

**AFGHAN ATTEMPTS
AT PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
1986 AND 2010 :
A COMPARISON**

Heela Najibullah

**Edited by
Supriya Roychoudhury**

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PREFACE

We are producing this booklet at a time when the Afghan peace process, weak and riven as it was, appears to be in complete tatters. In the past two years almost every powerful and independent Afghan in government has been targeted or dismissed. This has been followed by the assassination of the head of the Peace Council, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani. Together, these developments have effectively killed the idea of an Afghan-led process; indeed, on the Afghan side, the leadership of the peace process today comprises President Karzai alone.

Nevertheless, the peace process is not dead. Rather it has entered a new, and perhaps even more dangerous phase, one in which Afghan leadership has been curtailed and Pakistan's key role re-asserted. If President Karzai is the sole spokesman of Afghan peacemaking, his dialogue partners include the military as well as the civilian authorities in Pakistan. Any negotiations with the Taliban will have to be routed via Pakistan, with the focus shifting from moderate to hardliner groups such as the Haqqanis, whom many Afghans do not regard as part of the Taliban.

Will this phase see Afghanistan through to a peace settlement? That seems doubtful. No peace process can take

hold on the ground until it is publicly owned, and Afghans will only own a process that they see as Afghan-led and locally accountable. But a negotiation that will commit the Pakistan government, and through them groups like the Haqqanis, will at least provide the space for local peacemaking to evolve. The lack of Pakistani support for the Afghan process has choked it from the start; if the international community can get a genuine commitment from the Government of Pakistan to work for peace and stability in Afghanistan, then the country's prospects will improve.

This booklet does not directly address the Pakistan context for Afghanistan, but it forms the backdrop to discussion of two Afghan initiatives at peacemaking, the one launched by President Najibullah in 1986 to the one headed by President Karzai from 2002 onwards. The two have many similar features – indeed the latter can be seen as reviving many elements of the former – but the conditions in which it is taking place are very different.

Whether these conditions will ensure a real turning point remains to be seen. Judgement day is two-plus years away, in 2014. In the meantime, we hope that this booklet will contribute to Indian policy thinking on the future for a close regional partner and friend.

Radha Kumar

AFGHAN ATTEMPTS AT PEACE AND RECONCILIATION 1986 AND 2010 : A COMPARISON*

Introduction

In the summer of 2010, President Karzai unveiled a comprehensive plan for reintegration and reconciliation at a specially convened Loya Jirga. This is not the first time that Afghan leaders have sought reconciliation with the Mujahidin and the Taliban. In 1986, President Najibullah introduced the National Reconciliation Policy, which was in operation for six years until the Mujahidin came to power in Kabul in 1992.

President Najibullah's National Reconciliation Policy, like President Karzai's present day initiatives, was aimed at establishing peaceful relations with the Mujahidin and reintegrating them into Afghan national institutions. It was propelled by the Soviet Union's desire to withdraw, and the involvement of regional actors in Afghanistan. In particular, two parallel processes were taken forward by President Najibullah's government: one at the international level, the other at the national level. Negotiations at the international level were held between Pakistan, Iran, the U.S. and the

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Soviet Union to facilitate the withdrawal of Soviet troops. At the national level, the reconciliation policy aimed to restore unity, peace and security, and develop an independent, democratic Afghanistan.

Similar processes are currently underway. President Karzai held the Loya Jirga in June 2010 with the goal of putting an end to civil war in the country and gaining broad Afghan support for reconciliation with the Taliban. He proposed an amnesty, beginning by removing key Taliban leaders from the UN 1267 Blacklist, and has started negotiations with opposition groups such as the Taliban and Hizb-e-Islami. Additionally, he provided economic incentives for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) to armed groups.

With the transition period having begun in July 2011, the Afghan government is under growing pressure to succeed in peace negotiations with the Taliban, who demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Regional factors such as Pakistan's role in facilitating negotiations between President Karzai's government and the opposition, and the implementation of the U.S.' Af-Pak strategy, are crucial for security and stability in Afghanistan and the wider region. At the national level, issues around good governance remain critical.

While there are differences in the historical context, a comparative analysis of President Najibullah's National Reconciliation Policy and President Karzai's Peace and Reintegration Program illuminates some of the potential pitfalls that the transition policy could face, if preventive or redemptive measures are not taken.

Regional and International Asymmetry for an Afghan Solution

1985 marked six years of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. However, within a year of its invasion, 104 UN member states had voted in January 1980 for the withdrawal of Soviet troops (General Assembly Resolution ES-6/2)¹, and in November 1981, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 36/34, which gave the UN a mandate to negotiate with Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, the U.S. and Iran on the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The UN negotiations resulted in the signing of the Geneva Accords in April 1988, and marked the beginning of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in May 1988.

The Geneva Accords were signed between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the U.S. and Soviet Union acting as guarantors of the agreement. It comprised three main instruments:

- i) A bilateral agreement between the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the principles of mutual relations, in particular non-interference and non-intervention;

1. Cordovez, D., and Harrison, Selig S. 1995. *‘Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal’*. New York: Oxford University Press. 218.

2. Institute for Afghan Studies. http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/Accords%20Treaties/geneva_accords_1988_pakistan_afghanistan.htm. Accessed June 27, 2011.

- ii) A bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan on the voluntary return of Afghan refugees;
- iii) A multilateral agreement on interrelationships for the settlement of the situation in Afghanistan² signed by Afghanistan and Pakistan, and witnessed by the Soviet Union and the U.S.; and
- iv) A declaration of international guarantees by the Soviet Union and the U.S. for implementation of the Accords.

The Afghan-Pakistan agreement on the interrelationships for the settlement of the situation relating to Afghanistan was made to ensure that upon the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the two countries would refrain from “*interference and intervention*” in any form. The text of the agreement cited the two states’ rights and obligations under the Charter of the UN and stated that the political settlement was based on the following principles of international law:

- The principle of equal rights and self determination of peoples;
- The principle of sovereign equality of States;
- The duty to not intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, in accordance with the Charter of the UN;
- The duty of States to cooperate with one another in accordance with the Charter of the UN;
- The principle that States shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that

international peace and security and justice are not endangered;

- The principle that States shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the Charter of the UN.

The agreement also set up a monitoring mechanism under which the UN representative would investigate any reported violations.

Although the main focus of the Geneva Accords was the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the George H W Bush administration in the U.S. doubted President Najibullah's political intentions, and a secondary motive was to seek his replacement. During the negotiations, Zia-ul-Haq's government had taken the position that post Soviet withdrawal, it would be a betrayal for the Mujahidin if the Najibullah government remained in power. It was similarly felt that a coalition government comprising both the Mujahidin and President Najibullah, in which his newly-founded Watan Party had a majority, would be unacceptable. To settle these doubts, President Najibullah initiated negotiations for a broad-based unity government with King Zahir Shah in Rome, leaders of opposition groups living in Iran and Pakistan and commanders of armed groups operating within the country, but the Zia ul Haq government was not persuaded.

It is widely held in Afghanistan that Pakistan opposed the formation of a Mujahidin coalition government comprising the more moderate factions headed by King Zahir Shah,

preferring to install the more extremist wing of the opposition in Afghanistan instead, such as the Hizb-e-Islami.

Though his negotiations failed, in government, President Najibullah extended the offer to share power with all opposition groups, including the extremists, as one of the instruments of national reconciliation. However, the latter refused to negotiate with President Najibullah's government because they questioned its legitimacy as well as the Islamic nature of his regime (as suggested in President Najibullah's public speech inviting King Zaher Shah to return)³.

With the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and continued U.S. opposition to President Najibullah's government, the Geneva Accords remained ineffective as a bilateral mechanism. Lacking support from the U.S., the UN found it difficult to monitor the Accords and was unable to ensure a smooth government transition to an interim government of national unity. The UN eventually asked President Najibullah to resign.

On 7 November 1990, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 45/12 based upon which the UN Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, issued a declaration laying out a Five-Point-Peace-Plan for a political settlement in Afghanistan which comprised:

- i) Recognition of the national sovereignty of Afghanistan;

3. Najibullah's public speech, 1988, Kabul. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkhwyONWFZg&feature=related>, (in Dari). Accessed June 27, 2011.

- ii) The right of the Afghan people to choose their own government and political system;
- iii) During an interim period, the creation of an independent, credible and authorized mechanism to oversee a fair and free election to a broad-based government;
- iv) A UN monitored ceasefire; and
- v) Financial aid to facilitate the return of refugees and economic and social reconstruction.

The Geneva Accords were, however, observed, more in the breach than on the ground. Pakistan and Iran continued to influence internal tensions within Afghanistan, posing constant challenges to President Najibullah's reconciliation policy.

The National Reconciliation Policy of President Najibullah's Government

The National Reconciliation Policy of 1986 came into effect with transitional changes taking place in the then ruling party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) leadership. President Najibullah was appointed to head the party as Secretary General at the 18th Plenum of the PDPA on 4 May, 1986. On 30 December 1986, at the 21st Plenum of the PDPA, its Central Committee announced a program of national reconciliation to rally public support for the state, negotiate a peaceful solution with the Mujahidin groups and initiate dialogue with King Zahir Shah who was then residing in Rome.

The Soviet Union's new leadership under Premier Mikhail Gorbachev initially supported and encouraged President Najibullah's announcement of national reconciliation; however in the years that followed, he faced considerable opposition from the hardliners in his own party, for trying to accommodate the Mujahidin groups. This inner party division left his government weaker and further divided.

In fact, President Najibullah's reconciliation policy flowed from, and built on, earlier proposals made by his predecessor, Babrak Karmal. In November 1985, Babrak Karmal put forward a ten point action program for his government:

1. All national problems should be resolved by political means;
2. The government should become more representative and not be dominated by the PDPA;
3. Private investment in the agricultural sector should be encouraged;
4. Traders and businessmen should be encouraged to invest;
5. Independent organizations of intellectuals should be allowed;
6. Tribal self-government should be allowed;
7. The National Fatherland Front⁴ should be expanded, but other organizations should also be allowed;

4. The National Fatherland Front (NFF) founded in 1981, was an umbrella organization comprising the political, social and economic institutions of Afghanistan after the Saur Revolution. In 1984, it had more than fifty thousand members.

8. Islam should be respected;
9. The armed forces should be consolidated and, when foreign intervention ceases, Soviet troops should withdraw; and
10. Foreign policy based on active non-alignment and friendship with neighboring countries should be pursued.

Karmal's ten points focused more on liberalizing the PDPA-led regime than on reconciling with the Mujahidin and other opposition groups. President Najibullah's policy, on the other hand, focused squarely on reconciliation and on sharing power with the opposition and the Mujahidin.

Following the unveiling of the National Reconciliation Policy on 30 December 1986, President Najibullah announced a unilateral ceasefire to start on 15 January 1987, and declared his readiness to negotiate with every leader of the opposition to end the war. Stating that the Afghan people had only one domestic national enemy, that of economic backwardness, he hoped that peace would allow Afghans to tackle poverty and underdevelopment. Like Karmal, he stressed that the Afghan government's foreign policy would follow principles of non-alignment, active and positive neutrality, and non-interference. Detailing his foreign policy goals, he emphasized cooperation for Afghanistan's membership in platforms such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the UN.

In the eleven months that it took to prepare the Loya Jirga of 29 November 1987, President Najibullah tried to work

on three fronts: political conceptualization of the National Reconciliation Policy with PDPA members; formation of independent reconciliation commissions at the national and provincial levels; and contact with the leaders of the opposition, armed groups, clergy, nobility, monarchists, landlords, tribals and religious figures.

In the November 1987 Loya Jirga, President Najibullah's government put national reconciliation at the heart of its government's policies, "... *The Loya Jirga of 29th November 1987 adopted the policy of national reconciliation based on national democracy, peaceful settlement of the present and future problems of the country, formation of a coalition government, multi-party system, freedom of the press. The Loya Jirga, in fact, had the historic mission of adopting the constitution and on that basis, electing the President of the country.*"⁵

Outside Afghanistan, the National Reconciliation Policy focused on refugees, the three nationalist parties of Sebghatullah Mojadeddi, Said Ahmad Gailani and Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, the then Mujahidin factions within Pakistan and Iran (referred to as the "opposition" and no longer as the Mujahidin, resistance groups or terrorists).⁶

As a sign of good will, amnesty was granted to leaders of the opposition who had previously been sentenced to death. Political prisoners were also freed.

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5. Afghanistan. 1987. '*Loya Jirga Documents*'. Kabul: State Printing House. Author's private collection.
 6. Giustozzi, A. 2000. '*War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan; 1978-1992*'. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 163.

In his speech at the November Loya Jirga, President Najibullah stated that he would extend the ceasefire for an additional six months, provided the opposition also refrained from “*carrying out combat activities...and express their views concerning the future of Afghanistan and ways to establish peace in the country.*”⁷ He also offered the following confidence building measures (CBMs) for implementation of the National Reconciliation Policy:

- Extension of the ceasefire by another six months;
- Inclusion of all political forces, who desired peace and were willing to cooperate with the government;
- Initiation of dialogue to explore ways to arrive at a national agreement on a peaceful solution;
- Formation of a coalition/ broad-based government with local administration;
- Organization of free, fair and democratic elections to the National Assembly; and
- Provision of assistance to, and protection of returnees.

He went on to state, “*The scope of these guarantees can be expanded. We are ready to consider the proposals of the opposite side.*”

Soon after the Loya Jirga, President Najibullah’s government enacted legislation to recognize a multi-party

7. Najibullah. 1987. “Speech in Loya Jirga”. Kabul: Author’s private collection.

system in Afghanistan. The law allowed for the formation of political parties, called for the cessation of armed action and urged political parties to support the National Reconciliation Policy. According to President Najibullah's speech, the policy had begun to create "*opportunities for active participation*" in establishing national peace "*irrespective of one's belief or political view*"⁸. The seven Peshawer-based political parties and the eight based in Iran were requested to take part in the National Assembly election of 1988.

The Afghan Constitution was amended in September 1990, to lay down rules for the formation and registration of political parties. Any party which had 300 members and clearly stated its objectives and by-laws would be registered.

In follow-up, ten political parties were registered by the government including the Hizbullah Afghanistan, the Islamic Party of the People of Afghanistan, the Organization of Young Workers of Afghanistan (KAJA), Hizb-e-Watan, the Toiler's Organization of Afghanistan (SZA) and Ansarullah Union.

In June 1988, the first session of the National Assembly was held, ten years after the Saur Revolution (April 27, 1978). The newly adopted Constitution revoked the President's absolute right to veto. In the months to follow, the name *Democratic Republic of Afghanistan* was abandoned and replaced with *Republic of Afghanistan*. The National Assembly (comprising

8. Ibid.

the Senate and Members of Parliament) was elected, replacing the Revolutionary Council of the PDPA.

In the new government formed under President Najibullah's leadership, only 12 ministers out of 36 belonged to his party. President Najibullah also changed the name of the PDPA to Hizb-e-Watan (Watan Party), and positioned national reconciliation and national unity at the centre of his political and policy program. Non-party positions were filled by former nobles or MPs who had served during King Zahir Shah's rule (for example, Fazal-ul-Haq Khaleqyar⁹ as the Prime Minister, Mrs. Saleha Farooq Etemadi¹⁰ as Minister of Social and Work Affairs, Masooma Esmati Wardak¹¹ as Minister of Higher and Vocational Education and Minister of Public Health, Abdul Rahim Hatif¹² as Chairman of the Supreme Extraordinary Commission for National Reconciliation in Afghanistan and, Professor Abdul Wahed Sorabi¹³ as Vice President). Aligning itself with the principles embedded in the National Reconciliation Policy, the Watan Party attempted to create a nationalist, broad-based ideology, shifting its position from Left to Centre.

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9. Governor of Baghlan province (1971-1972), Deputy Minister of Finance (1973-1978).
 10. President, Women's Association of Afghanistan (1962), Lecturer, Faculty of Literature, Kabul University (1963-1966).
 11. Elected Member of House of Representatives from Kandahar Province (1969).
 12. Member of Ulusi Jirga – House of Representatives from Kandahar City (1965-1969).
 13. Minister of Planning (1969-1973), acting Minister of Mines and Industries (1967-1969).

In an attempt to achieve national reconciliation and create a broad-based coalition, President Najibullah announced that several positions would be created specifically for members of the opposition. These included the position of President of the Council of Ministers, as well as various positions within the Ministries of Communications, Finance, Defence, Banks, Transport and the State Planning. Following the formation of the National Assembly, President Najibullah offered the post of Defence Minister to Ahmad Shah Masoud, who, however, refused. The post remained vacant for six months.

President Najibullah also officially invited King Zahir Shah to lead the coalition government as the ‘Baba-e-Millat’ (Father of the Nation), engaging the services of the UN monitoring office (whose mandate was to establish a broad-based government in Afghanistan after the signing of the Geneva Accords) to convey this message to him in Rome. Apparently King Zahir Shah was reluctant to return, stating that the people of Afghanistan would not have accepted him had he availed of the offer.

National Reconciliation Mechanism

The National Reconciliation Policy’s implementation comprised, firstly, the setting up of reconciliation commissions at the district and the sub-district levels, headed by eminent citizens and representatives of the opposition and government. The responsibility of these commissions was to form local peace Jirgas that would enable tribes and village elders to use traditional methods of negotiation to reach agreements with

local armed groups. Any agreements reached would serve as protocols or memorandums of understanding between conflicting factions, and would be reviewed by provincial commissions for approval and enactment.

Secondly, a ceasefire would be enforced, following which a joint administration would be installed to plan local elections under the supervision of the UN monitoring office.¹⁴ At the local level, villages would be allowed to form their own administrations. The proposals made to the villages, irrespective of their previous history with the government, included the provisions that:

- Representatives from the opposition could be elected to the existing local councils;
- Coalitions could be formed preserving the autonomy of former rebel commanders; and
- Traditional administrative structures such as village councils would be instated as units of state power.¹⁵

Armed groups were encouraged to participate in local administration to safeguard their territories, provided they disarmed themselves first and accepted economic support from the government to sustain their local communities. Efforts were also made by the government to reintegrate armed groups into the national army. However, their

14 Najibullah. June, 1987. "Speech at the PDPA Plenum". Kabul: Authors private collection; Najibullah. May 1986 and July 1989. "Public Speech". Kabul: Author's private collection.

15. Giustozzi, A. *op.cit.*, 164.

reintegration remained limited and/or superficial because the armed groups that did join government forces turned out to be primarily motivated by temporary and financial gains rather than any desire to engage in nation and state-building. In effect, reintegration created significant vulnerabilities, often resulting in strengthening the armed groups with weapons and economic support.

There were some important win-overs, even if they were few. Examples of those who were successfully reintegrated into the national security forces included Commander Said Ahmad and Dawood Ziarat Jha in Herat, Ferdaws Mohmand in Jelalabad and Commander Asmatullah Muslim in Kandahar¹⁶. Their reintegration gave the government the opportunity to build peace and gain wider territorial control.

Reintegration in the national defense forces, however, had only begun when the Soviet Union withdrew. As a military tactic to avoid bloodshed, provinces such as Zabul, Kunar and Uruzgan were left without defenses to enable opposition groups to take control of their governance structures.

Since the opposition groups and the Pakistani and the U.S. governments believed that President Najibullah's government would collapse following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the opposition ignored the National Reconciliation Policy, and instead increased their offensive in the provinces of Jalalabad, Qunduz, Kandahar, Khost and Nimroz.

16. Leaders of armed factions of Mujahidin that reintegrated into the national security forces and fought along with the Afghan government.

The situation changed drastically when President Najibullah's government won the battle of Jalalabad in the spring of 1989, shortly after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. This left the opposition divided, with many of its armed groups defecting to the government and supporting the offers made by National Reconciliation Policy. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops, these groups were given the opportunity to either regain control in their respective localities, or share power with the government.

To incentivize reintegration, the Mujahidin were paid salaries. Land reforms as they existed in the early 1980s during the time of the PDPA, were also changed. Attempts were made to introduce judicial reform, release political prisoners, conform to universal human rights norms, allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit prisoners and detainees, support freedom of press and open up the economy.

In 1989, Abdul Rahim Hatif, Chairman of the Supreme Extraordinary Commission for National Reconciliation, announced the measures that had been implemented between 1987 – 1989:

- Formation of 3,370 reconciliation commissions, i.e., 31 at the provincial level, 45 at the city level, 142 at the district level and 3151 at the village level. 30,000 volunteers worked in these 3,370 commissions; 6,000 of these were returnees and members of the opposition;

- Publication of a fortnightly journal, *Voice of Peace* in Dari and Pashto; and
- The depositing of 90 million Afghanis by Afghans in the National Bank account which had been opened for the return and rehabilitation of refugees.

Finally, at the 1990 Loya Jirga, the constitution was revised to give Afghanistan an Islamic identity. President Najibullah's move was fiercely opposed by the members of his party as they believed that he was compromising on the values which underpinned the Saur (April) revolution, and as well as the PDPA's own left-wing beliefs.

Obstacles to the Implementation of the National Reconciliation Policy

President Najibullah's government faced multifaceted obstacles in the implementation of the National Reconciliation Policy. At home, he faced growing opposition from within his own party, which was divided between supporters of the National Reconciliation Policy and supporters of Babrak Karmal's more conservative approach that safeguarded the PDPA's revolutionary ideals.

These divisions left the Watan Party leaders torn between the hope of establishing a coalition government with the opposition, and the fear that President Najibullah was conceding too much to the opposition's demands. The unsuccessful coup attempted by his Defence Minister, Shahnawaz Tanai, who later fled to Pakistan, further

weakened the party and brought into question the legitimacy and capacity of the national forces.

Moreover, opposition leaders lacked confidence in President Najibullah's government, and believed that they could defeat him. For them, a coalition government and later an interim government, were unnecessary compromises.

Continued U.S. financial support to the opposition, Pakistan's breach of the Geneva Accords (especially its first instrument i.e. "... *the principles of mutual relations, in particular on non-interference and non-intervention*") and its insistence on replacing President Najibullah's government with the extremist wing of the opposition, and finally its success in keeping the opposition divided, were all detrimental to Afghanistan's efforts at reaching a consensus for peace building under the National Reconciliation Policy.

Regional players such as Iran favored the removal of President Najibullah from power. There was also additional pressure from the U.S. and Pakistan. All of these factors led to President Najibullah's resignation at the UN headquarters in New York, in March 1992.¹⁷

Although the Soviet Union initially supported President Najibullah's government, providing it with economic and financial assistance, relations between the two countries soured when he declared 'Nijat-e-Mili' i.e., National Rescue Day for the Afghans to commemorate the anniversary of Soviet withdrawal.¹⁸ The Soviets then initiated contact with the

17. Corwin, p. 2003. *'Doomed in Afghanistan: Najibullah's failed escape'*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

18. Najibullah. June 1990. "Speech at Loya Jirga". Kabul: Author's private collection.

resistance groups to explore alternative government options for Afghanistan. The break up of the Soviet Union further affected President Najibullah's government, as he was unable to acquire sufficient financial resources to keep his party structure intact and pay the armed groups who had reconciled with his government.

Although the UN was a key mediator of the Geneva Accords, post Soviet withdrawal, the UN's monitoring role was significantly weakened due to lack of support from the U.S.

On 21 May 1991, the UN Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, issued a five point proposal for political settlement in Afghanistan. His Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Benon Sevan, served as mediator to reconcile the interests of major stakeholders, including opposition groups in Pakistan, Iran, Pakistan's government and President Najibullah's own government, in order to introduce a neutral, interim government through free and fair elections. The UN's Five Point Peace Plan was thwarted by growing instability within President Najibullah's own government, various factions of which later joined some of the opposition groups to gain power in Kabul.

The reasons for prolonged UN negotiations between Pakistan, the opposition and President Najibullah's government on the formation of a neutral, interim government, and the legal implications of breaching the Geneva Accords and the UN Five-Point Peace Plan, are not the focus of this report. However, an inescapable conclusion is that the UN was unable to define common objectives for the countries

involved in the process of implementing the Geneva Accords and the Five-Point Peace Plan.

The Soviet Union's primary area of focus during the Geneva Accords negotiations was withdrawal, and ensuring that a friendly government was installed in Afghanistan. The U.S., on the other hand, grew suspicious of President Najibullah's government, which was in power for much longer than the U.S. had anticipated, and continued its support to the opposition groups, even after it had signed the Geneva Accords.

Pakistan, too, was anxious to undermine President Najibullah's government, which was seen as unwilling to serve Pakistani interests in Afghanistan. The Pakistani government prolonged negotiations, sought to ensure that the opposition factions remained divided and opposed a possible role for King Zahir Shah as the 'Father of the Nation'. Instead, they worked for a pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan with the support of parties such as the Hizb-e-Islami.

Iran also called for the resignation of President Najibullah on the grounds that this would enable the Afghan opposition to participate in an interim government under the auspices of the UN.

All of these concerns therefore undermined President Najibullah's efforts to ensure national reconciliation, bring opposition groups together, revive traditional Afghan values and mechanisms of administration and initiate a democratic political process that would ensure Afghanistan's future position as a credible nation, both in the eyes of the region as well as the wider international community.

Afghanistan's Peace and Reconciliation, 2001-2010

The Bonn Agreement, which followed 9/11 and the subsequent war against Al Qaida and the Taliban, was a renewed attempt at peace-building and reconstruction of Afghanistan. In December 2001, Afghan political groups met under the auspices of the UN in Germany to recreate Afghan political, judicial and economic institutions.

The Bonn Agreement facilitated the formulation of an Interim Authority under the Chairmanship of Hamid Karzai and laid down the following steps, with timelines:

- a) Within 6 months of its formation, the Interim Authority would organize an emergency Jirga, which would establish a transitional government; and
- b) Within 18 months, a new Afghanistan Constitution would be adopted by a Constitutional Jirga. This would be followed by elections in December 2003.

The final provision of the Bonn Agreement focused on the presence of foreign troops and the role of the UN in ensuring *'the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan as well as non-interference by foreign countries in Afghanistan's internal affairs'*¹⁹.

19. Afghanistan Online. "Agreement on Provincial Arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions". http://www.afghan-web.com/politics/bonn_agreement_2001.html. Accessed April 14, 2011.

In the meantime, an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was formed under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386²⁰, with the mandate of securing Kabul so that the Interim Authority could carry out its tasks under the Bonn Agreement. This mandate was subsequently expanded to ensure that ISAF remained until Afghanistan was able to rebuild its national security forces.

By October 2006, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and ISAF commands had established their presence in different regions of Afghanistan. A critical element of the Bonn Agreement was its encouragement of international aid and assistance for Afghan reconstruction. In November 2001, at the International Conference in Tokyo, the international community pledged more than US\$ 4.5 billion for recovery and peace-building in Afghanistan.

Point 1 of the Final Provisions in the Bonn Agreement stated the need for *‘all Mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country to come under the command and control of the Interim Authority, and be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces’*. In line with the above proposal, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), established in March 2002, recognized the urgent need to establish a DDR program

20. UN Security Council. “The United Nation Security Council Resolution 1386”. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/708/55/PDF/N0170855.pdf?OpenElement>. Accessed April 14, 2011.

to disband illegal armed groups and rehabilitate those that had not been integrated into the new national army.

The first DDR program, established under the joint management of the Afghan Defense Ministry and the UN Development Program (UNDP), and funded by the Japanese government, was called the “Afghan New Beginnings Program” (ANBP). The program intended to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate 100,000 non-state fighters. However, its start was delayed, and it eventually began in 2003, running until 2005. Although the UN reported success in demobilization and reintegration of 53,000 former combatants²¹, there remained many loopholes in the program.

The target group of 100,000 was an estimate since the actual number of armed militias was unknown. Since Afghanistan was governed by tribal structures, many of the commanders would have had civilian followings in their localities. While some armed militias underwent DDR, many fighters stayed away, and due to lack of local economic opportunities, increased number of civilians joined the ranks of new militias from time to time.

The DDR program aimed to demobilize and reintegrate foot soldiers, and undermine the position and power of commanders. In addition, it aimed to collect weapons from

21. Global Security.org, “DDR-Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration”. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/ddr.htm>. Accessed April 14, 2011.

each region of Afghanistan. The UN reported the collection of 8,603 heavy weapons from six regions in the country in March 2005;²² the majority of which were not reusable. The main challenge continued to be the proliferation of small arms.

In its later stages, the DDR program focused on the disbandment of illegal armed groups. This was also one of the security benchmarks identified in the Afghanistan Compact, which was announced at the London Conference in January 2006. However, the slow pace of DDR, combined with the inability to jump-start economic recovery, enabled the resurgence of the Taliban, and in response, the U.S. was forced to support local militias to fight the Taliban. The refusal of political leaders and parliamentary candidates (who had not been disqualified for the 2005 General Assembly elections) to disband their private militias further undermined the DDR program.

Despite ongoing battles between insurgent groups and the Afghan government in the last decade, there have been some successes for President Karzai's reconciliation policy. Following Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's move from Iran to Pakistan under duress post 9/11, the Hizb-e-Islami split, with defecting commanders forming a new party by the same name in Afghanistan. In 2004, they contested parliamentary elections and supported Karzai's candidature for President.

These developments may have paved the way for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to come to the negotiating table.

22. Ibid.

However the condition he put forward for negotiations, i.e., the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, affirmed his alliance with the Taliban and suggested that direct negotiations with the Taliban would be required in any case.

The Afghanistan Compact

The implementation of the Bonn Agreement was hindered by several factors. Lack of coordination between the international community and the Afghan government on security and development issues, and the absence of strategic vision were major constraints on the improvement of the ground situation in Afghanistan. Moreover, the lack of transparency and accountability of the Karzai administration led to a trust deficit between the Afghan people and their government.

In the face of these challenges, the international community, the Afghan government and the UN, gathered in January 2006 at the London Conference to assess the achievements of the Bonn Agreement. The Afghanistan Compact was the outcome of the London Conference, and it defined a framework for cooperation between the international community and the Afghan government.

The objectives of the Afghanistan Compact were:

- i) To fast-track improvements in security;
- ii) To work on governance, the rule of law and human rights;

- iii) To jump-start economic and social development;
and
- iv) To eliminate the narcotics industry.

The three most important sets of benchmarks were for security (capacity building of the National Army, presence of ISAF in provinces), economic and social development (environment, healthcare, energy, education, rural development) and governance (rule of law, anti-corruption processes, electoral reforms and the census). These objectives were to be achieved over a five year period.²³

By 2007, however, the resurgence of the Taliban became a matter of serious concern for the U.S., the international community and the Afghan government. The lack of nationwide security, concentration of foreign troops in secluded parts of the country, lawlessness, lack of local economic development, increased presence of militias, ethnic rivalries and external support to insurgent groups, all contributed to the sustenance and growth of the Taliban.

Following the U.S. elections of 2008, President Obama's administration introduced a revised policy towards stabilization in Afghanistan. Dubbed the "Af-Pak" strategy, the main objectives of the new policy were:

- i) Denying Al-Qaeda a safe haven;
- ii) Reversing the Taliban's momentum; and

23. NATO official website. "The Afghanistan Compact". http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf. Accessed April 14, 2011.

- iii) Strengthening Afghanistan's security forces and government.

In order to reach these goals, the Obama administration committed 30,000 additional troops for counter-insurgency operations against the Taliban and as well as strengthening the Afghan military's capacity.

On 27 March 2009, in a speech in Washington DC, President Obama stated, '*The terrorists within Pakistan's borders are not simply enemies of America or Afghanistan – they are a grave and urgent danger to the people of Pakistan*'²⁴. He went on to say, '*In a country with extreme poverty that has been at war for decades, there will also be no peace without reconciliation among former enemies.*'²⁵

The Af-Pak strategy encouraged reconciliation with those groups that '*have taken up arms because of coercion, or simply by price*'²⁶. However the '*uncompromising core of the Taliban*' should be defeated. Obama's strategy encouraged Afghanistan's government to align itself with reconciliation processes at the local level.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Bonn Agreement and the Afghan Compact, a second International Conference on Afghanistan was held in London in January 2010. The

24. Obama, B. 2009. Washington DC: Public speech. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/13720842/President-Barack-Obamas-Speech-on-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan-March-27-2009-TranscriptVideo-Link>. Accessed April 14, 2011.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

conference was organized ten months after the International Conference on Afghanistan at the Hague, where the international community pledged support for a military offensive against the Taliban.

The objectives set at the International Conference in London included a handover of security responsibilities from ISAF to the Afghan forces after a five year transition period, reintegration of the Taliban forces to end violence, and reconciliation and reintegration with the opposition, the Taliban and other insurgent groups. The peace and reintegration program with the Taliban comprised two parallel processes: inviting the Taliban leaders to participate in peace negotiations, and reintegrating followers of the Taliban through socio-economic programs. More than 70 countries and international organizations agreed the following objectives at the International Conference in London:

- To develop a plan for a phased handover to Afghan security forces by late 2010/early 2011;
- As part of the transition, to increase the Afghan Army and Police Forces to 171,000 and 134,000 respectively by the end of 2011, bringing the total number of total security force numbers to above 300,000;
- A significant increase in the number of international troops to support the training of the Afghan forces. The U.S. increased its contribution by 30,000, while the rest of the international community increased its share by 9,000; making the total number of international forces present in Afghanistan 135,000;

- Measures to tackle corruption, including the establishment of an independent Office of High Oversight and an independent Monitoring and Evaluation Mission;
- Better coordinated development assistance to be increasingly channeled through the Government of Afghanistan, supported by reforms in structures and budgets;
- A civilian surge to match the military surge, including new civilian leadership of the international community's programs;
- Robust sub-national government structures to ensure delivery of basic services to all Afghans;
- Support for the Afghan National Peace and Reintegration Program, through extending financial support for a Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund and offering economic alternatives to those who renounced violence, cut links to terrorism and agreed to work within the democratic process;
- Increased regional cooperation to combat terrorism, violent extremism and the drugs trade;
- Increased regional cooperation on trade and cultural exchanges and the creation of conducive conditions for the return of Afghan refugees; and
- Strengthening security through 37,000 additional NATO soldiers from 36 countries.

The Peace and Reintegration Program of President Karzai's government

In his inaugural speech as the President-elect in November 2009, President Karzai announced his intention to call for a Consultative Peace Jirga to map a peace process with the Taliban. At the International Conference on Afghanistan in London, President Karzai confirmed that the Peace Jirga would be held in May 2010, in Kabul.

In June 2010, President Karzai initiated the Consultative Peace Jirga which was attended by 1600 representatives from different communities and walks of life in Afghanistan. During the Jirga, participants were divided into 13 groups to discuss various issues.

Delegates of the Jirga decided on three key recommendations:

- i) A framework for peace talks should be prepared by the government with the following measures to be implemented:
 - *As a gesture of a goodwill, taking immediate and solid action to free prisoners detained on inaccurate information or unsubstantiated allegations;*
 - *To get the opposition names removed from the UN's consolidated blacklist;*
 - *To guarantee protection and safety for those who join the peace process and a safe return of the armed opposition;*

- *International and Afghan forces to strenuously avoid unnecessary arrests and arbitrary searches of houses as well as aerial bombardment of residential areas that cause civilian casualties;*
- *The government to take all measures to lead military operations and coordination among international forces operating in Afghanistan;*
- *The armed opposition to renounce violence and all activities that resulted in killing Afghans and destroying the infrastructure, and dissociate themselves from Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups;*
- *The international community to expedite the process of equipping, training and strengthening Afghan national security forces, to enable them to provide security for their country and people;*
- *A long-term international commitment to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a playground for regional conflicts again, and the space for stronger regional cooperation;*
- *International support for a peace process led by the Afghan government;*
- *Delivery of good governance, appointments on the basis of merit, combating corruption and illegal occupation of property at the national and provincial levels;*

-
- *A just peace to guarantee the rights of all citizens including women and children and equality of all citizens under the law.*
- ii) Afghan-centric negotiations amongst warring parties, with the exclusion of foreign militants and international terrorist networks.²⁷
 - iii) The Afghan government to set up a national mechanism to develop a comprehensive program for implementation of decisions made by the National Consultative Peace Jirga, and transform it into a standing national strategy.

Implementation mechanisms for these ambitious recommendations were also laid out by the National Consultative Peace Jirga. The reconciliation process would be led by a High Peace Council, comprising both government and non-government members. The High Peace Council would be supported by a Joint Secretariat under the supervision of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Provincial and district governors would play a crucial role in gathering support for local peace-building and reintegration processes. This would be accomplished through the support and inclusion of political, tribal and religious leaders as well as informal local governance institutions.

27. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Government Media and Information Center website. “*The Peace Jirga Resolution*”. http://www.gmic.gov.af/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65:the-peace-jirga-resolution&catid=48:analysis&Itemid=85. Accessed June 30, 2011.

The Operational Manual for the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) further defines the objective of the program, “*The goal of the APRP is to promote peace through a political approach. It will encourage regional and international cooperation, will create the political and judicial conditions for peace and reconciliation, and will encourage combatant foot soldiers, commanders and leaders previously siding with armed opposition and extremist groups to renounce violence and terrorism, and to join a constructive process of reintegration and peace.*”²⁸

Following the National Consultative Peace Jirga, the Kabul Conference (20-23 July 2010), further structured implementation mechanisms, settling up the Kabul Process – a transitional phase in which security and governance responsibilities would be transferred to Afghans. President Karzai’s government put forward a national agenda, called the Prioritization and Implementation Plan, from 2010-2013. The Plan aimed to initiate institutional reform and build local capacities, take the APRP forward, and increase regional cooperation.

Some of these goals are reiterations of the goals set in 2006 London Conference (see Annex 1), which also set timelines for their achievement. Though some of the benchmarks have been missed, the Kabul Process is clearly intended to push the implementation process forward.

28. Ibid.

A Comparative Analysis

As this brief comparative analysis indicates, there are several overlaps in President Najibullah's and President Karzai's approaches to the stabilization of Afghanistan. Their peace and reconciliation programs, in particular, have many common features, from negotiations with the armed oppositions for an end to conflict and DDR, to peace and reintegration commissions at the local, district and national levels. At the regional and international levels, however, President Karzai has much greater support than President Najibullah did; and the international commitment to Afghan reconstruction is much greater today than it was during the Najibullah period.

Looking at each set of peace and reconciliation initiatives, the following points emerge:

- The current situation in Afghanistan is a reflection of its history and its desperate quest for a peaceful solution with the Taliban. The main difference between the political reconciliation of the 1980s and the present day is that under President Karzai's government, Afghanistan is recognized as an Islamic State, and thus the issue of an ideological compromise does not arise. Hence, the Taliban's persistence to continue fighting with no clear objectives - with the exception of withdrawal of foreign troops and implementation of Sharia Law - against the Afghan government makes it hard to negotiate a political settlement for peace.

- During Najibullah's government (1986-1992), there was widespread public support for peace. However, the perception that the PDPA and thus the Watan Party was led by 'communist' ideology and therefore its members were 'infidels' in a traditional and Muslim society, created a trust deficit between the people and the government. Therefore, the mechanisms that were created by his government to enable public participation in the peace process such as the Afghan constitution (amended in Loya Jirga of 28-29 May, 1990 that enshrined the nation's Islamic identity) were questioned and manipulated. Nor did it help that these initiatives were not supported by the international community. As against this, Karzai's government has democratic institutional mechanisms and structures in place to allow public participation in political processes for its APRP.
- In the 1980s, the opposition's ultimate objective and purpose of Jihad was the establishment of an ideal Islamic State and freedom from Soviet occupation. The Taliban's present day demands, apart from the withdrawal of foreign troops and implementation of Sharia, are not clear. If they are an ideological group, what are the main objectives of their ideology within Afghanistan and outside?
- The leadership structures of the opposition i.e., Mujahidin and Taliban, have been and continue to be located outside Afghanistan. The opposition's

demand for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the desire of some of the regional players to weaken the Afghan government, continue to be as relevant today as they were during the 1980s.

However, when the Peshawar-based government of the Mujahidin was formed in the 1980s and was recognized by Pakistan and the U.S., the distinct structure and leadership of the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahidin²⁹ enabled the government of Afghanistan to easily identify its counterparts for reconciliation, whereas today the Quetta Shura's structure and leadership remain unclear to the people of Afghanistan, making it difficult to identify those with whom the Afghan government should reconcile.

- The recent reports of talks between the Taliban leadership, countries such as Germany and the U.S., and the Afghan government have made the peace process more opaque³⁰. Irrespective of the Taliban's continued demands for the withdrawal of foreign troops, it is not clear who they aim to negotiate and/or reconcile with: the Afghan government or the U.S.?

29. Also known as the Seven Party Mujahideen Alliance or Peshawar Seven.

30. New York Times. Rubin, Alissa .J.; August 3, 2011. "*Taliban Hint at the Interest in Negotiated Settlement*": http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/04/world/middleeast/04afghanistan.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=afghanistan,%20taliban&st=cse&scp=4.

Who are the stakeholders for peace negotiations in Afghanistan? Are the objectives for negotiations to achieve reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan, or the withdrawal of foreign troops, or both?

- The success of President Najibullah's National Reconciliation Policy lay in his skills as a leader and politician. He was able to differentiate between issues around the withdrawal of the Soviet troops and those related directly to national reconciliation. He considered this distinction to be an essential part of Afghanistan's national strategy for survival.
- Afghanistan enjoys a level of economic, military and financial support from regional and international players, which it did not earlier. Although President Karzai's government's structures and military capabilities are relatively weak in comparison with President Najibullah's government, the Afghan government can effectively utilize the commitment of the international community to its advantage to define the peace initiative and its objectives.
- The Taliban's demand for the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops, and President Obama's shift in policy to define an exit strategy, may be compared to the Soviet Union's position in 1985 when Premier Mikhael Gorbachev came to power and was keen to find an exit for Soviet troops. However, the time frame set for the withdrawal of troops (July 2011-2014) at the NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010,

exceeds the time frame agreed by the Soviet Union for withdrawal (15 May 1988 – 15 February 1989).

- While in the 1980s the majority of the UN Security Council members voted against Soviet occupation and demanded their withdrawal, post 9/11 the members of the UN Security Council supported presence of the ISAF and NATO troops to stabilize Afghanistan.
- The recent developments on the signing of a long term strategic partnership between the U.S. and the Afghan government will determine the level of presence and cooperation between the U.S. forces and the Afghan government. While, there was pressure on the Najibullah government to complete the withdrawal of Soviet troops within the timeline agreed under the Geneva Accords, today the Afghan government is in a position to define a long-term partnership with the U.S. and other regional powers to avoid a vacuum of power and the repeat of the civil war of the 1990s.
- The geopolitics of regional countries in relation to Afghanistan and the balance of power in the 1980s has changed due to globalization and multi-polarity in the world. Though the strategic interests of Pakistan and Iran continue to impact negatively on the search for peace and stability in Afghanistan, they are now themselves under international pressure due to the radicalization of Pakistan and Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons' capabilities. The regional

balance of force has changed with an emerging India, assertive China, and Russia re-asserting itself as well. Therefore, Pakistan cannot afford to support a new radical regime in Kabul which will be hostile to the interests of regional powers. The continued presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan and the emerging new role of the regional players will require a new equation for balance of power in the region. Therefore, the Afghanistan of today is different from the Afghanistan of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

- In the 1980s, the Geneva Accords focused on the superpowers and the two main regional players, i.e., Pakistan and Iran (where the bulk of Afghan refugees and opposition groups were based). Today, Afghanistan has foreign troops from 49 nations. The regional players that have a say in the political situation in Afghanistan are not just limited to Pakistan and Iran but also include countries such as China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia.
- Thus, to find symmetry among the conflicting interests of the regional players following the withdrawal of foreign troops is not only a challenging task for the U.S., but also for the Afghan government, which itself needs to define the objectives of the APRP in a more coherent and effective manner.

The success of President Karzai's peace plan with the Taliban depends on the extent to which it is reflective

of the Afghans' desire for a 'lasting reconciliation, which is home-grown'³¹.

- The absence of a neutral mediator between the Taliban and President Karzai's government is an obstacle for the peace process. This is unlike the situation in the 1980s, where the UN played a key role in the finalization of the Geneva Accords and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. It is important that the Afghan government find a credible negotiator for the successful process of reconciliation with the Taliban.
- As with the previous era, when the regime was seen as illegitimate because of its "communist" label, the present one too is suffering from a legitimacy crisis, this time because of corruption and mismanagement.
- The ongoing social divides based on ethnicity, religion and language and the corruption endemic in government institutions have aggravated the atmosphere of mistrust. Because the ruling government lacks institutional party structures, President Karzai's government is weak and lacking in support. The resignation of the Minister of Interior and Head of

31. Bloomfield, D., Barnes, T. and Huyse, L., eds. 2003. IDEA. *'Reconciliation After Violent Conflict'*. Sweden: Bulls Tryckeri AB Halmstad.23.

Intelligence in June 2010, and the recent assassination of important figures in Kandahar Province in July 2011 serve as apt examples. Although the comparison with President Najibullah's government is not entirely justified given the difference in circumstances in both cases, it can be said that a divided Watan Party did leave a weakened government under President Najibullah, which eventually led to its collapse.

- It is important to understand that the reason President Najibullah was pushed into a compromising situation during the implementation of the National Reconciliation Policy was that he was isolated both politically and economically by the international community (with the exception of the UN's humanitarian assistance which was mostly targeted at the returnees).

He was forced to negotiate through the United Nations with Pakistan on the formation of a neutral interim government instead of the Mujahedin factions. The conditions dictated favored the Pakistani government, to the extent that he was eventually forced to offer his resignation for peace and stability. His removal from power was advocated as a condition to allow an interim government in Afghanistan to be formed with the opposition. Thus, it is important that negotiations in the current government are held from a position of power and not compromise, since the country now has the international support it lacked in the late 1980s.

- It is too early to judge the progress of President Karzai's Peace and Reintegration Program since it is still in process. The manner in which President Karzai integrates the Taliban commanders and reconciles politically with its leadership will be important. Although the goal of the APRP is defined as promoting peace through a "political approach", the lack of a bottom up approach in which the social and economic needs of Afghans are considered, will lead to an incomplete process for peace-building and long lasting reconciliation. Afghanistan cannot afford the repeat of the events of 1992.

It is important that President Karzai publicize his government's objectives for peace negotiations to ensure that he has public support. There are four parallel ongoing negotiations under the umbrella of the APRP:

- i) between the Taliban and the Afghan government;
- ii) between the Taliban and the U.S. government;
- iii) between the U.S. and the Pakistan governments;
and
- iv) between the Afghan and Pakistan governments. How does President Karzai find common objectives from the above processes to determine the conditions for peace negotiations and reconciliation would be key to gain transparency, credibility and mass support for a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Finally, while President Karzai and the Loya Jirga's peace plans aspire towards lasting reconciliation, the focus on peace negotiations with armed opposition groups begs the issue of national reconciliation at the ground level. For a lasting reconciliation peace negotiations need to be entrenched community to community and tools such as restorative justice and truth commissions can start the healing process in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan Compact: Benchmarks and Timelines defined at the London Conference (January 2006)

The Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, is committed to achieving the following benchmarks in accordance with the timelines specified.

SECURITY

International Security Forces

Through end-2010, with the support of and in close coordination with the Afghan Government, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and their respective Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will promote security and stability in all regions of Afghanistan, including by strengthening Afghan capabilities.

Afghan National Army

By end-2010, a nationally respected, professional, ethnically balanced Afghan National Army (ANA) will be fully established that is democratically accountable, organized, trained and equipped to meet the security needs of the country and increasingly funded from Government revenue, commensurate with the nation's economic capacity; the international community will continue to support Afghanistan in expanding the ANA towards the ceiling of 70,000 personnel articulated in the Bonn talks; and the pace of expansion is to be adjusted on the basis of periodic joint quality assessments by the Afghan Government and the international community against agreed criteria which take into account prevailing conditions.

Afghan National and Border Police

By end-2010, a fully constituted, professional, functional and ethnically balanced Afghan National Police and Afghan Border Police with a

combined force of up to 62,000 will be able to meet the security needs of the country effectively and will be increasingly fiscally sustainable.

Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups

All illegal armed groups will be disbanded by end-2007 in all provinces.

Counter-Narcotics

By end-2010, the Government will strengthen its law enforcement capacity at both central and provincial levels, resulting in a substantial annual increase in the amount of drugs seized or destroyed and processing facilities dismantled, and in effective measures, including targeted eradication as appropriate, that contribute to the elimination of poppy cultivation.

By end-2010, the Government and neighbouring and regional governments will work together to increase coordination and mutual sharing of intelligence, with the goal of an increase in the seizure and destruction of drugs being smuggled across Afghanistan's borders and effective action against drug traffickers.

Mine Action and Ammunition

By end-2010, in line with Afghanistan's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Afghanistan's Ottawa Convention obligations, the land area contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance will be reduced by 70%; all stockpiled anti-personnel mines will be located and destroyed by end-2007; and by end-2010, all unsafe, unserviceable and surplus ammunition will be destroyed.

GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Public Administrative Reform

By end-2010, government machinery (including the number of ministries) will be restructured and rationalised to ensure a fiscally sustainable public administration; the civil service commission will be strengthened; and civil service functions will be reformed to reflect core functions and responsibilities.

A clear and transparent national appointments mechanism will be established within 6 months, applied within 12 months and fully implemented within 24 months for all senior level appointments to the central government and the judiciary, as well as for provincial governors, chiefs of police, district administrators and provincial heads of security.

By end-2006, a review of the number of administrative units and their boundaries will be undertaken with the aim of contributing to fiscal sustainability.

By end-2010, in furtherance of the work of the civil service commission, merit-based appointments, vetting procedures and performance-based reviews will be undertaken for civil service positions at all levels of government, including central government, the judiciary and police, and requisite support will be provided to build the capacity of the civil service to function effectively. Annual performance-based reviews will be undertaken for all senior staff (grade 2 and above) starting by end-2007.

Anti-Corruption

The UN Convention against Corruption will be ratified by end-2006, national legislation adapted accordingly by end-2007 and a monitoring mechanism to oversee implementation will be in place by end-2008.

The Census and Statistics

The census enumeration will be completed by end-2008 and the complete results published.

Reliable statistical baselines will be established for all quantitative benchmarks by mid-2007 and statistical capacity built to track progress against them.

National Assembly

The National Assembly will be provided with technical and administrative support by mid- 2006 to fulfil effectively its constitutionally mandated roles.

Elections

The Afghanistan Independent Electoral Commission will have the high integrity, capacity and resources to undertake elections in an increasingly fiscally sustainable manner by end-2008, with the Government of Afghanistan contributing to the extent possible to the cost of future elections from its own resources. A permanent civil and voter registry with a single national identity document will be established by end-2009.

Gender

By end-2010, the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan will be fully implemented; and, in line with Afghanistan's MDGs, female participation in all Afghan governance institutions, including elected and appointed bodies and the civil service, will be strengthened.

Rule of Law

By end-2010, the legal framework required under the constitution, including civil, criminal and commercial law, will be put in place, distributed to all judicial and legislative institutions and made available to the public.

By end-2010, functioning institutions of justice will be fully operational in each province of Afghanistan, and the average time to resolve contract disputes will be reduced as much as possible.

A review and reform of oversight procedures relating to corruption, lack of due process and miscarriage of justice will be initiated by end-2006 and fully implemented by end-2010; by end-2010, reforms will strengthen the professionalism, credibility and integrity of key institutions of the justice system (the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary, the Attorney-General's office, the Ministry of Interior and the National Directorate of Security).

By end-2010, justice infrastructure will be rehabilitated; and prisons will have separate facilities for women and juveniles.

Land Registration

A process for registration of land in all administrative units and the registration of titles will be started for all major urban areas by end-2006 and all other areas by end-2008. A fair system for settlement of land disputes will be in place by end-2007. Registration for rural land will be underway by end-2007.

Counter-Narcotics

By end-2010, the Government will increase the number of arrests and prosecutions of traffickers and corrupt officials and will improve its information base concerning those involved in the drugs trade, with a view to enhancing the selection system for national and sub-national public appointments, as part of the appointments mechanism mentioned earlier in this annex.

Human Rights

By end-2010, the Government's capacity to comply with and report on its human rights treaty obligations will be strengthened; Government security and law enforcement agencies will adopt corrective measures including codes of conduct and procedures aimed at preventing arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, extortion and illegal expropriation of property with a view to the elimination of these practices; the exercise of freedom of expression, including freedom of media, will be strengthened; human rights awareness will be included in education curricula and promoted among legislators, judicial personnel and other Government agencies, communities and the public; human rights monitoring will be carried out by the Government and independently by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and the UN will track the effectiveness of measures aimed at the protection of human rights; the AIHRC will be supported in the fulfilment of its objectives with regard to monitoring, investigation, protection and promotion of human rights.

The implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation will be completed by end-2008.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Roads

Afghanistan will have a fully upgraded and maintained ring road, as well as roads connecting the ring road to neighbouring countries by end-2008 and a fiscally sustainable system for road maintenance by end-2007.

Air Transport

By end-2010, Kabul International Airport and Herat Airport will achieve full International Civil Aviation Organisation compliance; Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar will be upgraded with runway repairs, air navigation, fire and rescue and communications equipment; seven other domestic airports will be upgraded to facilitate domestic air transportation; and air transport services and costs will be increasingly competitive with international market standards and rates.

Energy

By end-2010, electricity will reach at least 65% of households and 90% of non-residential establishments in major urban areas and at least 25% of households in rural areas; at least 75% of the costs will be recovered from users connected to the national power grid. A strategy for the development and the use of renewable energies will be developed by end- 2007.

Mining and Natural Resources

An enabling regulatory environment for profitable extraction of Afghanistan's mineral and natural resources will be created by end-2006, and by end-2010 the investment environment and infrastructure will be enhanced in order to attract domestic and foreign direct investment in this area.

Water Resource Management

Sustainable water resource management strategies and plans covering

irrigation and drinking water supply will be developed by end-2006, and irrigation investments will result in at least 30% of water coming from large waterworks by end-2010.

Urban Development

By end-2010, municipal governments will have strengthened capacity to manage urban development and to ensure that municipal services are delivered effectively, efficiently and transparently; in line with Afghanistan's MDGs, investment in water supply and sanitation will ensure that 50% of households in Kabul and 30% of households in other major urban areas will have access to piped water.

Environment

In line with Afghanistan's MDGs, environmental regulatory frameworks and management services will be established for the protection of air and water quality, waste management and pollution control, and natural resource policies will be developed and implementation started at all levels of government as well as the community level, by end-2007.

EDUCATION

Primary and Secondary Education

By end-2010, in line with Afghanistan's MDGs, net enrolment in primary school for girls and boys will be at least 60% and 75% respectively; a new curriculum will be operational in all secondary schools; female teachers will be increased by 50%; 70% of Afghanistan's teachers will have passed a competency test; and a system for assessing learning achievement such as a national testing system for students will be in place.

Higher Education

By end 2010, enrolment of students to universities will be 100,000 with at least 35% female students; and the curriculum in Afghanistan's public universities will be revised to meet the development needs of the country and private sector growth.

Skills Development

A human resource study will be completed by end-2006, and 150,000 men and women will be trained in marketable skills through public and private means by end-2010.

Afghan Cultural Heritage

A comprehensive inventory of Afghan cultural treasures will be compiled by end-2007. Measures will be taken to revive Afghan cultural heritage, to stop the illegal removal of cultural material and to restore damaged monuments and artefacts by end-2010.

HEALTH

Health and Nutrition

By end-2010, in line with Afghanistan's MDGs, the Basic Package of Health Services will be extended to cover at least 90% of the population; maternal mortality will be reduced by 15%; and full immunisation coverage for infants under-5 for vaccine-preventable diseases will be achieved and their mortality rates reduced by 20%.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture and Livestock

By end-2010, the necessary institutional, regulatory and incentive framework to increase production and productivity will be established to create an enabling environment for legal agriculture and agriculture-based rural industries, and public investment in agriculture will increase by 30 percent; particular consideration will be given to perennial horticulture, animal health and food security by instituting specialised support agencies and financial service delivery mechanisms, supporting farmers' associations, branding national products, disseminating timely price and weather-related information and statistics, providing strategic research and technical assistance and securing access to irrigation and water management systems.

Comprehensive Rural Development

By end-2010, rural development will be enhanced comprehensively for the benefit of 19 million people in over 38,000 villages; this will be achieved through the election of at least a further 14,000 voluntary community development councils in all remaining villages, promoting local governance and community empowerment; access to safe drinking water will be extended to 90% of villages and sanitation to 50%; road connectivity will reach 40% of all villages, increasing access to markets, employment and social services; 47% of villages will benefit from small-scale irrigation; 800,000 households (22% of all Afghanistan's households) will benefit from improved access to financial services; and livelihoods of at least 15% of the rural population will be supported through the provision of 91 million labour days.

Counter-Narcotics

By end-2010, the Government will design and implement programmes to achieve a sustained annual reduction in the amount of land under poppy and other drug cultivation by the strengthening and diversification of licit livelihoods and other counter-narcotics measures, as part of the overall goal of a decrease in the absolute and relative size of the drug economy in line with the Government's MDG target.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Poverty Reduction

By end-2010, in line with Afghanistan's MDGs, the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 a day will decrease by 3% per year and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger will decrease by 5% per year.

Humanitarian and Disaster Response

By end-2010, an effective system of disaster preparedness and response will be in place.

Disabled

By end-2010, increased assistance will be provided to meet the special needs of all disabled people, including their integration in society through opportunities for education and gainful employment.

Employment of Youth and Demobilised Soldiers

By end-2010, employment opportunities for youth and demobilised soldiers will be increased through special programmes.

Refugees and IDPs

By end-2010, all refugees opting to return and internally displaced persons will be provided assistance for rehabilitation and integration in their local communities; their integration will be supported by national development programmes, particularly in key areas of return.

Vulnerable Women

By end-2010, the number of female-headed households that are chronically poor will be reduced by 20%, and their employment rates will be increased by 20%.

Counter-Narcotics

By end-2010, the Government will implement programmes to reduce the demand for narcotics and provide improved treatment for drug users.

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Financial Management

By end-2007, the Government will ensure improved transparent financial management at the central and provincial levels through establishing and meeting benchmarks for financial management agreed with and monitored by the international community, including those in the anticipated Poverty

Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF). In turn, and in line with improved government accountability, donors will make more effort to increase the share of total external assistance to Afghanistan that goes to the core budget.

Domestic Revenues

Afghanistan's total domestic budgetary revenue – equivalent to 4.5% of estimated legal GDP in 1383 (2004/05) – will steadily increase and reach 8% of GDP by 1389 (2010/11). The ratio of revenue to estimated total recurrent expenditures, including estimated recurrent expenditures in the core and external development budgets, is projected to rise from 28% in 1383 (2004/05) to an estimated 58% in 1389, resulting in a continuing need, in accord with the principles in Annex II, for (1) external assistance to the core budget and (2) increasing cost-effectiveness of assistance that funds recurrent expenditure through the external development budget.

Private Sector Development and Trade

All legislation, regulations and procedures related to investment will be simplified and harmonised by end-2006 and implemented by end-2007. New business organisation laws will be tabled in the National Assembly by end-2006. The Government's strategy for divestment of state-owned enterprises will be implemented by end-2009.

Financial Services and Markets

Internationally accepted prudential regulations will be developed for all core sectors of banking and non-bank financial institutions by end-2007. The banking supervision function of Da Afghanistan Bank will be further strengthened by end-2007. Re-structuring of state-owned commercial banks will be complete by end-2007. State-owned banks that have not been re-licensed will be liquidated by end-2006.

Regional Cooperation

By end-2010, Afghanistan and its neighbours will achieve lower transit

times through Afghanistan by means of cooperative border management and other multilateral or bilateral trade and transit agreements; Afghanistan will increase the amount of electricity available through bilateral power purchase; and Afghanistan, its neighbours and countries in the region will reach agreements to enable Afghanistan to import skilled labour, and to enable Afghans to seek work in the region and send remittances home.