legitimacy and consent to govern while simultaneously providing financial incentives for many stakeholders to perpetuate the war for their own financial gain. Rather, an international military and financial drawdown from Afghanistan may be the greatest leverage available to the international community. A political and financial “hurting stalemate” may be far more effective at creating incentives for all sides to enter into earnest negotiations to end the war and to build a durable peace than what is achieved by flexing military might.¹⁰

Most wars end through peace agreements, but half of these also fail and there is a return to war.¹¹ Most of the peace processes in recent history have been deeply flawed in a variety of ways, such as excluding all but certain armed groups, failing to make needed structural changes, lacking necessary international support, or insufficient attention to the challenge of implementing agreements. Comprehensive peace processes that include international security guarantees, investments in economic development, demilitarized zones, and robust mechanisms for addressing conflicts at all levels of society through principled negotiation and mediation have a more successful track record.¹² Comprehensive peace processes are more likely to lead to positive outcomes than their noncomprehensive counterparts.¹³ Comprehensive peace processes more often lead to these interrelated positive outcomes:

- *Public support.* One of the reasons that half of all peace agreements fail is that too few people support them. The more people a peace process includes, the more people that may support an agreement.
- *Legitimacy.* Peace negotiations that include only armed actors inadvertently legitimize the use of arms to achieve political power. A comprehensive and inclusive peace process creates a more legitimate outcome and builds public consent for the national government.
- *Sustainability.* Comprehensive peace processes more often address a range of driving factors fueling conflict and thus help to prevent the causes of recurring violent conflict. Unarmed groups including religious and ethnic or tribal leadership, women, labor unions, educators, youth, and other elements of civil society play important roles in ensuring that peace agreements address critical issues fueling ongoing violence, such as reforming state institutions, and deep-seated public grievances.
- *Democratic governance.* A comprehensive peace process is an exercise in participatory deliberation and intergroup dialogue and negotiation. With the help of facilitators and mediators and the support of widespread training via local civil society institutions such as media programs and religious centers, a comprehensive peace process can teach skills of

An international military and financial drawdown from Afghanistan may be the greatest leverage available to the international community.

how to identify differences and build on common ground. Dialogue models used in a comprehensive peace process are strikingly different than those employed in Western-style democracies' competitive politics and hard-fought elections, which have been found to exacerbate social and political conflict in divided societies.¹⁴ While it may take more time to structure a participatory process, the long-term payoff for this participation is that the peace process can lay the groundwork for democratic governance.

These outcomes are directly related to the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders who raise a wide range of issues via a series of interrelated mechanisms for structuring public participation in a peace process. The next three sections of this report detail the *who*, *what*, and *how* of an Afghan comprehensive peace process.

The “Who” of an Afghan Peace Process: Key Stakeholders

An exclusive peace agreement reached only between certain armed groups at the top of society is insufficient. A sustainable peace requires building a national consensus on how to move the country forward. Research comparing successful and unsuccessful peace agreements illustrates that civil society engagement is often the critical ingredient to a successful peace process.¹⁵ Engaging with armed actors who want to be included in a peace process is also essential, as excluding them cements their commitment to using violence as the only communication channel.¹⁶ Peace processes that include a wider range of voices are more likely to lead to success, legitimacy, sustainability, and democratic governance. A tipping point or critical mass of people supporting a peace process for a war-to-peace transition is essential, particularly in countries with a weak central government, like Afghanistan. Figure 1 illustrates the key leadership at all levels of the pyramid that must be engaged to build a public consensus.¹⁷

Policymakers looking for a quick fix or “good enough” solution face temptations to shortcut the process. A desire for confidentiality, manageability, and security lead some to conclude that peace talks require only private negotiation spaces for moderate leaders of armed groups. These concerns are valid. A comprehensive peace process should include a track for confidential discussions and should have a design that is both realistic and flexible. Achieving cease-fire agreements and developing security arrangements often requires secret negotiations outside of the public eye. However, shortcuts cannot build sustainable peace.

Comparative case studies of public peace processes in Guatemala, the Philippines, Mali, and South Africa illustrate that manageable mechanisms and models for public input exist. A later section of this report details five broad models of public participation in peace processes and their relevance for Afghanistan.

Including “Spoilers” and “Terrorists”

It is routine for governments and groups engaged in armed conflict to refuse to negotiate with each other and to conclude that “violence is the only language” understandable to their opponents. Yet the history of the post-Cold War era shows most wars end in agreements and at some point all sides come to see that negotiation is the only viable option.¹⁸ Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, and armed insurgent groups in Guatemala, El Salvador, Mozambique, Cambodia, and numerous other countries, were once thought to be parties that could not be negotiated with. Yet today there are viable peace agreements in each of these countries. Engaging with armed groups is not equal to legitimating their cause.¹⁹ Negotiation

Figure 1. Pyramid of Afghan Stakeholders

processes can uncover legitimate grievances buried beneath a group's radical rhetoric. Addressing these legitimate grievances, which often center on a desire for respect and dignity, is far less expensive and more effective than the fantasy of firepower solutions aimed at eradicating the group or its ideas.

Strategies for managing potential spoilers of a peace agreement are necessary. "Spoilers" are groups that aim to disrupt any peace agreement either because their interests were not represented or included in the negotiations or because they perceive themselves to benefit more from ongoing violent conflict.²⁰ Peace processes often exclude spoilers because they do indeed aim to disrupt efforts toward peace.²¹ The dilemma in any high-level negotiation is whether to include potential and manifest spoilers. If the process includes both spoilers, they may make it impossible for moderates to make progress in areas where they find common ground across the lines of conflict. On the other hand, a peace process that excludes all potential spoilers may not have anyone around the table. If so-called spoilers are left out of the process because they are more difficult to work with, then they often come back later to disrupt the implementation of an agreement. Excluding potential spoilers can increase their commitment to violence by removing viable political alternatives.

Managing spoilers means preparing for the reality that certain stakeholders, including some participating in a peace process and those left out of the process, will either not follow through on implementation of agreements or will actively attempt to sabotage agreements. Developing plans for managing spoilers requires actively engaging with their interests so as to shift their perception of the costs of spoiling the process and the benefits from allowing a peace process to move forward.

Addressing legitimate grievances, which often center on a desire for respect and dignity, is far less expensive and more effective than the fantasy of firepower solutions aimed at eradicating the group or its ideas.

The 2001 Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan excluded key civil society interests and the Taliban. The process rewarded some warlords from the Northern Alliance with political authorities and impunity for their crimes, which some deem as on par with crimes by the Taliban. Many scholars noted the exclusion of Taliban leaders in the Bonn Agreement led to missed opportunities for finding a political solution.²²

Current negotiations threaten to repeat these mistaken calculations of who to include or exclude in discussions about Afghanistan's future, as they focus on high-level stakeholders in the international community, neighboring countries, the Afghan government, and moderate, politically minded Taliban representatives from Quetta Shura. These negotiations exclude some armed groups such as the Haqqani network, deemed too extremist for the process. While secret talks between certain politically minded stakeholders may be appropriate at early stages, an ongoing process that excludes the voices and interests of potential spoilers lessens the chances for achieving a sustainable peace.

Involving Civil Society

Including only certain armed stakeholders in a peace agreement creates long-term problems. First, it rewards groups who use violence with political influence and even positions of power. Second, a peace agreement that excludes public input leaves out the interests and needs of other key stakeholders in a society required to achieve a sustainable solution to underlying issues. If key stakeholders are left out, they will lack ownership of the agreement and the political will required to implement it. Successful and sustainable peace processes find ways to engage both armed groups deemed too extreme for negotiation and unarmed civil society deemed irrelevant or unwieldy.²³

In addition to those at the top of the pyramid in figure 1, national-level and community-level civil society leaders and the general public at the bottom of the pyramid also need spaces to represent their interests in a comprehensive Afghan peace process. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are groups of citizens not in government that organize themselves on behalf of some public interest. CSOs face many of the same challenges as government, such as corruption, lack of capacity, and inadequate funding to achieve their goals. As opposed to elements of "uncivil society that fuel violence," CSOs foster democratic dialogue, tolerance, and trust between groups, work in partnership with the state to carry out important public services, and hold the state accountable for its responsibilities to citizens and transparent governance. Stable governance and a durable peace require a citizen-oriented state working in partnership with an active civil society that has adequate space to hold government to account.²⁴ Civil society organizations (CSOs) are groups of citizens not in government that organize themselves on behalf of some public interest. As opposed to elements of "uncivil society that fuel violence," CSOs foster democratic dialogue, tolerance, and trust between groups. Civil society works in partnership with the state both to complement and supplement its capacity and to hold the state to account for its responsibilities and transparent governance. An active local civil society at the national and community levels is an indicator of a functioning and democratic state.²⁵ Given this broader understanding of civil society–state relations, the role of CSOs in a peace process is more obvious.

Generating and consolidating a new national narrative or story about a country's future is an essential element of a sustainable peace process. Public dialogue can help to create this national consensus on what a shared future looks like. When the public believes that its individual identity, economic, political, and security interests are supported by the nation at large, it will support a peace process to make that new reality possible. Media campaigns using tele-

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vision, radio, billboards, and posters to generate public support have been a component of a number of successful peace processes.

During the U.S. civil rights movement, those wanting a more inclusive, respectful society did not set out to kill or wage war against the intolerant Ku Klux Klan (KKK)—a once widespread violent white supremacy movement. Instead, Americans prosecuted KKK crimes while working to build a national consensus that rejected the ideology of racism, intolerance, and violence. While KKK groups still exist today in some areas of the U.S. and racism is still widespread, Americans created a strong enough national consensus—from Washington down to small towns in middle America—to push the KKK to the margins. The civil society movement, supported by institutions enforcing rule of law, defeated the *ideas* of the KKK through the media, public discussions, and peaceful protest.

An Afghan peace process cannot accomplish in a few years the kind of social change that takes decades or generations, especially without a functioning judicial system to support rule of law. The ideas driving the Taliban and other armed Afghan opposition groups, and the culture of impunity and corruption in Afghanistan, will take generations to change. However, a comprehensive peace process can build a national consensus to point Afghan society in a direction where most stakeholders believe they will achieve more through the political process than the battlefield. A comprehensive Afghan peace process could blend models used in other countries with Afghan peacebuilding traditions to create an inclusive national agenda to move forward collectively and peacefully.

Afghan civil society is complex. In addition to traditional or tribal structures such as *jirgas* (assemblies) and *maliks* (leaders), religious leaders and structures such as the Shura-e-Ulama (council of religious scholars) play important roles in mediating local conflicts.²⁶ Afghan civil society also includes trade unions, universities, artists, media professionals, women's groups, youth groups, and other forms of social structure outside of the state, including local Afghan nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and Community Development Councils (CDCs). All of these civil society sectors have roles to play in fostering durable peace in Afghanistan.

Researchers on Afghan civil society consistently find that locals define civil society broadly as citizens “concerned about the public good as opposed to private or sectarian interests.”²⁷ Afghan civil society plays active roles in fostering participatory governance and peace, including “breaking through client networks, solving local problems, and creating constituencies for peace.”²⁸ Yet civil society activists describe a “war on civil society” carried out by armed opposition groups, the Afghan government, and NATO forces, each of which they say further disenfranchises the interests of average Afghans.²⁹

Shallow definitions and understanding of the concept of civil society plague international policy. Historically, counterinsurgency manuals advised on how to “pacify” civil society so that it withdraws support from armed opposition groups and accepts government authority. Remnants of pacification strategies linger on while newer counterinsurgency guidance in Afghanistan asserts the need for military forces to gain public support and use civil society as “force multipliers,” service providers, or implementing partners for donor-designed projects. Citing an important surge in Iraqi civil society opposition to armed groups independently accompanying the military surge, U.S. military leaders in Afghanistan look for an Afghan civil society equivalent to reduce violence.

Premised on the belief that tribesmen living in the Pashtun belt make up the majority of the insurgency's recruits, the tribal elder is posited as Afghanistan's equivalent of an ... awakened Iraqi chieftain. It is to him that policymakers will turn when looking to consult ordinary Afghans on plans for reconciliation.³⁰

A comprehensive Afghan peace process could blend models used in other countries with Afghan peacebuilding traditions to create an inclusive national agenda.

There are several problems with this tribal strategy. First, tribal leaders are not eager to join forces with “a collateral damage prone International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) trumpeting a corrupt central government and a circus of intrusive development projects.”³¹ Second, tribal groups sway back and forth between competing external forces and the Afghan government, depending on rapidly shifting short-term assessments of what is in their interest.³² Finally, Afghan civil society is much more diverse and complex than suggested by this tribal strategy.

Afghan civil society will best contribute to an Afghan peace process when it is allowed space to act independently and when there are adequate civil freedoms to discuss key issues driving the conflict in Afghanistan.

The “What” of an Afghan Peace Process: A Negotiation Framework

All stakeholders calculate their interests in supporting continued war versus a negotiated solution—that includes armed groups and government but also business leaders, farmers, drug traffickers, military contractors, and ordinary citizens in Afghanistan and in those countries supporting international forces. A successful peace process is one in which all stakeholders are satisfied that the outcome is better than the alternative of continuing to fight. Stakeholders assess their “best alternative to a negotiated agreement” (BATNA) to determine whether to continue fighting.³³ If stakeholders believe they can achieve more on the battlefield, through other means of coercion, or by the continuation of the status quo, they will not negotiate in good faith. Stakeholders calculate their BATNA depending on the calculus of the costs and benefits, incentives and sanctions for participating or not participating. The “ripeness” of a peace process centers on whether the groups in conflict believe they have more to gain from peace or continued fighting.³⁴ There is no easy calculus to determine when a group may decide to devote energy to a negotiated outcome.³⁵

Box 2 summarizes some of the dilemmas of negotiation.³⁶ The dangers of a negotiated agreement in Afghanistan can be significantly reduced with the design of a comprehensive peace process involving a more strategic set of incentives, a principled negotiation approach, and a wider negotiation agenda. Internationals pushing a settlement may craft an agreement that looks good from an outsider’s point of view. Countless think tanks in foreign capitals have put forth solutions to Afghanistan’s challenges but the long and messy process of all stakeholders coming to understand each other’s underlying interests through wide consultations and public dialogue is necessary for all sides to understand why certain provisions in an agreement may be the best possible outcome.³⁷

Negotiation efforts fail in many peace efforts because mid-level diplomats, without comparative experience in successful peace processes, use coercive bargaining to battle and seek compromises on the positions of armed groups. To entice armed groups to “give up” their fight, all sides continue to pound each other on the battlefield while internationals throw small financial incentives at low-level fighters. In practice, this approach does not work. It leads to compounding and lengthening the time and costs of a war. Instead, research on successful peace processes suggests the need for a more comprehensive understanding of incentives and sanctions and a principled or “interest-based” rather than coercive approach to negotiation. It also suggests the need to address a wide range of drivers of violence—not just the armed groups’ stated public positions and demands—including the key issues of diverse stakeholders necessary to build a national consensus.

Box 2. Dangers of Negotiating versus Not Negotiating

Dangers of Negotiating	Dangers of Not Negotiating
<i>A negotiation between armed opposition groups could</i>	<i>Continued attempts to solve the conflict on the battlefield could</i>
endanger progress on human rights and women's empowerment, particularly if the negotiations exclude women and minorities;	perpetuate further suffering of civilians in a war with no end in sight;
foster a culture of impunity by allowing perpetrators to go free without accountability for their crimes;	increase the possibility that the insurgency will grow stronger over time, making negotiation more difficult in the future;
increase the tensions between ethnic groups if power sharing is perceived as consolidating Pashtun dominance and excluding other ethnic groups from political power;	increase the tensions between ethnic groups if the war overshadows efforts to address interethnic conflict and/or if the Taliban gains territory;
pose challenges in monitoring the relationship with al-Qaida;	lead to a missed opportunity to brainstorm options and conditions for ending the war.
lead to further control by Pakistan over Afghanistan, since it is widely believed that elements within Pakistan control the Taliban.	

Using Incentives and Sanctions

It is common for groups to apply sanctions against each other to physically, economically, or politically harm the interests of others. Efforts to inflict pain to opposing groups aim to achieve victory or exhaustion in some cases. Pounding on the battlefield or on the airwaves of public opinion seeks to make opposing groups reach a “hurting stalemate” where they determine that there are more costs than benefits to fighting.

All armed groups in Afghanistan are still trying to inflict pain on others and boast that they are winning on the battlefield, indicating their own reluctance to make conciliatory moves. There are high costs to the current approach attempting to impose a hurting stalemate in Afghanistan in hopes of driving armed groups to surrender or negotiate.

In practice, the use of violent coercion does not have a successful historical track record, as detailed earlier in this report. It leads to compounding and lengthening the time and costs of a war. Faced with a “lose-lose” option of losing on the battlefield or surrendering without incentives that address their interests, many groups will choose to continue fighting. Coercive bargaining also carries a failed history. Negotiation efforts fail in many peace efforts because mid-level diplomats without comparative experience in successful peace processes use coercive bargaining to battle and seek compromises on the positions of armed groups without addressing underlying legitimate grievances or interests.

Instead, research on successful peace processes suggests the need for a more comprehensive understanding of both incentives and sanctions and a principled or “interest-based” rather than coercive approach to negotiation. It also suggests the need to address a wide range of drivers of

violence—not just the armed groups’ stated public positions and demands—including the key issues of diverse stakeholders necessary to build a national consensus.

Peace processes depend on a range of incentives to entice armed groups and their supporters to negotiate with their enemies. These include a range of types of intrinsic incentives generated by the stakeholders themselves as well as external incentives offered by external groups with an interest in peace.³⁸

- *Externally generated incentives.* External incentives are most effective when they work in conjunction with internal or intrinsic incentives. External stakeholders can support a peace process by assisting with the needed economic and technical elements of implementing a peace agreement. However, creating pools of money or financial incentives for key stakeholders to participate in a peace process poses a number of challenges. It can encourage local people to feel like they are participating not because they want to, but because they are getting paid to participate. This can lower their willingness to put in their own effort and make their own sacrifices to ensure that peace is sustainable. It can also lead to the idea that the peace process is externally driven and ultimately about making money, taking away local leadership and legitimacy. It can also encourage perceptions that there are unlimited funds for peace process activities and that involvement in the peace process itself is about financial gain. In communities where so-called peace dividends fund small-scale projects like building schools or health centers, local populations have in some cases come to see peace as having only a financial benefit without an inherent value. These lessons learned from other contexts should temper the international community’s eagerness to bring an end to the war in Afghanistan by external incentives.
- *Internally generated or intrinsic incentives.* When the stakeholders themselves develop their own incentives for working toward peace, these tend to be more successful and creative than outside efforts. In places where disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs have been successful, local civil society helps to design, develop, and carry out internally generated incentives. For example, the Somali women of Wajir, Kenya, set up a peace prize for the clan chief contributing most to peace. After the first year’s prize, other chiefs approached the women to ask for training in mediation and negotiation. These incentives represent stakeholders’ efforts to address each other’s core interests by, for example, agreeing to share political power or resources. In Afghanistan, internally generated incentives require local stakeholders to understand and address the grievances and interests of other groups.
- *Security incentives.* Armed groups often continue fighting because to leave the network of their group may make them a target for all sides. Developing security guarantees for both armed individuals and groups who enter into a negotiation process can serve as a confidence-building measure to encourage others to join the process. While current external incentives in Afghanistan do include security guarantees, there is not sufficient research to determine whether armed groups trust that they will be safe if they reintegrate.
- *Amnesty incentives.* Amnesties are another form of security incentive, insulating leaders from a justice process to hold them to account. Victims and human rights advocates note that amnesty laws such as the one in Afghanistan create new problems of impunity.
- *Political incentives.* Individuals and groups engaged in a civil war seek political access and influence. Entering into peace processes can be risky for both groups with and without political authority; no one knows if they will come out with the same level of political

influence if the process redesigns government structures. Peace agreements often result in some form of power-sharing governance to ensure that key stakeholders are content with their access to political power, economic resources, and security and maintain a sense of their identity. Power-sharing agreements can be risky if they result in forcing together groups that are not in agreement about basic principles of governance.³⁹ Since the Taliban and other armed opposition groups have not yet articulated a clear political platform, it is difficult to assess the possibilities of powersharing at this stage.

- *Economic incentives.* All sides calculate the economic costs and benefits of continuing to fight or moving toward peace. War brings cover to illicit activities and economic opportunity. A tremendous number of stakeholders on all sides of the conflict financially benefit from instability and the continuation of war in Afghanistan. Creating economic incentives for peace means making peace more profitable than war. Also, members of armed groups may benefit financially from the war, as being a soldier or insurgent is a job, a form of employment. But research in Afghanistan illustrates that relatively few insurgents operate on purely economic motives.⁴⁰ Moreover, economic incentives have been relatively small compared with the benefits of continued fighting. Efforts to use economic incentives to buy off leaders almost always turn out to be a short-term strategy that backfires. Economic incentives can work only when a peace process also addresses other core grievances.
- *Identity incentives.* While often overlooked, all sides also assess the impact of a peace agreement on their identity and sense of dignity, self-determination, and group autonomy. Those groups that fight for identity, religion, or ideology are much more likely to accept any cost to continue fighting than those groups that fight for material resources or political power. Stakeholders often continue to fight for what they perceive is greater security, economic interests, political access, and a dignified identity long after they have felt the pain of war.

Sometimes this is addressed by allowing groups to retain a sense of ethnic or religious identity in a particular territory, which may even be marked symbolically with a separate flag, even though the territory belongs to a larger nation in a federal governance system, as with the territory controlled by the Moro Islamic Liberation Army in the Philippines.

Members of armed groups also benefit from the status of holding a gun, projecting an image of a masculine identity, and earning respect. Leaders of armed groups know they have a pathway for promotion through the ranks of their network. Armed leadership also allows them to impose order and prevent dissent in their group. Calculating how to address these ego factors via incentives that replace the respect earned from a gun with opportunities for individuals to earn respect or at least maintain dignity in another way is also important.

Comparative experiences in other countries illustrate that *internally generated incentives* are more successful and sustainable than *externally generated incentives* from the international community. At any rate, the effectiveness of any of these incentives builds on the credibility or likelihood that the incentives are valid and that others will follow through with their promises. “Changing the goal posts” can cause cynicism and detract from moderate leadership’s ability to sway others to participate in a peace process. Skillful mediation is all the more crucial when orchestrating a complex set of incentives and sanctions to move groups toward the negotiation table. Ultimately incentives are only the icing on the cake. The real enticement to end war comes by addressing the root causes driving violent conflict through the use of principled negotiation.

Employing Principled Negotiation to Address Root Causes

Negotiation, unlike warfare, is not a win-lose game. Stakeholders who take a “win-lose” orientation to peace are unlikely to achieve sustainable outcomes. There are three broad approaches to negotiation. Soft negotiation assumes that reaching agreement requires the acceptance of concessions, losses, and compromise. Hard negotiation assumes that winning requires making threats, demanding concessions, and sticking to strict public positions requiring the other side to lose. Successful peace processes require principled negotiation where the goal is to solve problems by finding options that meet the basic underlying interests (not public positions) of all stakeholders. Principled negotiation aims to create a “win-win” solution that all stakeholders can accept.⁴¹

Principled negotiation is interest based; it requires each stakeholder to identify their core, underlying interests and needs beyond their public positions. An analysis of underlying interests of all sides, beyond their public statements, can assist in finding mutually satisfying agreements or outcomes that all sides can live with. Principled negotiation is different from positional negotiation where stakeholders make absolutist public positions that make progress difficult. Negotiations based on wholesale compliance have a high risk of failure. It is best to avoid preconditions to talks as they make it impossible to even learn about the other stakeholder’s interests or to explore creative options for addressing underlying interests. Small, unilateral confidence-building measures (CBMs) build trust for more substantial negotiations and undermine antagonistic leaders. Hiding underlying interests only delays understanding or contributes to conspiracy theories. It may be very difficult for groups to use an interest-based approach to negotiation without the help of an outside mediation team coaching them to reality test their BATNA and explore their underlying interests.

For example, with the help of former president Jimmy Carter as a mediator, Egypt and Israel reached a win-win outcome to their negotiations over the Sinai Peninsula, though initially both groups had taken a win-lose approach that demanded full ownership of the Sinai for their respective sides. But through the process of principled negotiation they came to see that their underlying interests were not mutually exclusive. Israel wanted to make sure Egypt’s military was not on its border. Egypt wanted to maintain its historic tie to the land. The agreement that the Sinai would be a demilitarized zone under Egyptian control met both sides’ underlying interests.

In Afghanistan, negotiating on underlying interests rather than public positions is essential. For example, Taliban leaders generally talk about achieving a true Islamic and independent system but have been vague on their political platform and unclear about their underlying interests. It is impossible to negotiate or reintegrate armed opposition groups without knowing these interests. When the Taliban were in power, the expression of these interests was grave intolerance of religious and political pluralism and repression of women. It is hard to imagine any negotiation with the Taliban if their underlying interest is this type of repression. The Taliban also oppose perceived imposition of Western cultural values and development goals aimed at “modernization.” The symbol of Western cultural imposition is a provocatively dressed woman on a billboard. There is a lot of room for negotiation between this extreme and the demand that women wear burqas and that girls not receive education. Many traditional Afghan religious and secular leaders do see the benefit of educating girls and including women’s leadership. Taliban leaders and religious leaders have permitted development and even activities aimed at women’s empowerment when they are locally led and directly benefit the community.

Likewise, the Taliban demand that the United States withdraw immediately and have no permanent bases also requires discussion of underlying interests including sovereignty and

Figure 2. Three Central Themes of an Afghan Peace Process

cultural integrity. Given the history of external countries besieging Afghanistan, there are legitimate and shared concerns about the level of control and presence of outsiders. Discussing these underlying interests and ways to address them with creative, mutually satisfying options is essential.

Recognizing Three Key Themes in an Afghan Peace Process

Current negotiations in Afghanistan probably focus on “talks about talks.” If they go deeper than that, media reports suggest the discussions focus on gaining Taliban agreement to stop fighting, securing Taliban recognition of the Afghan Constitution, ending Taliban ties with al-Qaida on the one hand, and addressing the Taliban’s insistence that the United States not set up permanent bases in the country.⁴² This agenda leaves out many issues that fuel the current conflict. A comprehensive Afghan peace process would orchestrate work in three areas: developing a high-level political settlement between armed groups; increasing legitimacy for the Afghan government; and building a national public consensus on the future relations between diverse groups. A political settlement without significant progress in the two latter dimensions would be unlikely to produce a sustainable peace.⁴³ Figure 2 illustrates these three components of a peace process. Box 3 gives a longer list of the overlapping issues in each of these dimensions.

Issues between armed groups. High-level reconciliation and low-level reintegration are important components of an Afghan peace process. There are many contentious issues between international forces, the Afghan government, and armed opposition groups. The concept of principled negotiation and community-level peacebuilding provides a foundation for thinking through a more meaningful plan for reintegration and reconciliation between armed opposition groups

Box 3. Issues Requiring Negotiation and Discussion in a Comprehensive Peace Process

Presence of foreign troops

Presence of permanent bases and status of forces agreements for foreign troops

Process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of armed opposition groups

Interpretation and versions of sharia

Accountability for civilian deaths

Presence of local militias

External interests in Afghanistan

Balance of power between the central government and the local villages and districts and between different ethnic groups to ensure minority rights and protections

Protection of constitutional rights to education, political access, and freedom of expression

Addressing war crimes through memorials to past victims, truth telling and fact gathering, accountability of offenders to victims, and victim compensation

Addressing corruption

Addressing crime and drug trafficking

Increasing sense of citizenship and citizen oversight of corruption, crime, drug trafficking, the security sector, and other areas requiring public input

Developing a national narrative that addresses diverse groups' unique historical experiences

Building trust and respect between different ethnic and linguistic groups and protecting minority rights to foster a national unity and confidence that Afghans support human rights and security not just for their own group but for all segments of the population

Respecting and protecting women's rights

and Afghan society. There are many issues requiring discussion between armed groups. Those mentioned frequently include the status of forces of armed troops, whether the United States will keep permanent bases in Afghanistan, how armed groups take accountability for civilian deaths, and issues like drug trafficking and the interpretation of sharia (Islamic law) and how this impacts the rights of minorities and women.

There are significant divisions within the international community, within the Afghan government, and within armed opposition groups. The international coalition disagrees on the level of success they are achieving, with some pulling their troops out for lack of progress. Within the Afghan government, well-intentioned bureaucrats disagree with colleagues profiting from the corruption, drug trade, and military conflict. Within the armed opposition groups, divisions over whether to negotiate and how to define the ideal outcome of the armed conflict are so great that groups kill each other even though they share a common enemy in the government and international forces. Armed opposition groups fight for different reasons. Some fight against repressive government warlords and government corruption. Some fight to avenge the humiliation felt as a result of foreign troops' house searches, night raids, and bombs. Some have simple economic motives to secure basic employment or more greedy, ambitious economic motives to profit from the instability.⁴⁴

When it comes to identifying government corruption or drug trafficking as a key issue in the conflict, the international community, some armed opposition groups, and Afghan civil society share many similar concerns. If negotiations continue to exclude civil society, armed

opposition groups may bring this issue into formal negotiations. This is problematic because successful peace processes require structural reforms and it is civil society that can most authentically argue for these reforms. The armed opposition groups are able to appeal to Afghans precisely because locals perceive their stated grievances on government corruption and drug trafficking as legitimate. The international community and Afghan civil society, on the other hand, rightly point a finger at all those in armed opposition groups, the Afghan government, and the international community who profit from the ongoing war, recognizing that international funding channeled through corrupt hands lands in the pockets of these war profiteers.⁴⁵ Another strange alliance occurs when the Afghan government and the armed opposition groups all condemn civilian casualties caused by international forces. Official negotiations are more like a triangle rather than a line between two sides. In each corner of the triangle, groups could find strange bedfellows to address shared interests.

All sides share a concern about the influence of external interests in Afghanistan. International forces are concerned about the influence of Pakistan, Iran, China, and other countries. In repeated polls and focus groups,⁴⁶ a majority of Afghans report a perception that Pakistan plays a significant role in supporting the Taliban. The armed opposition groups share a concern with Pakistan that India is trying to win favor with the Afghan government. Informal conversations with diverse groups of Afghans and Pakistanis reveal that many believe the war in Afghanistan cannot be ended without robust regional diplomacy that also includes Pakistan, India, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, China, and other countries. The public widely perceives a lack of sustained diplomatic activity or sufficient economic, political, security, and territorial incentives for countries in the region to participate in such a process. Armed opposition groups get support from external bases thus requiring that any peace process include political solutions on all sides of Afghanistan's borders.

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of armed opposition groups is also a key issue needing discussion between the leadership of armed groups. The Afghan government's reintegration program, called the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program (APRP), has competing goals at the local level. On the one hand, ISAF sees it as a component of counterinsurgency, to weaken or cause divisions within an insurgency.⁴⁷ On the other hand, civil society groups in Afghanistan see the legitimate role of reintegration to reduce violence and foster community reconciliation by addressing key grievances.

Civil society leaders critique reintegration efforts that rely on "buying off" or bribing armed insurgent groups rather than addressing key local grievances that fuel the insurgency, noting financial incentives address the symptoms of the disease but not the disease itself.⁴⁸ The APRP would be more likely to be successful if it focused on local grievance resolution rather than on attempts to buy off insurgents. Ideally, DDR efforts replace the economic and security value of a weapon with local security guarantees and economic opportunities. These efforts help excombatants save face and address some of their core grievances through the creation of internally generated economic, security, political, and identity based incentives described earlier in this report. Sustainable DDR requires reconciling relationships, understanding and acknowledging all stakeholder's interests and basic needs, moving together to identify mutually satisfying agreements that all stakeholders can live with, and establishing a "good enough" solution.⁴⁹

Issues facing government legitimacy. Successful peace processes address root causes driving violence. In Afghanistan, corruption and structural problems with the current Afghan

Bolstering government legitimacy in Afghanistan requires a peace process that addresses corruption, elite control over government, political exclusion of women and minorities, and the need for significant structural reforms.

government and its approach to drug trafficking and the security sector are key driving factors fueling support for armed insurgent groups and preventing the Afghan public from supporting its government. In Afghanistan, as in many other countries, structural reforms are an essential part of a peace process. Bolstering government legitimacy in Afghanistan requires a peace process that addresses corruption, elite control over government, political exclusion of women and minorities, and the need for significant structural reforms.

Research shows that Afghans do identify with and support the concept of an Afghan state and representative democracy, though one based on local tradition, culture, and Islamic religion.⁵⁰ However, Afghans widely perceive Westernized democracy and the rest of the international project in Afghanistan as a self-perpetuating system that fuels the insurgency,⁵¹ creates an environment for war profiteering,⁵² and politically disenfranchises most Afghan citizens by rewarding warlords with illegitimate political power through armed force rather than provision of public services.⁵³ The challenges of nation building in Afghanistan also include significant distrust and tensions between ethnic groups that vie for political control and exclude other groups.⁵⁴ Afghan citizens point toward the inadequate quality of and widespread corruption within state institutions. Civil society fears that a political pact between warlords, a corrupt government, and armed opposition groups would pave the way for more violence and further exclude legitimate political leaders who base their support on citizen consent rather than the power of the gun.

National-level civil society organizations are increasingly vocal about their shared concerns about the current Afghan government, corruption, and the need for structural reforms. A peace process in Afghanistan that excludes civil society may not place as much emphasis on government corruption or structural reforms, as the international community supports the Karzai administration and that government has little interest in putting corruption or structural reforms on the negotiation table. While the Taliban or other armed opposition groups may bring the issue of corruption to the official negotiation table, this is unlikely to be a central concern given other priorities. Afghan civil society groups like Integrity Watch Afghanistan support communities in monitoring and reporting on corruption and promoting transparency.⁵⁵ Afghan news journalists also play an important role in exposing corruption, though threats of retaliation, night letters, and killing of journalists create a challenging environment for the news media.⁵⁶ Afghans' sense of citizenship and citizen oversight of corruption, crime, drug trafficking, the security sector, and other areas require strategies for engaging public interests.

A successful Afghan peace process will require increasing government legitimacy in the eyes of armed opposition groups and civil society by improving government performance in all areas of governance. Peace process efforts could focus on reducing widespread corruption and increasing the functioning and accountability of government ministries, particularly judiciary and police, by creating more effective checks and balances on state power via the constitution and guards against abuses of power.

A peace process also requires strengthening the constitution's protection of human rights, necessitating supervisory or monitoring bodies including civil society representatives. Countless other research reports outline these measures, but few put these issues as central to the success of a peace process. Reaching a political settlement in Afghanistan requires putting all these issues on the formal negotiation table. National civil society leaders assert "justice is as integral to sustainable peace as security."⁵⁷ National-level civil society leaders bring concerns that a peace process will undermine the Constitution, human rights, and justice. They assert that the Bonn Conference in 2001 included some individuals responsible for mass crimes

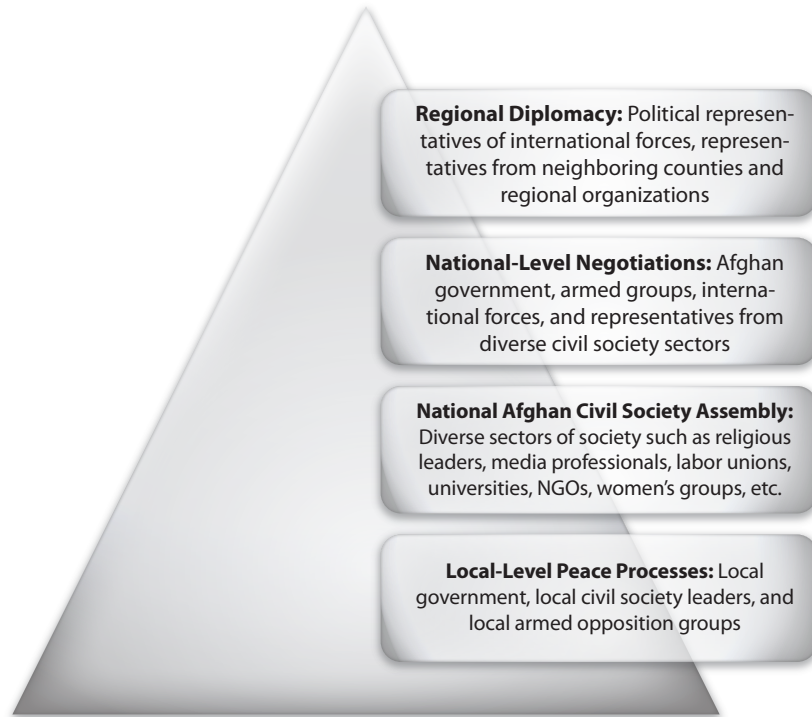
against Afghan civilians while excluding others. Some of these individuals continue to experience impunity for their crimes, financially benefit from their criminal gain, and participate in government. In a joint statement about the peace process in November 2010, civil society leaders wrote, “we are concerned after listening to the speeches of High Peace Council representatives that the privileges/concessions promised to the Taliban should by no means undermine or compromise the achievements of the past nine years in terms of civic values and human rights, especially women’s rights, enshrined in the Constitution.”⁵⁸

These groups expressed concerns regarding the 2007 Afghan amnesty law that protects all past and present belligerents from prosecution. They assert the international community virtually ignored the passing of the law and failed to express a commitment to transitional justice processes, such as the investigation or prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity, rape, and torture. In response, a coalition of twenty-four NGOs called the Transitional Justice Coordination Group organized a “victim’s jirga” to provide a space for recounting personal tragedies and war crimes under various regimes.⁵⁹ These groups note that the concept of justice does not necessarily refer to public trials. At the very least, transitional justice would acknowledge, document, and verify crimes committed by all sides as a necessary part of public healing and transformation from decades of war toward a more stable and peaceful future. Justice, they say, requires developing creative mechanisms for holding perpetrators of crimes against humanity accountable, particularly ensuring that they are prevented from holding office. Transitional justice can include symbolic measures such as naming and shaming offenders for human rights violations via a truth-seeking commission, acknowledging victims through documentation, real and symbolic reparations, and efforts to foster trauma recovery, institutional reform, and reconciliation between groups.⁶⁰ Civil society advocates a process of transitional justice to address past crimes and a culture of impunity. This concept of transitional justice is missing from plans for Afghan peace talks.

Issues facing national and local civil society efforts to build a national consensus. Building a national public consensus requires a peace process design that includes public issues, represented by national civil society groups as well as local-level community input. Local-level civil society faces a different set of issues. Local-level conflicts stem from family feuds, land and water disputes, tribal and ethnic power struggles, and the impacts of national-level conflict.

A successful peace process in Afghanistan links with the process of nation building; both require addressing the significant distrust and tensions between ethnic groups that vie for political control.⁶¹ Civil society groups assert the need to develop a national narrative that addresses diverse groups’ unique historical experiences and builds trust and respect between ethnic and linguistic groups. A public discussion also needs to include issues related to protecting women’s and minority rights to foster a national unity and confidence that Afghans support human rights and security not just for their own group but for all segments of the population.

Civil society also identifies the design of the peace process itself as a key issue, highlighting the key principles of transparency and inclusion that should inform peace efforts.⁶² Civil society fears that government and armed actors will use negotiation to achieve narrow political goals that will benefit particular ideological, ethnic, tribal, or religious groups and leave out others, further fragmenting the country. Noting the importance of overcoming ethnic divisions and building trust, many NGOs, media outlets, journalist associations, and other forms of civil society have found ways to collaborate to raise jointly identified issues related to government reconciliation initiatives. For the public to support and trust a peace process and

Figure 3: Four-tiered Design of a Comprehensive Peace Process for Afghanistan

peace agreement, the process needs to be transparent and include civil society concerns, such as addressing impunity and transitional justice issues using restorative justice practices and building trust between ethnic groups. National-level civil society has a key role in monitoring peace efforts to ensure that they respect and do not undermine basic principles of women's rights and justice issues. Civil society leaders look for a just peace process that will uphold human dignity and include robust mechanisms for public input.

The "How" of an Afghan Peace Process: Mechanisms for Structuring Public Input, Technical Support, and Coordination

Part of the reason why half of all peace agreements fail is because of too much of an emphasis on the signed *agreement* and not on the *process*. Transitions from war to peace fail when leaders rush the delicate process or leave too many difficult issues vaguely defined. A peace process is essentially about creating structured mechanisms for participatory deliberation and decision making involving diverse stakeholders. Peace requires a multileveled process involving top, middle, and community levels of society to assess the root causes of the conflict, propose creative options for addressing these problems, address basic needs and rights, and develop a national consensus for peace. A successful peace process combines high-level negotiation with vertical processes that link high-level negotiations with public dialogue processes. Successful peace processes rely not on one negotiation table, but on the construction of a sequenced and coordinated process with multiple negotiation tables or channels feeding into a central negotiation table.

Figure 3 illustrates this four-tiered peace process including all stakeholders. Given the regional nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, a regional peace process is an essential component

Successful peace processes rely on the construction of a sequenced and coordinated process with multiple negotiation tables or channels feeding into a central negotiation table.

of an Afghan national peace process. Like the national process, the regional process should also include multiple negotiation tables for addressing the diverse interests of Afghanistan's neighbors and the international community and for creating confidence-building mechanisms and oversight to monitor illegitimate external involvement. At the national-level in Afghanistan, a peace process could include both military negotiation tables for armed groups to discuss cease-fires as well as nonmilitary negotiation tables.⁶³ National-level forums could provide communication channels for all armed groups, even those not willing to negotiate directly. Shuttle diplomacy and conciliation by respected peacemakers can assist this process. In addition to including the Afghan government, regional governments, and political representatives from international forces, a comprehensive Afghan national peace process should have opportunities for deliberation between national civil society organizations in Afghanistan and neighboring countries and mechanisms to include citizens in local community-level peace processes.

Successful peace processes offer opportunities for both direct participation by stakeholders and for representative participation to ensure that a process is inclusive yet manageable. Adequate sequencing and spacing of negotiation tables allow the necessary internal discussions necessary for leaders to maintain the legitimacy and consent of the people they are representing in the peace process. Where groups are not willing to participate in direct negotiation, conciliatory channels are essential for opening up communication aimed at understanding key interests and motivations driving groups that support continued fighting. In this way, a peace process would include all stakeholders, recognizing that a stable peace requires addressing at least some of the core grievances and underlying interests of all groups.

The following section describes a range of public consultation mechanisms for including diverse civil society sectors and public input into the peace process in Afghanistan. It then describes the type of mediation and technical support needed to coordinate a comprehensive peace process.

Drawing on the Five Established Models for Public Consultation

There are five broad models of public participation in peace processes. Each is relevant to the design of a comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan. Unlike many other cultures, Afghans have a long tradition of participatory deliberation and decision-making *jirgas* and *shuras* (councils) at the national and local levels and across different regions. Traditionally, these processes include male tribal and village elders and draw on customary law or local interpretations of Sharia law rather than the constitution, human rights, women's rights, or other established legal standards. But civil society activists note the need to separate the *jirga* format—a deliberative process where people gather in a circle to discuss issues—from the notion that a *jirga* by definition excludes women and democratic representatives. *Jirga* and *shura* forums can evolve to draw on broader legal standards and include more diverse stakeholders. Most of the models described below require decisions to be made through modified consensus, as in the *jirga* or *shura*, where all stakeholders have an opportunity to voice their concerns and issues and decisions are made when there is broad, but not necessarily total, agreement.⁶⁴

Direct local peace processes and agreements. When the authority to stop a war is not centrally located, high-level negotiations cannot create a national cease-fire or political settlements. In Mali, civil society initiated direct traditional decision-making processes based on local rituals and traditions for dialogue.⁶⁵ These local processes resulted in local-level cease-fires and agreements that enabled previously stymied high-level negotiations to advance. These

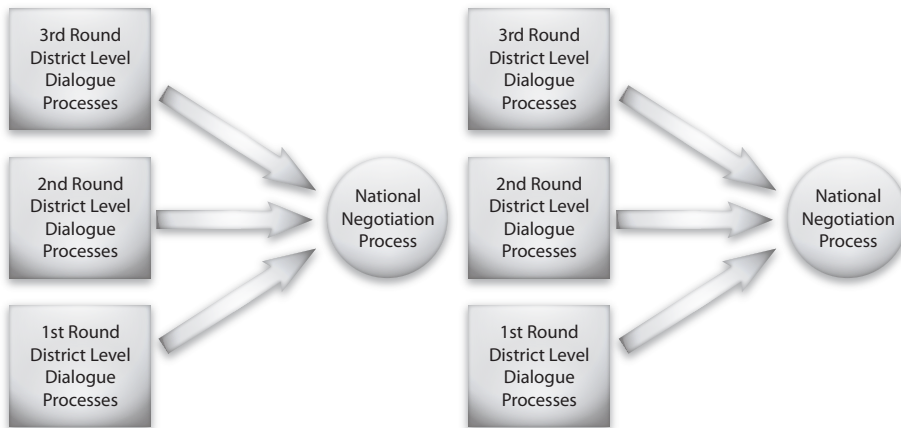
local-level peace processes can take place simultaneously across a country and involve thousands of people. Each locality may work through a similar agenda of issues to identify stakeholders' core grievances and develop local security guarantees, political power-sharing deals, and address economic and identity issues. Local communities then are responsible for implementing the agreements they make. These local peace processes can help create a national consensus that eventually leads to an end to the war.

Local and traditional Afghan structures for deliberation, consensus building, negotiation, and decision making could play a larger role in a comprehensive peace process based on direct local participation as was the case in Mali. Relatively new district development assemblies (DDAs), community development councils (CDCs), and peace councils complement and build on the format of traditional *jirgas* and *shuras* but often include more diverse civil society sectors. Newer structures include members trained in principled negotiation and mediation and include a wider representation of community interests by involving women and people of different ages. In some places, women's *shuras* or women-led CDCs and peace councils meet separately. The CDCs are nongovernmental, voluntary, unpaid, and democratically elected institutions operating across Afghanistan to help prioritize, design, and implement development projects such as health centers, irrigation systems, and schools with government funds. CDCs work in partnership with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development's National Solidarity Program (NSP), blending locally owned, cost-effective development projects with efforts to increase local capacity for conflict management. Peace councils help communities find mutually satisfying solutions to key divisive issues such as corruption and ethnic divisions identified in the last section of this report.

Afghan NGOs have been carrying out peacebuilding capacity-building programs in Afghanistan for the last twenty years.⁶⁶ These programs address water and land disputes, domestic violence, and family issues, as well as conflicts within community development councils over setting development priorities. For example, in Sayedabad district of Wardak province, a local peace council mediated a dispute among four villages around a water and irrigation project. Through the process of mediation, the group agreed to finish the project to provide more effective water distribution to all four villages.⁶⁷

Local peace councils already exist in many areas of Afghanistan to address local disputes over land, water, debts, domestic violence, and other community issues. In some parts of Afghanistan, civil society organizations are already identifying and training local peace councils in community grievance resolution processes to assist with conflicts directly related to the reintegrees and to leverage both formal and informal justice systems. As part of APRP, they help communities cope with reintegration and all of the everyday tensions that accompany real reconciliation efforts such as physical security, freedom of movement, economic well-being, and access to governance and justice, the five key areas identified as key indicators of human security in Afghanistan.⁶⁸

For example, in a recent case in Helmand province, armed opposition groups agreed to stop fighting ISAF, reject out-of-area fighters, remove or show the location of planted improvised explosive devices (IEDs), allow freedom of movement to patrols, and accept ANSF checkpoints. In return, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) agreed to have all Afghan leads in compound searches, to ensure that there are Afghans partnered in all patrols, and to begin short-term cash for work and long-term economic development opportunities.

Figure 4. Accordion Consultation Model

These peace committees could play a central role in local-level peace processes based on addressing key grievances through principled negotiation to support a national-level process. If carried out across the country simultaneously, local-level negotiations could help build cease-fires, political power sharing, and security guarantees that would result in a more sustainable outcome and make a national peace accord possible. A comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan would view these local-level reconciliation processes as a core component of a national peace process. However, it is also conceivable that local-level deals could result in allowing armed groups to retain security responsibilities could prove problematic for a sustainable peace at the national level. Local-level peace processes thus need coordination mechanisms to ensure complementarity of local and national efforts.

Participation through consultation. In South Africa, local consultations across the country complemented and fed into high-level negotiations. In the Philippines, a National Unification Commission held local, regional, and national consultations to identify core drivers of the conflict and lay out alternatives to address them. In Guatemala, a Civil Society Assembly brought together representatives of diverse sectors such as labor and agriculture. Mayan communities played a major role, resulting in a written agreement recognizing their unique indigenous identity and rights. The agenda in the Civil Society Assembly included topics that had not been openly discussed for decades. This assembly created nearly two hundred specific commitments included in the final, formal peace agreement.⁶⁹

These examples illustrate a model of civil society holding separate, broad consultations that run *in parallel* to official negotiations and/or are sequenced and coordinated with an official process (see figure 4). In this “accordion model” peace process, a sequence of small, private meetings and large public meetings move back and forth like an accordion opening and closing. A small, select group of key stakeholders negotiates over key issues while large, open processes seek input and creative generation of options from the public.

Civil society consultations may look at the key divisive issues, possible creative solutions, and build a national consensus. Civil society’s diversity means that they may reflect the tensions evident between national political leaders. Public consultations can help make progress on difficult issues that may be blocking formal negotiation processes by allowing the public to deliberate and build consensus on them.

If carried out across the country simultaneously, local-level negotiations could help build cease-fires, political power sharing, and security guarantees that would result in a more sustainable outcome and make a national peace accord possible.

A number of different conferences have brought diverse Afghan civil society leaders together to discuss their shared values and concerns.⁷⁰ But these conferences are not structured as an ongoing Afghan civil society assembly tasked with representing diverse constituencies. A national-level Afghan civil society assembly, like that held in Guatemala, could play a key role in assuring that a wider set of issues makes it onto the formal negotiation agenda. An assembly could address some of the key issues affecting civil society, such as women's rights or concerns from victims and human rights organizations about past and present human rights violations and the amnesty law. It could also play a key role in a peace process to build structures for public consultations on these and other issues such as corruption, ethnic tensions, and how to address the Taliban. An Afghan civil society assembly could also serve as a monitoring body for the National Peace Council, ensuring transparency and accountability.

In Guatemala, the international community played a significant role in ensuring that the civil society process had sufficient resources both during its deliberation and in the implementation phase. Given that so many peace agreements fall apart during implementation challenges, it is important to note that a civil society assembly's work does not end with an agreement. Rather, an assembly ideally continues to monitor a peace agreement and press for implementation in the postaccord phase.

Participation by representation. A third type of structure for peace processes includes a process of electing a representative group to work out the details of a peace agreement and/or a new constitution. Each group at the official negotiation table represents a group of constituents from a certain sector of society. In this type of a process, civil society sectors such as women's groups, religious leaders, human rights groups, and labor unions have a representative participating in national-level negotiations. Even in cases where there is no direct election or representatives, it is assumed that the core negotiators are representing the interests of their groups. Often there is a great deal of conflict within a group. The core negotiator then is negotiating not only with other key stakeholders at the negotiation table, but also with the second and third tiers of stakeholder constituents whom they are representing, illustrated in figure 5.

In South Africa, a national-level, elected constituent assembly negotiated a new constitution. Religious leadership played a significant role in helping to foster values in reconciliation. Human rights groups shaped many of the discussions about accountability and compensation for victims. While no side achieved all of its goals, there was a national consensus built that moved the country toward a sustainable political solution.

The benefit of this model is that the key issues of unarmed groups can be directly communicated to other key decision makers. This form of public participation can also incentivize the creation of new political parties or organizations that organize themselves to represent others' interests. In the Northern Ireland peace process, citizens elected political parties who were part of the multiparty negotiation process.

The challenge of this model is that there may be great competition for the designated seats. Elite and westernized civil society leaders may gain access to the process, but there is the question of whether they truly are in touch with diverse civil society sectors and village-level interests and perspectives. Effective representation requires agreement among civil society on a process to decide who directly represents their diversity.

After the absence of any women in a number of national peace negotiations, global women's groups mobilized to pass UN Security Council Resolution 1321, which mandates the inclusion of women's representatives in peace processes. In peace processes in Southern Sudan,

Figure 5. Representation Model

for example, women's groups had a designated seat at the table. There could be a separate forum for discussion of the issues and interests important to certain groups, such as women's groups or victims' groups. These could be a formal or informal women's negotiation table and a victims' negotiation table, to help build consensus for strategies to assert their specific interests and ideas to address them. Representatives from these discussions could then articulate these interests at other negotiation tables that include representatives of other interests.

An Afghan Civil Society Assembly could elect representatives to sit on the National Peace Council and represent diverse civil society interests at formal, high-level negotiations. The current Afghan National Peace Council, formed from the Consultative Peace Jirga's mandate, mainly includes representatives from traditional and religious leadership, former Taliban, and former Northern Alliance members. The few seats allotted to women and civil society representatives do not represent the breadth of interests and concerns of different sectors.⁷¹ It is not clear that these civil society members represent a certain constituency or whether they are included only to present a token face of civil society.⁷² The National Peace Council could be the central negotiation table, the place where representatives from other negotiation tables, forums, or channels come to exchange views. By playing such a role, it could relieve pressure on other negotiation tables and make it more likely that a coordinated process could jointly develop

solutions to the armed struggle, the crisis in government legitimacy, and the lack of a national public consensus on the future of Afghanistan.

Participation by referendum. In some cases, the public takes part in a referendum on a peace agreement developed by a negotiated agreement. Referendums allow the public to either say “yes” or “no” to a negotiated agreement. Ideally the news media and social marketing campaigns help educate the public about the contents of a peace agreement before the referendum. In Northern Ireland and Macedonia, for example, the public had an opportunity to vote in a referendum to accept or reject the peace agreement developed by the constituent assembly.

One of the benefits of public referendums is that it requires the authors of a peace agreement to have a stake in fully explaining it to the public and urging its support. The public, on the other hand, has the opportunity to oppose the agreement and at the same time the responsibility for supporting it should the referendum pass.

The Afghan government’s legitimacy gap requires a variety of strategies. Ensuring that the public has a vote in any peace deal is one way the Afghan government could increase public trust. While other structures for public input into a peace process are necessary, a public referendum on a final high-level agreement could significantly increase the chances that the public understands and supports such a deal.

Participation via media. Afghan journalists and media producers have both the capacity and responsibility to support peace processes. Mass media can play several roles in supporting public participation in a peace process. First, the media has a role in educating the public about the contents of a peace agreement before a national referendum. Media entertainment formats as well as public service announcements, particularly on the widely available and popular Afghan radio stations, could support a peace process by providing educational materials on peacebuilding themes. In Northern Ireland, an international advertising firm developed a marketing campaign to support the Good Friday Peace Proposal. The firm conducted quantitative and qualitative research of key public concerns, developed specific advertisements to target each segment that would vote in the referendum, and monitored media coverage. The marketing campaign included colorful graphic posters, billboards, direct mail brochures, Internet ads, and public service announcements for television and radio to foster awareness and acceptance of the peace agreement among key constituencies.⁷³ The public eventually approved of the peace agreements in the public referendum, which indicates that the campaign had some level of success.

In Macedonia, a similar multimedia campaign pointed the public to the benefits of the peace agreement several months before a public referendum on the agreement. Audience identification and segmentation led to individualized messages about the peace agreement. The announcements produced in the Macedonian language focused on stability and security as the main benefits to Macedonians. The Albanian announcements emphasized extended civil rights to the Albanian minority as the result of the agreement. Again, the public referendum favored the agreement. It would be an exaggeration to attribute the positive outcomes of the referendum solely to the impact of the campaigns on public opinion. Such causation would be impossible to prove even though the correlation between the campaign’s goals and the voters’ intentions is apparent.

Second, media outlets can undertake polling of public attitudes on issues related to the peace process. Polls can help all stakeholders understand where there is consensus and where there is great division.

Third, the mass media can foster public discussion to build a national consensus on a vision for a country's future. Media outlets can also use two-way programming where audience members can, for example, call in to a radio show or send a mobile phone SMS (short message service) to discuss or register their opinions on issues relevant to the peace process.⁷⁴ Afghan media should use more dialogue-based public programs to build national consensus on the future of the country and to address specific obstacles to peace. If the Afghan public is similar to audiences in other parts of the world, a media-savvy and skeptical public wants to make up its own mind and participate in constructing a vision of its future rather than having it force-fed through a steady diet of redundant advertisements from international security forces, the Afghan government, or the Taliban seeking to manipulate public opinion. In Afghanistan, more participatory media programs could empower local people and prompt reflection. But fostering participatory, media-based dialogue requires new skill sets to handle the inevitable antagonism and diversity when people begin to dialogue. Radio call-in shows, for example, do not communicate nonverbal cues people often use in Afghanistan's rich cultures, thus making dialogue and understanding even more difficult. Afghan media professionals should receive training in how to facilitate media-based dialogue so as to highlight common ground and identify potential solutions developed by audience participation.

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Developing Mediation and Technical Support for an Afghan Peace Process

Coordinating a multitiered peace process requires committed teams of internationals, government, and civil society working together. A multidimensional peace process with large numbers of stakeholders by necessity requires a mediation team or technical support group to coordinate efforts. Outsiders often do not coordinate with each other, creating a sense of confusion and redundancy of effort. A peace process is always somewhat chaotic. But it can turn into a cacophony if local and international stakeholders all sing from a different sheet of music. Ideally, the international community develops a comprehensive strategy and regular channels of communication to support a mediation effort, a strategic package of incentives and sanctions, and both the shorter-term support to reach a national peace agreement and the longer-term support to monitor the implementation of an agreement. Coordination helps to ensure that all elements of international assistance and intervention in conflict-affected states are supportive of a peace process. Coordination in developing and applying a shared strategy to prevent certain stakeholders from spoiling the agreement is a common theme among successful processes.⁷⁵

Using Mediation Teams

Mediators assist stakeholders in achieving a principled negotiation process of identifying underlying grievances, developing a joint analysis of key differences and common ground between stakeholders, and brainstorming creative options for addressing the underlying interests of all stakeholders. Mediators assist in this process by bringing cultural insight, authority and/

or skills and knowledge to help the stakeholders through a process of negotiation. A mediator can test the reality of each side's perceptions and check for miscommunication and misunderstanding.

Mediation has been an essential component of many comprehensive peace processes, particularly in Africa.⁷⁶ In South Africa, a technical support team skilled in mediation helped key negotiators on all sides develop the skills needed to reach a peace agreement. Armed groups are more likely to engage in constructive negotiation efforts if they are familiar with the negotiation process and skilled in negotiation techniques. All stakeholders benefit when all sides have sufficient negotiation skills. The less prepared a group is to negotiate skillfully, the less likely a negotiated outcome is possible. Technical support and capacity building on negotiation and the process of mediation for all key stakeholders makes success more likely.⁷⁷ Denying technical support to an armed adversary is counterproductive. The less a group is able to negotiate constructively, the less likely it is that other stakeholders will be able to achieve their own outcomes.⁷⁸

Mediation and technical support teams draw on expertise from a range of contexts and peace processes in other countries to assist stakeholders in the negotiation and dialogue process. Ideally there are two mediation teams, with one including insiders/locals that hold extensive social capital networks with diverse stakeholders and the other including outsiders/internationals with comparative experience with peace processes in other countries.⁷⁹ These teams carry out a number of roles that serve a variety of functions, including the following:⁸⁰

- *Process designers and planners.* Develop proposals for how the peace process will work, with various mechanisms for input by diverse stakeholders. Ensure that all stakeholders accept the location of meetings, arrange for security and detail protocols at meetings, maintain a level of confidentiality, and follow other ground rules to foster respectful interactions.
- *Trainers.* Offer stakeholders conflict-coaching training in negotiation, handling and speaking with news media, and other skills necessary to a peace process.
- *Analysis.* Engage in ongoing analysis and assessment of political, social, economic, and security dynamics impacting the peace process.
- *Good offices.* Provide good offices or access to information related to the conflict needed by stakeholders.
- *Envoys.* Help identify, communicate with, transmit messages between, and convene diverse stakeholders.
- *Models.* Demonstrate respect for all stakeholders and constructive communication.
- *Process facilitators.* Ensure each stakeholder has adequate and roughly equal time to share their perspectives, identify shared grievances, highlight common ground, develop creative options, and design next steps together.
- *Reality testers.* Challenge stakeholders to identify their best alternatives to a negotiated agreement and consensus on the way forward for the country. Identify the costs of not reaching an agreement.
- *Catalysts.* Act as catalysts for new forums, programs, and institutions to foster the peace process and ongoing peacebuilding.
- *Sustainers.* Provide continuity and sustainability to a long-term, dynamic process.

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- *Monitors.* Follow the implementation of agreements and offer support, sanctions, and incentives where appropriate.

In past peace processes in other countries, mediators succeeded in getting groups to agree to a political settlement but left agreements vague in terms of implementation. Exhaustion has led many mediation teams to let others “work out the details.” But this endangers the whole process. Mediation and technical support teams should remain available during the implementation phase of peace agreements, as so many peace agreements fail because stakeholders are unable or unwilling to put agreements into practice.

Given the complexity of stakeholder interests, a comprehensive Afghan peace process is more likely to succeed with the help of internal and external mediation and technical support teams. An internal mediation or technical support team could draw from Afghan civil society expertise and experience in decades of peacebuilding between political, ethnic, and religious groups in Afghanistan. Afghan civil society’s peacebuilding capacity could also support the development of internally generated incentives such as face-saving mechanisms for reintegration via grievance-resolution processes. Civil society has a crucial role in helping local governments, tribal leaders, and armed opposition groups identify core grievances and develop local solutions and written agreements. This internal mediation support team should include members from different ethnic groups and those with diverse constituencies. But most important, the Afghans on the internal mediation support team should have technical expertise in peacebuilding, have demonstrated their personal commitment to interacting with all stakeholders, and be people who do not stand to personally gain from the outcome of a negotiated agreement.

Understanding the Structures and Challenges of International Support and Coordination

Most successful peace processes receive substantial and ongoing support from the international community. The role of outsiders in a negotiation process is delicate. Internationals may be perceived as tainted because of their country’s role. Personality and personal networks may also be at play. Some diplomats may have more success than others in playing a conciliatory role to move groups toward a negotiation or an agreement. Mediators and technical support teams should have legitimacy in the eyes of key stakeholders.

International support for peace processes comes in a wide variety of models. In rare cases, one international mediator takes the lead and attempts to guide the coordinated effort required for a comprehensive peace process. In most cases a group of states work together in either a “Contact Group” such as the Quartet group working with Israelis and Palestinians or a more informal and mid-level “Group of Friends” made up of four to six countries that support a mediation team effort related to a peace process. Other forms of international support include monitoring implementation of agreements such as the Joint Monitoring Commission in Namibia or the Peace Implementation Council in Bosnia that coordinated international assistance and support for the region after the Dayton Accords.⁸¹

The benefits of these forms of international coordination and support mechanisms are that outside countries can bring additional leverage, information, resources, and practical help with the coordination. Working together, a group is more likely to be able to put together a strategic package of internal and external incentives and sanctions that complement

stakeholders own motivations and interests to move groups toward resolution. Successful peace processes often enjoy support from regional countries such as the roles that Mexico played in the Central American peace processes and Australia and New Zealand's roles in East Timor's. peace process. In El Salvador and Guatemala, Mexico's relationship with insurgents made it easier for them to pressure insurgent negotiators while the U.S. pressured governments it had long supported. In Sudanese peace process, the U.K. liaised with the North, the U.S. related to the South and Norway used conciliation strategies with both North and South.⁸²

But there are also challenges to international coordination. A Group of Friends model, for example, has proven most effective when the Group of Friends' interests align. When there are competing interests, conflicts between the Friends can further complicate already delicate negotiations. The Group of Friends supporting the Georgia/Abkhaz conflict, for example, experienced a great deal of conflict among themselves over their fifteen years working together. In situations where the international interests in a peace process diverge, it may be necessary to address the conflict between outside groups wanting to foster a peace process; even a "mediation among potential mediators." Furthermore, external countries often have few diplomats with comparative experience with comprehensive peace process, so they have little technical expertise to share. Furthermore, internal political and budgeting constraints in countries wanting to be involved in a peace process can bring conflicting funding schedules with many pouring an overabundance of funds into short-term projects. But the payoffs of short-term investments in a peace process may be lost without longer-term support for implementation of agreements and consultation mechanisms. The resulting cacophony of conflicting and competing interests and actions may actually prove to pose an even greater challenge or threat to internal groups aiming to foster peace.⁸³

International coordination efforts in Afghanistan face a maelstrom of challenges. Afghans perceive that most internationals such as the United States have their own interests in Afghanistan that may not always align with Afghan interests. Afghanistan's regional neighbors more often play a more menacing role than a constructive one. They may even perceive an "unstable" Afghanistan as in their interest and attempt to spoil a peace process. In past peace processes, coordination among different groups proved challenging. First, outsiders in the international community have different and sometimes conflicting or even competing interests. The United Nations and United States have the most investment in the conflict and a desire and responsibility for a role in coordination. Yet both the U.N. and U.S. are seen as a party to the conflict by virtue of their support for the GIROA. A number of commentators note the problems with a U.N. or U.S.-mediated peace agreement and suggest instead that a more neutral, and preferably Muslim, country may have more success.

A United Nations team could provide critical technical support and bring comparative experience from other contexts. However, the United Nations' role might best be to support other outside mediators or technical support teams from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or regional organizations like the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) or the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA), as these may be seen as more acceptable alternatives to UN mediators.⁸⁴ Canada, Italy, and Germany have also invested resources in a potential peace process and countries such as these may be able to play the role of a Group of Friends.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan requires a much more deliberate design than currently exists. The hope of a quick and tight negotiation process is as illusory as the fantasy that firepower will achieve victory. The road to peace in Afghanistan is not short. Maneuvering through Afghanistan's internal and regional political dynamics is no less challenging than five-dimensional chess.

The Afghan government, Afghan civil society, and the international community should draw on lessons learned from other countries to ensure that an Afghan peace process

- helps all stakeholders recognize the need for an inclusive process and to create mechanisms, or even communication channels to hear the interests and concerns of all groups, even those deemed irrelevant or extremist;
- supports the ability of all stakeholders to use principled negotiation to address the root causes and underlying interests of each group;
- assists each stakeholder in assessing and reality testing their best alternative to a negotiated solution and helps stakeholders develop internally generated incentives—economic, security, political, and identity-based—so that agreements are more likely to be sustainable over the long term;
- develops internal and external mediation and technical support teams.

Recommendations for the Afghan Government

1. *Consult with Afghan civil society in the design of a comprehensive peace process.* The Afghan government already asks civil society organizations to help build public support for peace initiatives. But civil society organizations with long-term expertise in local-level mediation and negotiation processes have not been consulted in the development of government reconciliation and peace initiatives.
2. *Invest time in training the National Peace Council.* Allow internal and external technical support teams with extensive experience in peace processes and peacebuilding to share skills and conceptual frameworks on principled negotiation and mediation processes.
3. *Identify existing incentives and what, if any, negative implications there are to these incentives.* Determine how to create or redesign internal and external incentives in each of the four categories, particularly incentives that can open up new possibilities for persuading key stakeholders to pursue peace. Sequence incentives for different stages of the peace process, from enticing armed groups to the negotiation table, to staying through difficult issues, and finally to implementing a peace agreement.

Recommendations for Afghan Civil Society

1. *Develop a diverse and representative Civil Society Assembly.* Create an ongoing mechanism and forum for identifying key issues and redline interests, such as protection of minority and women's rights.

2. *Invest time in training and capacity building.* Give and receive training from technical support teams on principled negotiation and mediation processes.
3. *Work with the National Peace Council.* Develop and coordinate public consultation mechanisms.

Recommendations for the International Community

**The greatest leverage
available to the
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is less military and
financial investment,
not more.**

1. *Recognize that current international military and financial assistance creates obstacles to a successful peace process.* The greatest leverage available to the international community is less military and financial investment, not more. Current levels of military and financial investments keep the existing dysfunctional system in place, allowing the government to forgo the hard work of earning public legitimacy and consent to govern and providing financial benefits for the continuation of the war and instability.
2. *Urge support for a comprehensive Afghan public peace process.* Consult with a broad range of diverse local civil society leaders representative of the various ethnic groups to identify the ideal model of public participation in a peace process and how internationals could support this.
3. *Develop strategies for supporting Afghan civil society.* The international community's focus on supporting the legitimacy of the current government overshadow and even undermine efforts to build an Afghan nation with an active, engaged civil society. Internationals could reach out to develop better relationships with diverse civil society leaders in Kabul. Afghan-led civil society peacebuilding efforts such as peace councils and dialogue forums are low cost, yet plant the seeds for longer-term improved relationships.
4. *Deploy more diplomatic staff.* Finding a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan and the region requires more diplomats. For example, they are important for holding town halls to listen to the concerns, ideas, analysis, and points of view of Afghans in all sectors of society. Afghans and Pakistanis both desire a diplomatic surge, noting that they did not perceive a diplomatic surge to accompany the troop surge. There is a desire to have more U.S. policymakers listen directly to Afghan government ministers, parliamentarians, and civil society leaders.
5. *Invite more Afghan government personnel and civil society leaders to Washington or other foreign capitals to talk with policymakers.* Afghans wonder why so few are invited to speak to foreign policymakers about the future of their country. They ask how policymakers, who they perceive as knowing little about their culture and history, can talk about democracy in Afghanistan and then make such big decisions about U.S. policy in Afghanistan without listening to Afghans themselves express their analysis and hopes for the future.
6. *Develop a Group of Friends with teams of mediators and peace process technical support capacity.* Small, well-trained teams who have specialist knowledge, experiences, and skills in working on comprehensive peace processes can advise and leverage the support from other sectors of government on behalf of developing a sustainable outcome. Deploy long-term support teams of mediators and diplomats to work on complex regional diplomatic initiatives. Ensure diplomats are trained in principled negotiation and mediation to help support a comprehensive Afghan peace process. Few governments have made supporting peace processes a priority. Technical support teams from a Group of Friends could provide financial support, coaching, negotiation training, and capacity-building measures to all

groups in an Afghan peace process, including civil society stakeholders. All parties must understand the process so that they can work together constructively.

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76. *Unpacking the Mystery of Mediation in African Peace Processes* (Zurich: Swiss Peace, Center for Security Studies, and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, 2008).
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82. *Ibid.*, 21.
83. *Ibid.*, 22.
84. Matt Waldman and Thomas Ruttig, *Peace Offerings: Theories of Conflict Resolution and Their Applicability to Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, January 2011), 4.



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In June 2011, Afghan president Hamid Karzai revealed publicly for the first time that the United States and the Taliban have been holding secret negotiations. To date, these negotiations have focused on a narrow agenda on conditions for the Taliban to lay down their arms and for the United States to leave Afghanistan—and do not address other significant root causes of the current conflict, such as government corruption and ethnic tensions. Thus, they will be unlikely to lay the foundation for a sustainable peace. This report argues that a comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan requires a much more deliberate design than currently exists, calls attention to Afghan civil society's capacity to support a national peace process, and offers recommendations to the international community, the Afghan government, and Afghan civil society for ensuring a more comprehensive, successful, and sustainable peace process.

Related Links

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