Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding

Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding

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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANBP</td>
<td>Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Programme</td>
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<td>AYCA</td>
<td>Afghanistan Youth Coordination Agency</td>
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<td>ANDS</td>
<td>Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy</td>
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<td>DDR</td>
<td>Demilitarization Demobilization &amp; Reintegration Program</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee for Red Cross</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NSP</td>
<td>National Solidarity Program</td>
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<td>PRTs</td>
<td>Provincial Reconstruction Teams</td>
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<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security Sector Reforms</td>
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Background Note

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, is a South Asian research and training initiative which seeks to empower new voices and build synergy between the academia, the voluntary sector and policy makers. It positions its work at the interface of gender with Security Studies, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding and uses critical and human security approaches to interrogate the parameters of the realist paradigm of International Relations, by placing people and their concerns at the centre of the security discourse. WISCOMP recognizes the importance of transforming conflictual relationships in order to build sustainable peace and consequently, dialogue projects lie at the heart of its peacebuilding approach.

WISCOMP through its various roundtables and symposia, seeks to provide a context where senior and mid career professionals along with younger entrants to the field can interact and dialogue on a range of non-violent, transformative responses to the endemic ethnic, communitarian and political conflicts particularly in the South Asian context. The expectation is that various sections of civil society, recognizing that peacebuilding is too important a task to be left to governments alone, will begin to fashion their own interventions in this area. This would, in turn, generate a series of impulses which if sustained, may well pave the way for what is now being accepted as a ‘public peace process.’ Some questions that foreground its engagements are:

- What kinds of values, relationships, capacities, roles and institutions need to be developed and nurtured in order to achieve sustainable peace and security?
- Which actors, if brought together have the ability because of their location and skills/expertise in a given setting to initiate and sustain constructive change processes?

South Asia has been the geographical area of focus for WISCOMP. Furthering its engagement with the region, the roundtable Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding was conceptualized as an important first step for
Wiscomp, to comprehend the complex ground realities in contemporary Afghanistan and the multiple actors engaged in what is now characterized broadly as “the peacebuilding” processes. The purpose of the roundtable was to enable participants to identify the current peacebuilding issues and the role of civil society initiatives, particularly initiatives by the youth in building peace. By bringing together diplomats, young Afghan and Indian students and members of international organizations and foundations who have worked in Afghanistan, the roundtable was also expected to provide a platform to share the lessons learnt from successful or thwarted peacebuilding processes in the country.

Afghanistan has been the site of protracted, violent conflict for over thirty years. Its socio economic fabric has been virtually destroyed by the long years of internecine violence. Post 9/11, it was the Bonn Agreement\(^1\) which laid out the political blueprint for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Signed in Germany in December 2001, it brought together different Afghan factions to set out a schematic roadmap and timetable for establishing peace and security, reconstructing the country, reestablishing key institutions, and protecting human rights. It also reiterated the need for international assistance in the reconstruction of the country.\(^2\)

A defining moment in the reconstruction process was the formation of the National Assembly and Provincial Councils after elections in 2005. The parliamentary election highlighted the significant strides made by Afghanistan. A UN Report noted that “[c]ivil society and the media participated actively at every step of the process, and there was a marked improvement in how government institutions managed the elections, particularly the military and the police.”\(^3\)

Despite these significant strides, there remain multiple challenges that confront the people of Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Compact

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1. See Annexure IV
of January 2006 recognizes that “security remains a fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability and development” and that it cannot be “provided by military means alone but requires good governance, justice and rule of law, reinforced by reconstruction and development.” It further highlights that “strong international engagement will continue to be required to address remaining challenges.”

In a recent speech at Washington DC, a US State Department official spoke of 26 NATO allies and 14 partners contributing forces in Afghanistan to control violence so that reconstruction work can progress. In addition to these forces, numerous international organizations, international NGOs and humanitarian agencies are working in the country. The focus of this reconstruction work is on re-building infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals as well as capacity building of human resources in different sectors including government institutions and civil society.

The building and nurturing of institutions that can provide good governance, justice and rule of law has emerged as an important point of engagement. As endorsed by the Afghanistan Compact, the emphasis is on strengthening socioeconomic foundations (such as infrastructure and natural resources, education, health, agriculture and rural development) and political frameworks (such as civil administration, rule of law, effective justice system). While ‘Peacebuilding’ as well as one of its key components, ‘reconstruction’ have become rallying points for national as well as international actors, multiple challenges have collated.

Several reports on the current situation in Afghanistan have pointed to the problems that emanate from a predominantly top-down peacebuilding approach. The Oxfam International Research Report highlights three lacunae in these processes: one, they are mostly carried out at the political level; two, they are target limited; and three, the processes are primarily concerned with peace and development.

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4 See Annexure V
5 op.cit. p.3
reconciliation at the national level and do not involve Afghan communities in building and sustaining peace. They only marginally, indirectly, or partially concern the people of Afghanistan. The capacity of Afghan communities to resolve their own disputes, and build and sustain peace is largely neglected.

It further states that there have been attempts at a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding and with sufficient resources and political will, such initiatives have the potential to improve security. Thus an important dimension that is probably underemphasized in this reconstruction framework is the ‘re’building of trust and human relationships across the myriad divisions of conflict.  

John Paul Lederach, a pioneer of peacebuilding theory, places relationships at the centre of peacebuilding processes. He identifies the ‘interdependence gap’ as a major chasm in peacebuilding practices that contributes to recurring cycles of violence in areas of protracted conflicts. Lederach stresses on the need to work with counterparts and “enemies” across various faultlines to build and strengthen relationships. Harold Saunders who designed the conceptual framework of ‘sustained dialogue’ avers that there are certain things that governments can do, and there are others that citizens can. Recognizing the human dimension of conflicts, Saunders emphasizes that only human beings can transform conflictual relationships.

The centrality of human relationships and the capacity of citizens to transform conflictual relationships open up creative spaces for engagement in peacebuilding processes. It is in this context that we seek to explore the possibilities of peacebuilding for the youth in Afghanistan.

Several youth organizations have emerged in Afghanistan over the last three decades. However, not many have focused on the role of youth in the peacebuilding processes. In countries that are emerging

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from violent conflict/war, youth are often seen as a part of the problem and not as a part of the solution. Lack of viable means of participation in the political processes leads to loss of potential that the youth hold, and can sometimes lead to their diversion into extremists groups. Uprooted, alienated and unemployed youth are seen as ready recruits for groups that have violent agendas. However, once relevant skills, training and motivation are provided, the youth can effectively and constructively engage in their communities and build relationships.\textsuperscript{10}

The roundtable \textit{Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding}, attempted to highlight the hitherto underemphasized possibilities of engaging the youth in peacebuilding processes in Afghanistan and explored the possibilities of initiating and sustaining multi-level dialogues through which the goals of sustainable peace and security could be established.

The roundtable sought to:

- Understand the current ground realities in Afghanistan through the lens of human security.
- Explore possibilities for collaboration between the youth of India and Afghanistan.
- Evaluate the challenges to the involvement of youth in the peacebuilding process and explore ways of overcoming these challenges.
- Identify ways in which the youth could impact the processes of peacebuilding both within Afghanistan and outside, through countries that are providing aid and are engaged in the processes of reconstruction.

An important element of peacebuilding, relates to the ability of human beings and states to take actions that address immediate

security needs while focusing on long term goals. It involves a process where people explore options for responding to the challenges of the present, while being guided by the possibilities and hopes for the future.\textsuperscript{11} It is WISCOMP’s hope that insights generated at this Roundtable will illuminate many possibilities for collaboration between youth that will not only invigorate the ongoing processes but also create new partnerships for peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

The roundtable *Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding*, was conceptualized as an important first step for WISCOMP to comprehend the complex ground realities in contemporary Afghanistan and the multiple actors engaged in what is characterized broadly as peacebuilding processes.

Introducing the work of WISCOMP, Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, elaborated that under the aegis of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, WISCOMP was committed to providing the intellectual, psychological and spiritual space to contribute to the theory and practice of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Reiterating the commitment of WISCOMP, to engender reasoned dialogue, on issues impacting the civic sphere, Gopinath highlighted that the roundtable was an attempt to look at visions of public peace processes, where genuine spaces for dialogue between governments, academia and civil society groups could open up the possibilities for meaningful collaborations. It was through such processes that one could mark the movement from formalistic, notional democracies to more substantive participatory ones. Pointing to the contemporary conceptions of democracy and justice that underscore the need for sustaining social relationships, governed by terms and conditions freely acceptable to people affected by those relationships, Gopinath asserted that the search for common ground by acknowledging differences and building on commonalities was by no means a linear progression. It required a sustained focus on developing option generating capacities with the ability to imagine people in an inclusive and expandable web of relationships. This required a fundamental faith in the generative act of engaging in redemptive rather than repetitive history making and above all courage and acceptance of the risks involved for practitioners of conflict transformation.

She asserted that Afghanistan had been part of the Indian consciousness for centuries. Stories of the *Kabuliwala* and like,

\[\text{op.cit.}\]
recounting tales of a people of honor, dignity, rare courage, loyalty and capable of friendship, had been narrated and passed on to children for generations. However, the presence of many Afghans in India in the recent past had not translated into deeper interaction and engagement at the social level. Gopinath hoped that insights generated at the roundtable would illuminate possibilities for collaboration between the youth. It would invigorate the ongoing processes and also create new partnerships, a new vocabulary for peacebuilding, not only for Afghanistan but the South Asian region as a whole.

Referring to the changing images of Afghanistan – from those of humanity and unconquered landscapes, to the present day images of violence, devastation, cruelty and desolation, she asserted that the complex realities of Afghanistan required that all in the region acted and worked in concert. She flagged off the discussion by posing three important questions:

• What do the Afghan people owe to themselves?
• What do the countries of our region owe to Afghanistan?
• What can the world at large do to restore to a unique people the legacy of a larger humanity, which really was their heritage?

Recounting the story of Mullah Nasruddin, who was looking for his lost key; when asked by a passerby why he was looking for the key outside when he had lost it inside his house, Nasruddin stoically replied, there was more light outside. Gopinath expressed hope that the youth would be pathfinders, lead the way – taking that leap of faith – maybe a leap in the dark – for the reemergence of Afghanistan.

Gopinath reiterated that an important element of peacebuilding relayed the abilities of human beings and states, to take action, in a manner which addressed not only the immediate needs, but also envisioned a future where the structural causes of conflict could be redressed. This initiative too reflected a belief that without consistent and unfettered introspection and engagement, the cultures of militarism in our world may overpower and stifle voices of dialogue and reconciliation. It was therefore important to initiate and sustain conversations that would yield a dialogic and
experiential mindfulness of non violent practices and norms. She affirmed that one had to be “open to both synchronicity as well as serendipity with the motivation that would allow for several unintended unfoldings” and concluded with the hope that a better future awaited Afghanistan and that it would reemerge, marking what Toynbee labeled a “roundabout of history.”
I

Negotiating Peace: Identifying the Issues

We feel disfavor for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home in this fragile, broken time of transition.... We ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin “realities.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

The purpose of the roundtable was to enable participants to identify the current challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding in Afghanistan and the role of civil society initiatives, particularly initiatives by the youth in this area. Like ‘women’ the term ‘youth’ does not signify a monolithic block or an undifferentiated category. Evidently the ability and motivation of all sections of the youth can not be uniform and their involvement with peacebuilding initiatives will depend on a multitude of factors significant among which are gender, class, ethnicity, urban-rural location, access to education and means of livelihood. The opening session of the roundtable, Perspectives from Afghanistan, sought to chart the potentialities for peacebuilding for Afghan youth in the country and share the initiatives for peace that the youth have been involved in after the fall of the Taliban regime. It also aimed to focus on some opportunities that could be explored to strengthen ties between youth from India and Afghanistan as a step towards generating collaborative ventures in the area of peacebuilding.

The first presentation by Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, Director, Regional Studies Centre of Afghanistan explored the importance of thinking about peace and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. He began by mapping some of the major achievements made by the country in the last few years. Significant among these were the strides in the field of education.

More than 81,000 students completed their high school education in the year 2007. However, Liwal stated that despite this success

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story at the level of elementary and secondary education, a similar success had not been registered at the higher educational level. Only 31,000 of the 81,000 students who had completed high school were able to join college. Referring to the inability of the existing higher educational institutions to absorb these students, he highlighted thus some of the problems emanating from such uneven infrastructural developments at various levels.

He averred that students who were studying in other countries like India, did not have to face such problems. Outlining the broader possibilities for youth in higher educational institutions abroad, he argued that their relatively advantageous position left them better equipped to deal with the challenges of reconstruction and work in the area of peacebuilding. He therefore stressed the need for the Afghan students to explore such opportunities. It was important that such students gain expertise not only in their specific subjects but also from the larger environment of the host country. Referring to certain similarities between Afghanistan and India, especially diversity of religion, ethnicity, language, he encouraged the Afghan youth in India to take back home the culture of work that, he felt, was prevalent in the latter.

Further exalting the need for capacity building and specialized training as crucial to the peacebuilding processes, he argued that it was imperative to translate capacities and specialized knowledge/skills into more concrete programs for action including delivery of services. The lack of specialized skills and knowledge was highlighted as one of the largest impediments in the reconstruction efforts. It was therefore important for the youth to return to Afghanistan and contribute to the country’s reconstruction through their specializations and expertise in different areas of work. He further averred that meeting in a foreign land as Afghan students and not as members of different ethnic groups like, Hazara or

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15 Article four, Chapter One of the Afghan Constitution states that “The nation of Afghanistan shall be comprised of Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujar, Brahwui and other tribes.” Available at <http://www.president.gov.af/english/constitution.mspx>
Pashtun, could help in fostering and strengthening their national identity. Such neutral spaces could be better used to develop their skills and on returning to Afghanistan, he asserted that they should optimally utilize their learnings by maximizing their contributions to the reconstruction processes.

While it was important to learn from other countries, and benefit from the different approaches available in the region, Liwal cautioned that these approaches can not be transported to the Afghan region without being suitably modified and contextualized to the specificities of Afghanistan. He pointed out that despite the presence of many civil society and youth organizations in Afghanistan, there were certain roadblocks – predominant among them was the lack of an academic and practical approach towards bringing the youth together. It was therefore important to distinguish between what was applicable and what was not.

Pointing to the strategic location of Afghanistan, he asserted that the challenges of reconstruction in the country were not challenges for Afghanistan alone, but challenges for the entire region. If Afghanistan remained inflicted by violent conflict and war, the region as a whole would remain affected. He stressed, “peacebuilding, ending conflict and bringing peace, was the responsibility of each one of us in the world and not simply of those affected directly in Afghanistan”. Liwal asserted the importance for all in the region as well as outside to act and work in concert.

Abas Baser, Second Secretary, Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi in his presentation shared the advances made by Afghanistan since 2001, and also highlighted the major challenges like terrorism, corruption and narcotics that plagued the country.

October 2001 ushered in a new chapter in the history of the Afghan people. Post 2001, Afghanistan had witnessed remarkable feats in areas of state building, reconstruction and development. The presentation chalked out the efforts being made by the Government to strengthen the political and economic structures and deepen democracy in the country. With active assistance from the international community and building on these partnerships,
Afghanistan had made commendable efforts towards the achievement and realization of the major goals of the Bonn Agreement. A new constitution enshrining the values and ideas of Afghans, Islam and democracy was adopted and signed by President Hamid Karzai in 2004. Presidential and parliamentary elections were successfully held and Afghans were gradually taking bold steps towards strengthening democracy.

Coming to terms with its history of various conflicts over the last twenty five years, the government was striving hard to rebuild not only the political and social institutions of the state, but also working on rebuilding the physical infrastructure and economic foundation of the country. The presentation highlighted that the government in Afghanistan was working diligently to strengthen the economy by creating an enabling environment for businesses to grow and for farmers to produce and market their products. The progress made was manifest in the steady growth of the national economy. Over the last four and half years, the country had enjoyed a total GDP growth of 85%, while the rate of inflation was around 10%. Private sector investment was being solicited, as also Foreign Direct Investment. One of the prime concerns for the government was macro economic stability and which was being sought through debt relief from international creditors through the Paris Club Arrangement.\(^{16}\)

Despite the Taliban uprising, Afghanistan had enjoyed strong economic growth and trade with its neighbors. Baser pointed out that there was tremendous increase in trade in the last few years. Trade with Iran for instance had increased from $ 10 million, a few years ago to nearly $500 million; trade with Pakistan had jumped from $30 million a year during the Taliban era to $1.4 billion annually.

Further stressing on the importance of strengthening ties with other countries, he averred that in continuation of its efforts towards

\(^{16}\) Paris Club Creditors Agree on Substantial Debt Relief for Afghanistan, Press Release, 19 July 2006
regional and international economic cooperation, Afghanistan enjoyed the membership of Economic Cooperation Organization, Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation, Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Afghanistan Contact Group, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and had achieved the status of Observer at the World Trade Organization.

On the social front, there had been substantial increase in the number of children going to school which was over 6 million; the number of people who had completed high school and registered for college was also escalating. Further the number of universities had increased from five in 2004 to twenty in 2008. Despite the lack of basic facilities in many schools across the country, Baser commended the commitment of the Afghan people towards education and their thirst for knowledge. Under the Afghan National Solidarity Program (NSP), reconstruction projects had been started in over 20,000 villages across Afghanistan. The average per capita income had increased to $350 per person, and health services covered 80% of the population, resulting in better standard of living.

Significant strides had also been taken towards police and armed forces reforms, to build the capacity of the Afghan state to combat and counter security threats sans foreign support.  

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17 A general outline of the security sector reform agenda for Afghanistan was sketched at the Tokyo donor conference in January 2002. The Geneva donors’ conferences (in April and May 2002) resulted in the establishment of a multi-sectoral donor support scheme, in which individual donors were allocated responsibility for overseeing each of the five pillars of the Security Sector Reform (SSR): the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-combatants (led by Japan); Military Reform (led by the United States); Police Reform (led by Germany); Judicial Reform (led by Italy); and Counter-Narcotics (led by the United Kingdom). See “Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan”, available at: <http://www.bicc.de/ssr_gtz/pdf/afghanistan.pdf>

For Afghan Government’s targets for SSR under various programs on National Defense, Internal Security & Law Enforcement, Disbanding Illegal Armed Groups and De-Mining, see <http://www.president.gov.af/english/np/security.mspx>

However, there were many challenges, which required sustained commitment, attention and resources from different actors. Baser highlighted international terrorism, narcotics and corruption as some of the major challenges and despite police and armed forces reforms, “security” remained one of the central concerns for the country.

Reiterating the need for sustained international assistance in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Baser pointed out that in comparison to other countries/regions like Kosovo, East Timor and Bosnia, the amount of international assistance to Afghanistan had been far less. Furthermore the channeling of large amounts of aid through NGOs resulted in duplication, mismanagement and in some cases, corruption on the ground. Referring to the London Conference where a large number of participants had recognized the urgent need for channeling assistance via the Afghan government, Baser asserted the need for better coordination amongst international partners as well as the national government in optimally using international aid. He clarified that the Afghan government recognized the problems of state control of economic activities and was conscious of delineating its engagement to policy making, regulating and monitoring the economic activities rather than providing and managing them in entirety.

The thrust of the government’s work was economic development, building strong institutions like bureaucracy, extending social services to the rural areas and capacity building to deepen democracy and good governance in the country. Given its unique geographical location as the crossroad of different regions, Baser pointed out that the government was keen to exploit the many untapped and untouched potential such as mineral resources, agricultural products, tourism, among others. He avowed that the government of Afghanistan was committed and determined to convert the country’s latent potential into “active sources for the country’s prosperity as well as the region”.

The third presentation was made by Jawed Nader, a youth leader from Afghanistan. Anchoring his presentation on a deeper
understanding of structural violence,\textsuperscript{18} Nader laid out some of the major challenges and opportunities for youth in peacebuilding, both within and outside Afghanistan.

Nader began with the assertion that the role of youth in societal transformation was an accredited fact. However in conflict areas, the potential of the youth in peacebuilding as well as its opposite – the possibility of driving nations back into warfare – had been established.\textsuperscript{19} In Afghanistan, he asserted, given their significant numbers and energy, the youth could play one of the principal roles in the ongoing processes of reconstruction. 68\% of the Afghan population consisted of people under the age of 25, making the youth the largest section of the Afghan population, outnumbering other groups drawn from linguistic, ethnic or even regional affiliations.\textsuperscript{20} However, the long drawn conflict-the civil strife, the Soviet invasion and the Taliban insurgency – had grave consequences for the youth. The protracted conflict and the induction of the youth into the war as soldiers, suicide attackers, had in a sense incapacitated the youth, preventing them from proactively engaging in peacebuilding. Categorized as the \textit{lost generation} in Afghanistan, the youth had for decades suffered not

\textsuperscript{18} Structural violence, a term which was first used in the 1970s and which has commonly been ascribed to Johan Galtung, denotes a form of violence which corresponds with the systematic ways in which a given social structure or social institution kills people slowly by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Institutionalized elitism, ethnocentrism, classism, racism, sexism, nationalism, heterosexism and ageism are just some examples of structural violence. Life spans are reduced when people are socially dominated, politically oppressed, or economically exploited. Structural violence and direct violence are highly interdependent. Structural violence inevitably produces conflict and often direct violence including family violence, racial violence, hate crimes, terrorism, genocide, and war. See Johan Galtung, Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, \textit{Journal of Peace Research}, vol. 6, no. 3, 1969, pp. 167-191.


\textsuperscript{20} UN classifies people in the age group of 15-24 years as youth. Jawed Nader pointed out in his presentation that the definition of youth in Afghanistan does not conform to international standards. In Afghanistan, people in the age group of 12-18 years are referred to as the \textit{Naujawans}, while people from 18-30 years are referred to as the youth/ \textit{jawans}. 

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only from the protracted conflict, but concurrently grappled with the ramifications of conservative social bindings and the lack of opportunity in educational as well as economic sectors.

Despite certain significant strides in the field of education, especially school education, numerous challenges remained. As a result of the prevailing insecurity, particularly in the rural areas, many parents were discouraged from sending their children to schools. The curriculum in schools was outdated and even bare necessities like chalks, blackboards and well-trained teachers were lacking. Further, the low salaries acted as deterrent to good teachers who sought better and productive jobs, with better salaries. Only 34-5% of the youth were able to read and write and a mere 0.18% of the Afghan population had access to higher education.\(^\text{21}\)

Despite revocation of the ban on girls attending schools\(^\text{22}\), the insecure environment made the girl child vulnerable to atrocities like kidnappings, attacks, forced marriages and rapes. Nader pointed out that UNICEF had declared the Afghan rural area as the worst for a girl child. Women in Afghanistan were born and raised with intrinsic discrimination – naming them *Khatema*, or *Yagona*, meaning the end or the only one, to stop the birth of other girls – was common practice. Their subordinate status in society was reflected in the low rate of female literacy, which bordered around 14%. Women’s health was also an area of concern. One out of seven women died during childbirth. Pregnancy was the leading cause of death among young teenage girls, resulting from complications during childbirth or unsafe abortions. Afghanistan had the highest rate of maternal mortality and the second highest rate of infant mortality. Barring a few urban centers like Herat, Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, and some other cities, there was a complete lack of sports and recreational facilities for girls. He remarked that


women were used as tools of “conflict resolution” in many villages. Sometimes given away to settle village disputes-the rate of self-immolation among the young girls was soaring, especially in the western provinces.

Poverty was on the incline with escalating unemployment, especially in the rural areas. Citing a report by the International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC), Nader stated that 26% of the people between 18-25 years were unemployed in Afghanistan. Asserting that the actual rate of unemployment in Afghanistan was much higher, Nader highlighted that young people, stricken by poverty were forced into labor intensive jobs like carpet weaving or opium production. 23 50,000 worked as child laborers or beggars on the streets of the cities in Afghanistan, of which 37,000 were in Kabul alone. One out of four 13-14 year olds in Kabul was a street kid.

Moreover, the youth were rarely positioned as significant actors in peacebuilding processes, and mainly seen as possible recruits to various terrorist organizations. Poverty and unemployment propelled their induction into such activities. 70% of the mobilized soldiers in the Demilitarization, Demobilization & Reintegration Program (DDR) 24 were below 26; 75,000 child soldiers were under the age of 18 25, and the average age of a suicide bomber was 23 years. 26 Nader pointed out that one of the major reasons for the induction of very young children into terrorist organizations was the difficulty security forces faced in establishing their identity.

Apart from grave violations like slavery, exploitation, kidnapping, domestic abuse, physical torture, trafficking, forced prostitution,
forced marriages, the patriarchal and conservative social structures perpetuated a certain **culture of silence** amongst the young, especially girls. Nader argued that these social, cultural mores of a patriarchal and hierarchical society drove the youth to **self censorship, diffidence** and **psychological marginalization**. The socially imposed silence incapacitated the youth from expressing themselves, even in decisions directly impacting them like career, marriage, etc. This resulted in low political and social engagement, apathy, unproductive/destructive lifestyles and lack of critical thinking. One of the fundamental challenges then was **breaking this silence** and encouraging the youth to participate in the social and political affairs of the country.

The youth to some extent, had been able to overcome some of these barriers in the recent past to play a more active role. This was palpable in the rise of the number of youth organizations in the country, which undertook the task of increasing awareness, promoting volunteerism for peace and development of the country and exploiting the potential of the youth for reconstruction and peacebuilding. One of the major initiatives which vitalized the process was the organization of the First Afghan Youth Civil Society Conference in Kabul in the year 2002. It included not only senior government officials and representatives from the 34 provinces but also young Afghans from the diaspora settled in countries like Germany, Canada, Australia etc. This conference laid out the roadmap for youth activism in Afghanistan, which included the proposal for setting up the Afghanistan Youth Coordination Agency (AYCA) that could build networks amongst various youth groups. Following this, regional conferences were organized in Herat and Bamian in 2004-05. However the AYCA could not continue, as ethnic/regional/linguistic divides impeded the youth from working together under its umbrella.

National projects on the youth were a cross-cutting theme under the current development framework. The Millennium Development Goals of Afghanistan (2005), Afghanistan Compact (2006) and

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27 In 2003, Afghan Civil Society Foundation carried out a mapping of the youth organizations in Afghanistan, the first and most comprehensive one of its time. Of the 148 youth organizations surveyed, a vast majority of them prioritized the education sector. See Annexure VI.
Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy (2008) all endorsed the predominant role of the youth. Another significant project underway in Afghanistan was one where eight ministries of the government were working in collaboration with nine UN Agencies to strengthen the capacity of governments to respond to the needs of the youth in the country, promote non formal education, engage youth in governance and development and promote voluntarism for peace and development.

However an unfortunate development, Nader pointed out, was the gradual de-prioritization of youth affairs within the government. While the government had started a Ministry for Youth affairs, in the present day it was working as a Deputy Ministry under the tutelage of the Ministry of Culture and Information. The government had also developed the National Youth Strategy at the 2002 Conference, but lack of adequate resources constrained its efforts. They were now working on a possible Independent Commission of Youth directly under the President.

Despite some success, the potential of the youth was not being fully tapped. Nader asserted that there were varied ways in which the youth could participate, partake and contribute more productively. The foremost task was to bring the youth together in ways to cull imaginings beyond regional, provincial, ethnic, linguistic lines and propel their energies towards a secure and vibrant future.
Whereas strategy is only concerned with the problem of winning military victory, grand strategy must take the longer view – for its problem is the winning of the peace. Such an order of thought is not a matter of “putting the cart before the horse,” but of being clear where the horse and the cart are going.

B.H. Liddell Hart

As a follow up to the commitment made after the Bonn Agreement, the international community brought together different Afghan factions to set out a roadmap and timetable for establishing peace and security, reconstructing the country, reestablishing key institutions and protecting human rights. Countries such as India which had long historical relations with Afghanistan were instrumental in extending assistance towards reconstruction and rebuilding of infrastructure and human capacity. The second session of the roundtable discussion titled *Challenges and Possibilities for Peacebuilding in Afghanistan* focused on the regional and the international efforts especially India’s role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Some of the central questions foregrounded in the session were:

- What was India’s role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan?
- What were the challenges of working in Afghanistan?
- What were the opportunities for future peacebuilding processes?
- What could be the role of youth from both countries in terms of peacebuilding?

I.P Khosla, Member of the Board of Directors, Indo-Afghan Foundation in his presentation sought an evaluation of the reconstruction processes in Afghanistan through the lens of the “strategic interests” of various international actors like India and USA in furthering the “interests of Afghans in peace.”
Some of the questions that the presentation explored were:

- What were the possibilities of reconciling conflicting interests of national as well as international actors in Afghanistan?
- What were the possibilities of peace in Afghanistan in the context of continuing foreign presence in the country?

Khosla underscored that analysis of the reconstruction processes must not be limited to an evaluation of “successes” in Afghanistan in the last few years. It was important to measure these successes, by placing them within the larger violence marred socio-political context. He further cautioned that “facts” and “statistics” being filtered by the media from Afghanistan must not be endorsed as neutral indicators. Elucidating these dual and concurrent processes of opportunities and obstacles, Khosla pointed out that on one side, Afghanistan was witnessing tremendous progress in the educational sector, especially with the proliferation of schools/universities; on the other side, the country was dealing with spiralling violence and escalating levels of narcotics production. It was thus important to assess the reconstruction processes through these varied and contradictory developments that were underway in Afghanistan.

He drew attention to three different responses to elucidate the ongoing reconstruction processes in Afghanistan – first, a solely Afghan solution, second, the international solution and third, a regional solution.

Explicating the first response, Khosla argued that it was highly impractical to think in terms of a purely Afghan solution. In the last 25-30 years, the people of Afghanistan had been pushed into strengthening their ethnic identities contra their national identity. This had turned intra-Afghan relationships into conflictual ones, where delineation of identities on ethnic lines had become fundamental – it was one’s identity as Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara or Uzbek that took precedence over the Afghan identity. Given such inter group dynamics, it was very difficult to bring in the discourse of nation building, especially if one were to understand nation building as precipitating the need to move beyond ethnic or regional identities to a national one.
As far as the second response, i.e. the international solution was concerned, Khosla argued that it was important to understand the varied ‘interests’ international actors had in the ‘reconstruction’ of Afghanistan. He avowed that neither did all these interests correspond, nor did all actors necessarily have an interest in ‘peace’. In the present day when the international community was being led by the USA, Khosla argued, assessing the interests of other actors like the EU, Germany etc in Afghanistan, if USA were to rescind, would be difficult.

The American intervention in Afghanistan itself was hinged on two distinctive and different interests. One was to build up President Karzai’s position – his political, military and other powers, while the other was its overarching concern apropos international terrorism and the search for Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar. The course taken to embolden these interests were evidently different and opposed. The United States’ effort to locate Bin Laden and Omar was taking it in a direction away from that, which would bring in more stability/strength to the central government. Khosla argued that in terms of its real focus, it was evident that location and elimination of the Al Qaeda was crucial to the success of USA’s war against international terrorism. He thus prodded the participants to evaluate and assess the possibilities of establishing ‘peace’ in Afghanistan in this context.

Expounding the third response, i.e. the feasibility of harnessing a regional solution, he highlighted that it would require the three Central Asian states neighbouring Afghanistan in the north plus Iran, Pakistan, and India to work in concert. An important question that would guide the viability of a regional solution was what ‘interests’ each regional actor had in Afghanistan. He argued that Pakistan had a very specific type of interest in Afghanistan, acknowledged and endorsed by both the political as well as the military leadership in the language of strategic depth. India too was crucial to this ‘regional effort’, given its involvement in the region as a whole. The viability of such a response would also be determined to a great extent by the possibility of India and Pakistan

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28 Strategic depth is a term in military literature that refers, broadly speaking, to the distances between the front lines or battle sectors and the combatants’ industrial core areas, capital cities, heartlands, and other key centers of population or military production.
working ‘together’. Citing the example of Africa, where different African nations came together to fathom a regional solution for West Africa, he expressed hope in the possibility of carting out a regional solution in South Asia, as well. Despite the West African response being a moderately effective and temporary one, it was a good precedent to follow to devise a response from the regional actors sans the influence of the non regional ones. However, he reminded that a regional solution would take time to develop, as even talking about ‘peace’ in the coming five-six years might be premature given the persistence of violence in Afghanistan.

As far as the possibilities for youth in peacebuilding were concerned, Khosla averred that these possibilities were limited in a certain sense but it was important to strengthen the collaborative ties between the youth of these countries. Given that there were immense similarities in social and cultural mores of India and Afghanistan, he stressed on the need to encourage more and more Afghan students to come to India and foster and develop the collaborative potential.

The second presentation by T.C.A Raghavan, Joint Secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran) Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, explored the following questions:

- What was India’s reconstruction program in Afghanistan?
- Was there an Indian perspective on Afghanistan?
- What was the role of Afghan students in India and what were the contributions they could make to the peacebuilding process?

Raghavan expounded that the needs in Afghanistan were very large. However, India’s contribution to the reconstruction process was not commensurate with such large requirements and its efforts were limited to four or five principal areas.

29 The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen West African countries, founded on May 28, 1975 with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos. Its mission is to promote economic integration. It was founded to achieve “collective self-sufficiency” for the member states by means of economic and monetary union creating a single large trading bloc. See E. Aryeetey, Regional Integration in West Africa, OECD Development Centre Technical Paper no. 170, 2001.
Terming India’s contribution as **modest yet significant**, he pointed out that the main areas of focus were:

- firstly, the power sector, where programs for building transmission lines, hydro-electric projects had been initiated;
- secondly, infrastructure, especially the construction of roads and buildings including the Parliament building in Kabul;
- thirdly, health sector and;
- fourthly, education and capacity building.

The Indian assistance program also included building infrastructure for agriculture and commerce. Raghavan pointed out that in a very successful program, the Indian government completed work on a cold storage in Kandahar, which facilitated the export of pomegranates to Pakistan and Dubai, abating the crisis that farmers in the region faced the year round.

India also had medical missions in five parts of Afghanistan. While the primary work was being done in collaboration with the Central Government, the Indian government was involved in certain other smaller district level and provincial level health clinics.

Another area where India was making significant contribution was the large sector of education and capacity building. Asserting that this was the most important area of engagement, the Indian government made available approximately five hundred scholarships for Afghan students annually for graduate level studies in India; in addition, another five hundred scholarships for specialized courses ranging from 3-4 months up to about 2-3 years were extended. The Indian Government was also involved in building schools in different provinces. To ensure higher levels of participation and attendance in schools, programs on ‘school feedings’ had been started in collaboration with the World Food Program, through which protein-enriched biscuits were distributed to every school-going child in Afghanistan. Most of Afghanistan barring a few provinces around Kabul was covered through this program.

Drawing out the distinctive features of India’s assistance program in Afghanistan, Raghavan averred that it was spread all over
Afghanistan and not concentrated in any one particular region. Despite facing some problems in the South and the East due to a perilous security situation, projects continued. India was also engaged in small development projects through which provincial governments were extended budgetary support for specific projects that needed to be initiated at the local levels like veterinary clinics, polyclinics, girls’ schools, hostels, orphanages, etc. A significant flagship project that was underway (set up with the help of an Indian organization called SEWA from Ahmedabad, Gujarat) involved training Afghan women to become trainers for developing certain household and cottage industries in Afghanistan.\(^{30}\)

The gestation period of these smaller development projects was shorter as compared to the larger infrastructure related projects and therefore it yielded quicker as well as more cost effective results.

Another distinctive feature of the Indian assistance program was its concurrence with the priorities of the Afghan government itself—projects were designed in sync with the priorities set by the various ministries and departments, or different political-levels. Raghavan asserted that the design of the assistance program was not based on prescriptive suggestions or solutions offered by the Indian government but was devised to strengthen the priorities of the Afghan government itself. He pointed out that the Indian reconstruction program in Afghanistan was therefore not reflective of ‘a’ perspective that the Indian government had vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

In terms of challenges, Raghavan pointed that apart from security, a major challenge was the lack of transit. The lack of transit through Pakistan compelled the Indian government to take a more cumbersome route via Iran. This was a major hold-up especially for the infrastructural projects, for which equipment had to be

\(^{30}\) During the discussion, Mondira Dutta, Professor, JNU pointed out that in addition to SEWA, an NGO headed by Bunker Roy called Barefoot College in Tilonia, Rajasthan, was engaged in training Afghan women to become solar engineers. These Afghan women returned to their provinces in Afghanistan to practise the implementation and utilization of solar energy for their daily requirements and they were also further training people from their village communities.
shipped to Bandar Abbas in Iran, from where it was transported by road to the Afghanistan border and then distributed further. Deterioration in the security situation in some parts of eastern and southern Afghanistan further impeded the transference. Highlighting these problems, Raghavan said that a transmission line, for which heavy equipment could not be sent by road, the Indian government proposed to carry out one of the largest airlifts in history whereby an entire power station would be airlifted to Afghanistan.

Further, the difference between the Indian perspective and the Western perspective emanated from the similarities in the nature of problems plaguing both the countries. Raghavan highlighted that India’s own problems enabled a greater understanding of the complexity of the situation in Afghanistan especially those emanating from differences of culture, language and ethnicity amongst people.

Raghavan further stressed on the need for international actors involved in the reconstruction processes in Afghanistan to be lenient in their measurement of the successes as well as patient in their assessment of time-frames to garner tangible results. Given the range of problems that persisted in the country from gender issues, education, health, to insurgencies, terrorism, corruption, and drugs, the reconstruction process required a long term commitment from the international community.

Further the grave security situation that prevailed, elicited the need to accentuate the positive developments that had taken place over the last few years. Raghavan pointed out that given that these achievements had been compressed into a time-frame of only four or five years, the efforts were quite commendable and laudatory, especially the expansions in the educational sector and the primary health care system.

While he cautioned the international community to be chary of overloading the agenda with prescriptive solutions, he accepted that it was important that the international actors engaged in Afghanistan delineated their role as supportive. The important question in this context was whether the direction the Afghanistan government was taking was the right one or not? The complex
situation and the multiplicity of problems like corruption, nepotism, drugs, and human rights violations further endorsed the need for strong institution building in Afghanistan. Raghavan stated that the central concern was ensuring that tangential issues did not over-determine the overall direction of the political process. It was important to ascertain that the internal political process and institutions were in place and these institutions had the flexibility to accommodate different often conflicting interests.

Some of the central concerns that emerged from the presentation were:

- Reconstruction was a time taking process and the international community must not expect quick results.
- Solutions from the international community must not be imposed; they have to emanate from the people of Afghanistan.
- It was important to assess whether the direction in which the political process was going was the right one or not.

In the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) played an important role in penetrating the local structures for reconstruction of provinces. It was therefore important to understand the mechanism of their operations, and measures these institutions had taken in order to be successful. Germany was one of the significant actors in these processes. The third presentation by Philipp Ackermann, Minister Councillor at the German Embassy in New Delhi sought to extend the focus on the international involvement in Afghanistan, especially the role of PRTs in peacebuilding as well as the impact of these PRTs in Afghanistan.

Countering the argument that reconstruction of Afghanistan was an American project, Ackermann asserted that the perception of Afghanistan being a western exercise was misplaced. The reconstruction processes underway in Afghanistan were sustained by the international community as a whole. While the security question was dominated by NATO, the reconstruction effort was an international affair. Ackermann underscored that never in history had the international community engaged so decisively and profoundly in one country with the intent of “getting it back on track.” As a world project, Afghanistan was in fact the first of its kind.
Reiterating that the reconstruction of Afghanistan was indubitably an international community effort, Ackermann highlighted the remarkable achievements made in Afghanistan over the last 5 years. It was important to recognize that the commitment towards reconstruction and peacebuilding was a long term one. He argued that the international presence in Afghanistan was of utmost importance, especially in the security sector and it was crucial for the different countries involved in reconstruction to validate the need for a sustained and enduring engagement that may range from fifteen to twenty years.

It was imperative within democratic contexts to consistently and periodically justify to its electorate, prolonged engagement in countries like Afghanistan. Reflecting on the situation in Germany, Ackermann stated that in Germany, Afghanistan was not a simple foreign policy issue concerning only the diplomatic and political entourage. It had become a weighty topic in public debates and discussion, as “every German had an opinion on Afghanistan – a country 6000km away from home had become a predominant concern for the entire nation.” He remarked that the situation was similar in countries like Holland and Canada where a lively public debate on Afghanistan was on.

Explicating the concept of the PRTs in Afghanistan and its history, Ackermann pointed out that the idea of PRTs was principally an American one. Building on a more nuanced understanding of reconstruction and peacebuilding, where reconstruction work did not commence post the establishment of peace and security, the strain to organize PRTs followed an understanding that reconstruction and security must be parallel exercises. There was an endorsement of the need to have military dispatches alongside efforts for reconstruction involving civilians.

The western partners especially the NATO members furthered the need to confer a national stamp to these PRTs. Eighteen countries had PRTs in Afghanistan and each of these countries designed and conceptualized the PRTs differently. All PRTs therefore had a distinctive design, making it a tailor made exercise for the particular province it covered.

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Ackermann argued that the idea of PRTs bearing a national stamp had its own share of disadvantages; primary among them was the lack of coordination. For e.g. in Mazar-i-Sharif there were five different PRTs – one Swedish, one Norwegian, one Hungarian and two German – and they were all working in different ways. This world project character thus threw up major problems, primarily in terms of coordination amongst the different international actors. Ackermann pointed out that it was important for the international actors to coordinate with each other, travel to each other’s countries with their Afghan partners to facilitate better understanding of the issues compounding in Afghanistan.

Elaborating the nature of Germany’s involvement in the reconstruction process at both military and financial levels, Ackermann stated that the government was committed to a prolonged involvement in Afghanistan. He affirmed that for the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the word reconstruction was extremely vital. There was one military leader and one civilian leader. The military leader was responsible for the military staff and the maintenance of stability and peace in the province. The civilian leader was responsible for the civilian reconstruction efforts in the province and also acted as the link between the Afghan provincial government and the military as well as the foreign military and administration. He highlighted that this design was novel in its coalescing of military and civilian efforts as against the traditional and staunch separation of the two, where military tasks like establishing security were separate from civilian tasks like reconstruction and development.

Reconstruction efforts covered almost every aspect from long term aid for power and electricity, infrastructure and roads to building bridges, water supply etc. The focus was on three fields- security sector, state administration and rule of law.

The largest German PRT was in Kunduz. Two very short term projects the German government had initiated were projects on women’s empowerment in the economic field and in the education sector. Comparing the situation in Kunduz under the German PRTs, with the earlier work done by the Americans till 2002, Ackermann highlighted that the number of school-going children had drastically gone up—from fourteen thousand in 2002 to two hundred and fifty thousand children, of which 40% were girls in the present day.
This was a major exercise as it involved not only enrolling children into schools, but establishing or resurrecting the infrastructure from school buildings to training teachers. Ackermann further pointed out that the success in the educational sector as compared to other sectors was much more as people from the most conservative settings were more likely to endorse the need for school education over other areas of development, where there was deep distrust apropos the involvement of foreign actors.

Adverting to the success of the German PRTs in Kunduz and Takhar, Ackermann stated that the level of success of the various PRTs was largely contingent on the prevailing security situation in that particular province. Despite relatively better security situations in Kunduz and Takhar, even the German PRTs had suffered casualties and set backs, as security remained a major challenge for the entire country. Therefore one of the fundamental tasks was to strengthen political institutions that would be able to address these concerns.

Referring to the PRTs, Ackermann noted that the process was an endorsement of the need for state building. Highlighting the distinction between the processes of nation building and state building, he asserted that the populace in Afghanistan was aware of their identity as Afghans and that Afghanistan was their nation. Nobody said that “I want to be part of Uzbekistan because I’m Uzbek” or “I want to be part of Tajikistan because I’m Tajik”. However, there was a lack of trust in the state. Pointing to his own work in the Kunduz province, Ackermann averred that after 25 years of war, people had more or less lost confidence in state institutions. There was no trust in the veracity and commitment of law enforcing agencies and officials, whether the judiciary or the police, towards the establishment of the rule of law in Afghanistan. He highlighted the impact of PRTs in refurbishing the trust deficit of the citizenry in their state mechanisms and institutions and in trying to convince people that the state was not working against them but for them.

Another lingering problem in Afghanistan was that people from different provinces expressed an analogous sense of discrimination. The people ‘felt’ like a nation but when spoken to it was their ethnic or regional/provincial identities that became manifest. Drawing from his own experience, Ackermann pointed
out that one heard the Pashtuns of Kunduz say “we are discriminated”, while those in Takhar complained that Kunduz got preference, while in Kabul, there were reverberations that the entire north east was neglected. Despite an overarching desire for peace, and a feeling of optimism about the present state of affairs, in terms of the relative stability that Afghanistan was experiencing after twenty five years of conflict – there was no expressed sense of solidarity and articulation of togetherness in their efforts to rebuild the nation. After 25 years of war, Afghans had reverted back to their tribal, familial and clan identities, hence floundering in their efforts of conflict management. 32

Referring to the youth in provincial Afghanistan, Ackermann avowed that the youth were perhaps one of the biggest problems in the provinces. Despite a commendable increase in the number of school-going children and a deeper craving for knowledge, the situation apropos of the youth remained grim. The situation was graver as far as the boys and young men were concerned, amongst whom developing martial skills and training was extolled. One of the biggest problems that the Afghan youth faced was the dearth of engaging spaces, to harness their creative potential. Referring to the German efforts, Ackermann pointed out that bringing together of Afghan exiles in Germany to form a cultural institution called Mediothek was an interesting experiment, offering cultural activities to young people like music, dance, theatre and films. This institution was replicated by the German PRT as a platform for young people to explore their creativity and to develop their ideas. The institution also published a newspaper called Afghanistan Marroz, which was well received in Northern Afghanistan.

Explicating the reasons for the success of this initiative, Ackermann highlighted the complex social and political relations that exist in Afghanistan. He educed an understanding of these complexities in provincial Afghanistan, and the interplay of seemingly disparate but evidently concomitant processes of tradition and modernity that were at play in the country. A modern initiative worked in a conservative setting because of the presence of a warlord who consented to it and his sheer presence as the President of this Centre

protected the entire exercise. This illustrated the ways in which the political centre and periphery, and non-state social and local structures intertwined – particularly the remarkable stability and resilience of certain tribal systems that had survived political/social chaos and continued despite emerging democratic structures at the centre. It was therefore imperative for the international actors to understand and grapple with these complexities in order to work well in Afghanistan – at the provincial level deal with the presence of conservative feudal forces and at the centre concur with the nascent democratization of political institutions.

Given these complex ground realities, it was important to draw on and exploit the potential of the youth. He asserted that various actors engaged in peacebuilding and reconstruction had to consciously build on the potential of the youth by providing them with safe spaces for expression, articulation and participation especially women who had smothered for decades under patriarchal and patronizing structures. He stressed the importance of peace education in this context and how it must be expanded to “teach people to speak up in Afghanistan” and “to assure a young Afghan woman that her opinion was as valuable as that of a Governor”. Ackermann encouraged the youth to work proactively in these areas and argued that it was the Afghan people themselves who had to enthuse and inspire each other, and that it was imperative to place the youth in the forefront of reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts.
III

Securing Peace: Understanding the Dynamics of the Conflict and its Resolution

It is great to have roots, as long as you can take them with you.

Gertrude Stein

The third session focused on the causes of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the problems it posed for reconstruction and peacebuilding. It also touched upon the ways in which the youth could impact the processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction both within Afghanistan and outside, through countries providing aid and engaging in processes of reconstruction. Radha Kumar, Director of the Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Jamia Millia Islamia through her presentation furthered an understanding of the nature of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the ways in which it impacted the reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts in the country.

Tracing the complex trajectory of the conflict in Afghanistan, Kumar located the genesis of the conflict to the Cold War period. She argued that at its inception the conflict was an ideological one and not ethnic. However, the subsequent infusion of the ethnic component into this ideological war further complicated the nature of the conflict. She argued that it was the American-Pakistani support to ethnic warlords during the Cold War period (to counter Soviet dominance in the region) that had created localized structures of power in Afghanistan. The strengthening of these structures made ethnic fragmentation, the defining characteristic of the conflict in the country. It was this ethnic fragmentation and not its ideological underpinnings, which had become the perceived reality of the Afghan conflict.

Over these three decades, the nature of the ideological war had undergone change. While it was an upshot of the Cold war policies, in the present context it was the tension between the establishment of a liberal democratic state on the one side and the establishment of an Islamic state on the other that defined the ideological crisis in Afghanistan. She averred that despite its changing nature, the ideological war remained “a conflict that has not yet been addressed fully, but might need addressing at some stage”.
Reiterating the ideological underpinnings of the conflict, and its manifest ethnic dimension, Kumar argued that the ongoing peacebuilding efforts lacked a holistic understanding of the conflict. There was a certain ambiguity that informed these peacebuilding efforts, making the ‘solutions’ relatively less effective. Citing the examples of the Bonn Agreement and the Afghanistan Constitution, Kumar pointed out that it was this underlying ambiguity that translated into the constant “push-pull struggles on what kind of Shariat laws to introduce or not to introduce, what to permit and what not to permit.”

This ambiguity also informed, processes of institution building in Afghanistan. She referred to the experiment in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the issue of territorial-ethnic diversities was addressed by introducing a federal system with crosscutting minority representation. However, in Afghanistan this federal model was not considered suitable and therefore a “unitary centre with a great deal of local devolution” was established, further complicating the peacebuilding efforts. She further argued that this institutional model assumed a level of post conflict capability at the local levels of governance that was lacking in Afghanistan. She pointed out that the limited capabilities of these local governance structures were a major impediment in the process of political reconstruction. While certain gains had been made in infrastructure building or economic reconstruction, serious efforts towards political reconstruction were lacking.

She asserted that complexities on the ground further dampened the reconstruction efforts. One of the major challenges in Afghanistan was security and often military imperatives overruled and gained priority over reconstruction. This complicated and stalled reconstruction efforts to restore normalcy into people’s lives and secure peace in the country. In this context, she highlighted the unique situation in Afghanistan where reconstruction started before cessation of open hostilities and therefore peacebuilding was contemporaneous with ongoing war, in contrast to other areas of conflict, like Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Elucidating the ongoing reconstruction efforts, Kumar assessed the role of various international and regional actors in Afghanistan. In a riposte, to an earlier argument that raised the issue of regional intervention in the conflict and expressed skepticism about Pakistan’s inclination to cooperate with the Afghan Government, Kumar cited examples from Northern Ireland, the Balkans and Indonesia to articulate that the inclusion of the neighbouring countries was critical to the success of the peace process. Expressing hope that the recent developments in Pakistan – the establishment of a democratically elected government at the centre and of a sympathetic Awami National Party led state government in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) – would contribute positively to the peace process in Afghanistan. These were clear indications that the NWFP state government was devising a peace plan to address insurgency in Afghanistan. Nevertheless she cautioned against complacency and reiterated the importance of active engagement by civil society groups and citizens both in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as the international community to put pressure on their governments and ensure the implementation of these plans.

In addition, Kumar focused on certain developments in the Afghan context that provided hope to the peacebuilding community. Referring to successful peace settlements and peace processes both in the region (Jammu and Kashmir) and across the globe (Balkans), she suggested that some concrete steps like the pursuit of economic ties, free movement of people, goods and services, people to people contact and regional cooperation under SAARC must be explored. She asserted that these steps could “stabilize the region and mov[e] it away from being an area of arms, drugs and black economy”.

Within Afghanistan, she extolled the role of the youth in reconstruction and peacebuilding. Contrasting the situation in Afghanistan to other conflict situations, Kumar highlighted that in many areas, protracted conflict debilitates the youth, leaving them with an overwhelming feeling of despondency and hopelessness. In such contexts, the youth often respond to the support from international agencies with great suspicion. The youth in Afghanistan had, however, responded differently and positively to interventions by international NGOs and perceived these engagements as having “opened the doors to the world.” She asserted the need to build on this positive development and engage the youth proactively in the peacebuilding efforts.
She further underscored the importance of devising more localized responses to conflicts. Countering the enforcement of an essentially western model of peacebuilding to most conflict areas, Kumar asserted the need to explore certain “traditionally and culturally accepted methods of peacebuilding in the South Asian context”, especially in areas of people to people contact and cultural exchanges. Reflecting the recent shift in approaches to building peace, she stressed on the need to move beyond political and economic reconstruction to incorporate innovative ways of building peace through collectively held ideas of mutual support and sharing. She noted that in diverse societies where different groups felt disadvantaged and suffered from a sense of victimhood, people could be brought together to find shared and mutually consensual set of institutions – their common experiences of “victimhood” acting as the plank for underlying commonalities to surface – invigorating, in turn, processes of peacebuilding.

In the second presentation of the session Khalique Rashid from the Centre of Persian and Central Asian Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, argued for a critical engagement with the notions of democracy and security in the context of Afghanistan.

Furthering the explication of the Afghan conflict as a product of Cold War politics, Rashid pointed out that Afghanistan had always existed as a nation and the Afghan people took pride in their shared history and national identity. It was the Soviet invasion and the subsequent American intervention that had dented the strong fraternal relations and shared history. However, the violence marred present was a glaring contrast to the country’s glorious past and it was this disconnect that the youth had to address and resurrect the glory of the bygone era.

He referred to the long shared history of the people of Afghanistan and averred that the differences between the ethnic communities were small, compared to this shared history. Rashid made an affective appeal to the Afghan youth to resurrect the identity that they had lost during years of war and conflict. In this context he stressed on the idea of strengthening the long standing cultural ties between the South Asian countries to bolster the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and appealed to the participants to support Afghanistan in its difficult times.
Assessing the ongoing reconstruction efforts in the country, Rashid classified the international engagements into two broad categories. The first referred to international actors propelling military initiatives and second, those engaged in peacebuilding and reconstruction. Rashid argued that in the present situation in Afghanistan, it was important to prioritize the latter. He felt that more than armies and weaponry Afghanistan needed international assistance to rebuild its human resources. He brought into focus a major cause of concern for researchers in the area of peacebuilding, namely the overemphasis on military security to the neglect of normative integrity of individuals, groups and communities. Reflecting the need to redefine ‘security’ in a holistic manner, he emphasized the importance of creating enabling conditions for the Afghan people to optimize their potential.

He further argued that in this context, it was important to critically reflect on the nascent democratic processes underway in Afghanistan. One of the major lacunae in deepening the democratic processes was the lack of trust in the political leadership. He gave examples of incompetence and corruption among the high-ranking political officials, as one of the major impediments. Arguing for a deeper and more substantive democratic experience, Rashid cautioned against restricting democracy to mere symbols. He illustrated that the recent parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, while at one level indicated the institutionalization of democracy; a closer analysis revealed that these apparently democratic institutions continued to mirror the ideology of the Taliban regime. Referring to the recent government ban on Indian television serials-on the pretext that these serials being un-Islamic, Rashid highlighted that in Afghanistan there was only a symbolic and superficial engagement with democracy at present.

Eloquently summarizing his argument, Gopinath averred that in a democracy, diversity should be handled in a manner that “issues of justice and access are addressed and people can be comfortable with multiple identities and yet have an overarching sense of belonging to the country”.

The roundtable was envisioned as a space to bring the voices of youth from Afghanistan to impact the broader discourse on Indo-Afghan relations, to explore possibilities for collaboration between the youth of India and the young people from Afghanistan, and identify ways in which voices of the youth could impact the processes of peacebuilding. The last session titled Looking Ahead engaged the multi level actors in a vibrant discussion on the broader themes of reconstruction and peacebuilding and elicited varied responses around themes of democracy, invigorating the economy, ensuring advancement in education, rebuilding fractured relationships and ascertaining the role of youth in these processes.

Reflecting on the ongoing processes of democratization in Afghanistan, R. Ramasubramanian from Jawaharlal Nehru University cautioned that democracy as institutionalized in Afghanistan was not substantive, and perpetuated western liberal values at the expense of Afghan values. He argued that the local level leadership in Afghanistan which had traditionally been very strong had not found adequate representation in the current model, creating roadblocks in Afghanistan’s efforts at deepening democracy. He argued that a more suitable alternative could be found in deliberative democracy like the one Jai Prakash Narain had envisioned for India. He stressed on the need to augment the role of women, youth, non governmental organizations, free media and the private sector in Afghanistan to devise the framework for the implementation of this model of democracy.

Explicating the complex situation in the country, Philipp Ackermann highlighted the influence of those sections of the Afghan populace whose interests were incompatible with the country’s larger interests in peace but who had come to acquire enormous amount of wealth and influence in the political
institutions and social structures. Ackermann in his intervention pointed out that while eradicating corruption and illiteracy was desirable and one must strive towards it, in a democracy refusing to accept legitimately elected representatives merely on the pretext that they had not achieved a level of education considered desirable, would be inappropriate. He argued that, “we have to not only accommodate them but also accept their authority as elected representatives even if they are illiterate.” One of the anomalies of democracy, Ackermann pointed out, was that one had to accept even those actors who had come to power in the country due to external pressure. While it was far less complicated to marginalize these sections and keep them out of the process, it was extremely difficult to fill the vacuum with legitimate actors once these forces had been marginalized. Ackermann gave the example of the time when this vacuum of power was filled by the Taliban in some regions. Demilitarization was important but he asserted that it was equally important to ensure that the warlords be replaced by legitimate actors and ascertain that one set of unlawful actors was not replaced by another.

WISCOMP Fellow, Swapna Kona Nayadu argued that reconstruction must not be defined in terms of institution building alone. For the institutions to work and garner legitimacy, it was imperative to work fervently towards trust building. It was only by re/estabhlishing trust, both between people as well as at the level of institutions that one could truly invigorate the reconstruction and peacebuilding processes, and enable passive citizens to re-imagine themselves as political actors. In this context, she asserted, peace education could be employed as an important tool to initiate the youth into deliberating/ debating the ‘need for peace’ in the region.

Heela Jilani, WISCOMP Consultant, pointed out that another major challenge impeding the deepening of democracy was that level of trust apropos the social structure, especially relationships between groups had been tarnished in the many years of conflict. While one could not ignore the differences that divided people – there were Pashtuns, Hazara, Uzbeks, and Tajiks but at the same time they were all Afghans – it was thus important to build on the commonalities, to strengthen the reconstruction efforts in the country. She endorsed the need to work on the commonalities that they were all Afghans, they had all suffered and affected by pain and war. The important concern was to ensure that they were
brought together, on the basis of their commonalities. She endorsed the need to channel resources to bring people together, “whether through education, or through spirituality” in a manner where they understood and accepted themselves and each other. Trust in floundering relationships could be resurrected only through such engagements with one’s self as well as the ‘other’.

A young afghan student Yahya Amiry surmised that, “barriers break when people communicate, which leads to success in interpersonal relationships….more communication we have with each other, the more we see the commonality, then we can also realize and enjoy the diversity of each other.”

Several suggestions were made by the participants to explore possibilities of using culture and media as they might prove cathartic and help create conditions for rebuilding trust between communities divided along different faultlines during war and protracted conflict. Meenakshi Gopinath suggested that alternative media, documentaries, soap operas could be used. In order to begin the process of rebuilding trust, Liwal pointed out that cultural associations of university students had been very successful in Afghanistan and similar associations could be replicated among the Afghan and Indian students in India. These activities could “build bridges between Afghans” he felt. In response to his suggestion Gopinath illustrated the work of WISCOMP in Kashmir through it’s Athwaas initiative, that had over the years used writers’ workshops to provide spaces for creative articulation.

Sharing her experiences from Athwaas, Ashima Kaul, WISCOMP Consultant on Kashmir, narrated the transformative journey of the women who constituted the Athwaas core group. The parallels to Afghanistan were clearly visible. She made references to the regional and ethnic differences between the Kashmiris and the differences in the way the conflict was experienced by each group. She ended on an optimistic note by highlighting the possibilities of working together if people recognized that pain was shared by all communities despite the differences and that all harbored the desire to work collectively towards a brighter future.

Articulating the need for sustained efforts in other areas like the economy, Roya Saqib, a student from Jamia Millia, reinstated that
only a strong economy could expedite the reconstruction process. Asserting the need for the youth to engage more ardently in these reconstruction processes, she said it was important that the youth stem the lure of monetary benefits and individually contribute towards strengthening the economic base of the country.

Another area which needed sustained effort was the education sector. Khalique Rashid stated that lack of education was one of the biggest problems in the country. At the educational and cultural levels, Saqib further affirmed the need for the youth to work towards national reconstruction, by not only pooling in their specialized skills and trainings, but consciously working towards securing their national identity – moving beyond the fetters of their narrow provincial, ethnic, regional, racial and linguistic loyalties. Stimulating her peers to be ardent nationalists, she endorsed the need to work collectively to secure the future of the country.

Nazir Ahmad Yosufzai, from JIIMS, Indraprastha University, highlighted the differential developments in the various provinces. Referring to his home province of Nimroz, Yosufzai pointed out that despite significant strides in the educational sector, the Afghan government lacked a stringent focus on education and it was important for the government to reassess its commitment towards strengthening the educational infrastructure in provinces like Nimroz.

Drawing parallels from her own experiences in Kashmir, Mondira Dutta of Jawaharlal Nehru University reiterated the importance of education and that of reintegrating the disarmed youth into society. She cautioned that the marginalization of the youth in the developmental and decision making processes had dire consequences in some parts of India and Afghanistan must not move in that direction. “Channels of dialogue must be kept open and these youth must be involved in the decision making processes”, she avowed.

Radha Kumar asserted the need to be vigilant of a unidimensional focus on education divorced from a concurrent process of employment generation to absorb the “educated”. She argued that the inability to do so may lead to an explosive situation – there was a threshold of educated unemployed that could not be crossed without increasing the risks of violent outbursts in society.
A recurring theme during the deliberations was the need to recognize the transitory nature of international engagement in Afghanistan. While most acknowledged that international assistance in the reconstruction efforts was crucial to the establishment of sustainable peace in Afghanistan, one had to be wary of the long term presence of international forces in the country. Radha Kumar pointed out that “if more and more and more people in Afghanistan are saying that ...the international military role is more of a problem than of a help then we have to come back to the question of exit policies”.

Phillipp Ackermann too reiterated that it was important for the Afghans to collectively take responsibility for postwar relationships. During the transitional phase the decision to rely on the PRTs or international forces to provide protection was not doubted but in the long term the Afghan people would have to be motivated and empowered to resist the illegitimate actors, like warlords and militia on their own.

Responding to this, Yahya Amiry, a student from the University of Delhi pointed out that Afghans were making attempts at conflict resolution both through the traditional Jirga structures and negotiations with the neighboring countries. He asserted that traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution were part of the Afghan society and therefore it would not be difficult to build on such social practices and vitalize efforts towards peacebuilding in the region.

While assessing the role of the youth in peacebuilding and reconstruction, the term ‘youth’ came under the scanner. Mosca Najib, Producer/Researcher, BBC, reiterated the need to delineate who the Afghan youth were, whether the Afghan youth amongst the diaspora could be considered a part of this group and what role they could play in the process of peacebuilding?

Responding to a question posed by Monica Wahi, Founder/Director, Himmat, Gujarat, apropos the “mood of the Afghan youth” and their “political consciousness”, Jawed Nader asserted it was difficult to condense or classify the mood of the youth, given the fact that the youth were a heterogeneous and diverse cluster, with different regional, ethnic, linguistic, provincial affiliations. While the youth
in Afghanistan was largely hopeful and optimistic about a better and secure future, there was one section of the youth, which had been involved in the war, and was therefore dealing with post-conflict trauma.

In this context, Phillipp Ackermann, acknowledged that people in Afghanistan were grappling with the psychological impact of the long years of conflict. He pointed out that the PRTs had so far failed to provide any psychological service to the young people and therefore stressed on the need for the PRTs to work in concert with the Afghan civil society and equip themselves better to deal with such situations. Meenakshi Gopinath reminded the participants that trauma healing was an integral part of conflict transformation processes that aided in bridging relationships and moving from a divided past to a shared future.

Reiterating Jawed Nader’s views, Shamroz Khan, an Afghan student from Delhi University brought to the fore the plight of the demilitarized and disarmed young people who were perceived as the cause of the conflict.

Focusing on the role that Afghan Youth could play in the peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes in Afghanistan, Ishita Chaudhry, Founder and Managing Trustee, YP Foundation, pointed out that the four qualities, essential for stimulating this process were already present among the Afghan youth- energy, readiness to listen, thirst for knowledge and willingness to share experiences.

Elaborating on the varied challenges that Afghan students faced in India, Hamdia Hamdard, a young student at Jamia Millia Islamia, highlighted that lack of information about the Indian education system, universities, different educational programs and the examination system was perhaps the central problem. Given the differences between the Indian and Afghanistan’s educational systems, Afghan students who came to India with the intent of pursuing their studies, often faced difficulties in understanding the nature of the educational system in India. Often seemingly minor issues like changing courses in colleges, compounded into major challenges, as they were unaware of the procedures in Indian colleges and universities. The assistance provided at the Indian Consulate and Embassy often proved insufficient.
Another source of discomfort for the Afghan students emanated from their lack of awareness about the cultures, regions, and languages of India. For some students the unfamiliar social-cultural contexts in India became too alienating and thus they were unable to continue studying in India. Communication too was a huge problem, especially for students not comfortable with the English language.

Portrayal of Afghans in popular media and the images it created about the Afghans were also an area of concern in the minds of many young Afghans. Several young students highlighted the misinformation and misconceptions about Afghans that were circulated through media images and the urgency of fighting them. Post 9/11, the growing suspicion about people from Afghanistan, exacerbated the problems of finding suitable accommodation in India.

Jawed Nader further pointed out that the source of this mistrust could be traced to a wider lack of knowledge about Afghanistan and its people. The branding and labeling of people from Afghanistan as untrustworthy, hostile and bellicose was common practice both in the West as well as within the region. He also highlighted the importance of speaking meaningfully, of having discussions and dialogue, and designing roadmaps for action. Nader argued that there was need for sustained dialogue not only between Indian and Afghan youth but also between the youth from different ethnic communities in Afghanistan. Recognizing that differences existed amongst the youth, Nader asserted that it was important for those studying in countries like India, to use this opportunity to bridge differences and carry these conversations back home.

Some of the recommendations that emerged from the discussion were that in order to familiarize Afghan students about the educational system in India, orientation programs could be organized in Afghanistan to disseminate information about the Indian educational system. Such programs could also be used to familiarize the Afghan students about the social and cultural diversity of India. Radha Kumar suggested that an autonomous body could be created to take care of scholarships etc. Hamdia Hamdard asserted the need for increased interaction between Indian and Afghan students. She suggested a joint committee of Afghan and Indian students be formed to organize cultural events, initiate
academic and cultural travels involving youth from both the countries.

Ishita Chaudhry suggested several ways in which organizations in India like the YP Foundation could collaborate with Afghan youth organizations to work on issues of common concern. Since the Indian youth grappled with gender bias and discrimination at multiple levels and the Afghan women were positioned similarly, this could, in her view, be one area where the youth from the two countries could share learnings. Many participants asserted that Afghan Youth studying in India could explore the different mechanisms to engage with the youth in the country. They could help in organizing information sharing sessions with Afghan university students, by providing them information about the educational system in India.

Heela Jilani too stressed on the need to exploit the potential of the youth, not only in Afghanistan, but also in India and Pakistan to bolster efforts towards securing and stabilizing the region as a whole.

Phillipp Ackermann asserted that the youth settled outside Afghanistan must return to their country and pool in their efforts into the reconstruction process. Responding to this, Nazir Yosufzai avowed that it was not enough to prod the youth to return home. It was imperative to first work on creating enabling conditions within the country to beckon these youth to return. Endorsing this Moska Najib in an impassioned intervention argued, “it is very easy to say Afghans need to go back to the country and give back to country. It’s also not fair to say to Afghans who are stuck in Afghanistan to continue to try and make the country work. But how can you convince Afghans abroad to go back when they have gone through a progression of insecurity, instability, identity crisis, displacement to the extent that they fear going back, they don’t want to go back. They don’t want to loose their years, youth years or generations. My parents went through hell I don't want to go through that, I want to have a normal life, I want to have a child, I want my child to have food, why should I go back?”

Acknowledging these concerns, Meenakshi Gopinath remarked that one needed a sustained engagement with issues of identity- of roots, of belonging, of multiple identities. There was need for incessant
dialoguing with one’s self as well as others – on questions of multiple identities and whether these identities could coexist? While recognizing that these questions were salient for one and all, Gopinath expressed hope that the Afghan youth would continue with such engagements. She concluded that it was important to build on and recover the faith that “Afghanistan is not a space forsaken by God; that it has a future – a beautiful future and it has the tremendous potential of young people to contribute to that future. It is important to reiterate not only what the world can offer Afghanistan but what Afghanistan can offer the world. It is important to make that shift in consciousness, to develop a sort of self confidence and move from the notion of being victims, to being actors of our history and our own destiny.”
Participants’ Feedback

A set of five questions was distributed to the participants, to elicit responses on possibilities of ‘peace’ and ‘peacebuilding’ in Afghanistan. The questions were:

1. Peace in Afghanistan requires / means…
2. What are the key difficulties of bringing peace in Afghanistan?
3. What do you think you can do?
4. What first steps would you like to take?
5. I envision an Afghanistan where…

Responses:

Peace in Afghanistan requires / means…

- There had to be a holistic approach towards peace and development in Afghanistan, with security and peace as pre-requisites.
- International intervention must be seen as a necessary evil under the present circumstances. But it was important that the international agencies train the indigenous people so as to empower them. They must be included in the ongoing development processes.
- As far as troop deployment was concerned, the international actors must devise a gradual phasing out process and implement it diligently.
- A bottom-up approach to peacebuilding was required so that community members including the youth could proactively participate in the process.
- Education was a crucial component of bringing peace in Afghanistan as it was an important means for changing the mindset of people, reducing gender discrimination and child exploitation. Since 68% of the population was below 25 years and about 7500 were child soldiers, both education and employment generation must not be neglected.
• If unemployment remained unchecked, it could lead to the exacerbation of violence and conflict.

**What are the key difficulties of bringing peace in Afghanistan?**

• Youth apathy or lack of enthusiasm among the youth to take part in peacebuilding efforts

• Efforts made by International Community and Afghans (including the Afghan government) were not sufficient and there was a need for implementation of more projects.

• Lack of communication and freedom of speech

• Lack of skills and lack of technical & professional knowledge among government employees and others involved in peacebuilding activities.

• Unfavorable economic condition of Afghan families which ultimately lead to the employment of Afghan youth by international terrorist organizations and political actors.

• Illiteracy

• Interference by other countries

• Lack of interaction/communication between youth from different ethnicities

**What do you think you can do?**

• Take greater responsibility to bring about peace in Afghanistan and reduce the involvement of “foreign people”.

• Work together as a nation and participate as equals along side the international community in the reconstruction process.

• Garner support from “Indian friends”

• Assist Afghan women in accessing education

**What first steps would you like to take?**

• Identify like-minded Afghan students & Indian individuals and organizations that stand for peace and strengthen the academic and professional ties with them.

• Continue strengthening networks and activities in Afghanistan

• Establish community-based peacebuilding initiatives with the Afghan youth
• Liaison with Indian and international organizations to draw upon their expertise
• Increase interaction among Afghan youth from different ethnicities.
• Increase interaction among Indian and Afghan youths “to educate our selves about each other so that we can share the commonalities and appreciate diversity”.

I envision an Afghanistan where...
• Everyone feels safe and happy
• Women are educated and know about their rights and work alongside men as seen in other countries
• Everyone is united and working for the nation
• The youth are a primary component of reconstruction processes
• There is sustained peace, brought about not only by military intervention but by upholding justice and rule of law. This change could be brought about when the sections of Afghan society who have long been marginalized and abused i.e. women and the youth are mobilized.
• Oppressed come forward and speak out
• Eventual withdrawal of the foreign troops in order for the Afghans to build their nation with independence and a free spirit.
Annexure-I

Political Map of Afghanistan

Source: <http://www.placesonline.com/asia/afghanistan/map.asp>
Map of Afghanistan-Pakistan Border

Source: <http://www.atlapedia.com/online/maps/political_Afghan/etc.htm>
###Chronology of Major Events (1987-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 27, 1979</td>
<td>Commencement of Soviet Military intervention in Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 1987</td>
<td>Mohammad Najibullah appointed President after Soviet withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15, 1989</td>
<td>Soviet troops pull out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25, 1992</td>
<td>President Najibullah resigns to form a broad-based government according to the UN agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1994</td>
<td>Afghan Civil War continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 1997</td>
<td>Taliban seizes Kabul &amp; ousts President Burhanuddin Rabbani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 1997</td>
<td>Taliban captures Mazar-i-Sharif</td>
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<tr>
<td>August, 1998</td>
<td>Taliban begins attack on northern provinces of Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August, 2001</td>
<td>The first consultative conference of Afghans is held in London to discuss the possibility of future activities of peace in Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9, 2001</td>
<td>Leader of opposition Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Massoud, critically injured in Panjshir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 12, 2001</td>
<td>Under a new US Policy American President George Bush makes a broad declaration of war against terrorists and the states which harbor them</td>
</tr>
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</table>
September 15, 2001  Ahmad Shah Massoud succumbs to injuries

September 20, 2001  US demands that the Taliban regime hand over suspected terrorists

October 7, 2001  US begins air raids in Afghanistan

October 18, 2001  Troops of the US Special Force deployed in Afghanistan

November 17, 2001  Taliban officially ousted from power

December, 2001  Bonn Agreement signed in Germany

July 13, 2002  Hamid Karzai appointed as President of the Afghan Transitional Administration

December, 2004  Hamid Karzai elected as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

January – February, 2006  Adoption of the Afghanistan Compact, following the London Conference
Excerpts from the Bonn Agreement

Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan
Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent
Government Institutions

December 2001
Bonn, Germany

The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan,
In the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan,

Determined to end the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country,

Reaffirming the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan,

Acknowledging the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice,

Expressing their appreciation to the Afghan mujahidin who, over the years, have defended the independence, territorial integrity and national unity of the country and have played a major role in the struggle against terrorism and oppression, and whose sacrifice has now made them both heroes of jihad and champions of peace, stability and reconstruction of their beloved homeland, Afghanistan,

Aware that the unstable situation in Afghanistan requires the implementation of emergency interim arrangements and expressing their deep appreciation to His Excellency Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani for his readiness to transfer power to an interim authority which is to be established pursuant to this agreement,

* Excerpts from the original document of the Bonn Agreement
Recognizing the need to ensure broad representation in these interim arrangements of all segments of the Afghan population, including groups that have not been adequately represented at the UN Talks on Afghanistan,

Noting that these interim arrangements are intended as a first step toward the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government, and are not intended to remain in place beyond the specified period of time,

Recognizing that some time may be required for a new Afghan security force to be fully constituted and functional and that therefore other security provisions detailed in Annex I to this agreement must meanwhile be put in place,

Considering that the United Nations, as the internationally recognized impartial institution, has a particularly important role to play, detailed in Annex II to this agreement, in the period prior to the establishment of permanent institutions in Afghanistan,

Have agreed as follows:

THE INTERIM AUTHORITY

I. General provisions

1) An Interim Authority shall be established upon the official transfer of power on 22 December 2001.

2) The Interim Authority shall consist of an Interim Administration presided over by a Chairman, a Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, and a Supreme Court of Afghanistan, as well as such other courts as may be established by the Interim Administration. The composition, functions and governing procedures for the Interim Administration and the Special Independent Commission are set forth in this agreement.

3) Upon the official transfer of power, the Interim Authority shall be the repository of Afghan sovereignty, with immediate effect. As such, it shall, throughout the interim period, represent Afghanistan in its external relations and shall occupy the seat of Afghanistan at the United Nations and in its specialized agencies, as well as in other international institutions and conferences.
4) An Emergency Loya Jirga shall be convened within six months of the establishment of the Interim Authority. The Emergency Loya Jirga will be opened by His Majesty Mohammed Zaher, the former King of Afghanistan. The Emergency Loya Jirga shall decide on a Transitional Authority, including a broad-based transitional administration, to lead Afghanistan until such time as a fully representative government can be elected through free and fair elections to be held no later than two years from the date of the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga.

5) The Interim Authority shall cease to exist once the Transitional Authority has been established by the Emergency Loya Jirga.

6) A Constitutional Loya Jirga shall be convened within eighteen months of the establishment of the Transitional Authority, in order to adopt a new constitution for Afghanistan. In order to assist the Constitutional Loya Jirga prepare the proposed Constitution, the Transitional Administration shall, within two months of its commencement and with the assistance of the United Nations, establish a Constitutional Commission.

II. Legal framework and judicial system

1) The following legal framework shall be applicable on an interim basis until the adoption of the new Constitution referred to above:

   i) The Constitution of 1964, a/ to the extent that its provisions are not inconsistent with those contained in this agreement, and b/ with the exception of those provisions relating to the monarchy and to the executive and legislative bodies provided in the Constitution; and

   ii) existing laws and regulations, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with this agreement or with international legal obligations to which Afghanistan is a party, or with those applicable provisions contained in the Constitution of 1964, provided that the Interim Authority shall have the power to repeal or amend those laws and regulations.

2) The judicial power of Afghanistan shall be independent and shall be vested in a Supreme Court of Afghanistan, and such other courts as may be established by the Interim
Administration. The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a Judicial Commission to rebuild the domestic justice system in accordance with Islamic principles, international standards, the rule of law and Afghan legal traditions.

III. Interim Administration

A. Composition

1) The Interim Administration shall be composed of a Chairman, five Vice Chairmen and 24 other members. Each member, except the Chairman, may head a department of the Interim Administration.

2) The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan have invited His Majesty Mohammed Zaher, the former King of Afghanistan, to chair the Interim Administration. His Majesty has indicated that he would prefer that a suitable candidate acceptable to the participants be selected as the Chair of the Interim Administration.

3) The Chairman, the Vice Chairmen and other members of the Interim Administration have been selected by the participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan, as listed in Annex IV to this agreement. The selection has been made on the basis of professional competence and personal integrity from lists submitted by the participants in the UN Talks, with due regard to the ethnic, geographic and religious composition of Afghanistan and to the importance of the participation of women.

4) No person serving as a member of the Interim Administration may simultaneously hold membership of the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga.

B. Procedures

1) The Chairman of the Interim Administration, or in his/her absence one of the Vice Chairmen, shall call and chair meetings and propose the agenda for these meetings.

2) The Interim Administration shall endeavour to reach its decisions by consensus. In order for any decision to be taken,
at least 22 members must be in attendance. If a vote becomes necessary, decisions shall be taken by a majority of the members present and voting, unless otherwise stipulated in this agreement. The Chairman shall cast the deciding vote in the event that the members are divided equally.

C. Functions

1) The Interim Administration shall be entrusted with the day-to-day conduct of the affairs of state, and shall have the right to issue decrees for the peace, order and good government of Afghanistan.

2) The Chairman of the Interim Administration or, in his/her absence, one of the Vice Chairmen, shall represent the Interim Administration as appropriate.

3) Those members responsible for the administration of individual departments shall also be responsible for implementing the policies of the Interim Administration within their areas of responsibility.

4) Upon the official transfer of power, the Interim Administration shall have full jurisdiction over the printing and delivery of the national currency and special drawing rights from international financial institutions. The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a Central Bank of Afghanistan that will regulate the money supply of the country through transparent and accountable procedures.

5) The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Civil Service Commission to provide the Interim Authority and the future Transitional Authority with shortlists of candidates for key posts in the administrative departments, as well as those of governors and uluswals, in order to ensure their competence and integrity.

6) The Interim Administration shall, with the assistance of the United Nations, establish an independent Human Rights Commission, whose responsibilities will include human rights monitoring, investigation of violations of human rights, and development of domestic human rights institutions. The Interim
Administration may, with the assistance of the United Nations, also establish any other commissions to review matters not covered in this agreement.

7) The members of the Interim Administration shall abide by a Code of Conduct elaborated in accordance with international standards.

8) Failure by a member of the Interim Administration to abide by the provisions of the Code of Conduct shall lead to his/her suspension from that body. The decision to suspend a member shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of the membership of the Interim Administration on the proposal of its Chairman or any of its Vice Chairmen.

9) The functions and powers of members of the Interim Administration will be further elaborated, as appropriate, with the assistance of the United Nations.

IV. The Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga

1) The Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga shall be established within one month of the establishment of the Interim Authority. The Special Independent Commission will consist of twenty-one members, a number of whom should have expertise in constitutional or customary law. The members will be selected from lists of candidates submitted by participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan as well as Afghan professional and civil society groups. The United Nations will assist with the establishment and functioning of the commission and of a substantial secretariat.

2) The Special Independent Commission will have the final authority for determining the procedures for and the number of people who will participate in the Emergency Loya Jirga. The Special Independent Commission will draft rules and procedures specifying (i) criteria for allocation of seats to the settled and nomadic population residing in the country; (ii) criteria for allocation of seats to the Afghan refugees living in Iran, Pakistan, and elsewhere, and Afghans from the diaspora; (iii) criteria for inclusion of civil society organizations and
prominent individuals, including Islamic scholars, intellectuals, and traders, both within the country and in the diaspora. The Special Independent Commission will ensure that due attention is paid to the representation in the Emergency Loya Jirga of a significant number of women as well as all other segments of the Afghan population.

3) The Special Independent Commission will publish and disseminate the rules and procedures for the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga at least ten weeks before the Emergency Loya Jirga convenes, together with the date for its commencement and its suggested location and duration.

4) The Special Independent Commission will adopt and implement procedures for monitoring the process of nomination of individuals to the Emergency Loya Jirga to ensure that the process of indirect election or selection is transparent and fair. To pre-empt conflict over nominations, the Special Independent Commission will specify mechanisms for filing of grievances and rules for arbitration of disputes.

5) The Emergency Loya Jirga will elect a Head of the State for the Transitional Administration and will approve proposals for the structure and key personnel of the Transitional Administration.

V. Final provisions

1) Upon the official transfer of power, all mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall 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.

2) The Interim Authority and the Emergency Loya Jirga shall act in accordance with basic principles and provisions contained in international instruments on human rights and international humanitarian law to which Afghanistan is a party.

3) The Interim Authority shall cooperate with the international community in the fight against terrorism, drugs and organized crime. It shall commit itself to respect international law and maintain peaceful and friendly relations with neighbouring countries and the rest of the international community.
4) The Interim Authority and the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga will ensure the participation of women as well as the equitable representation of all ethnic and religious communities in the Interim Administration and the Emergency Loya Jirga.

5) All actions taken by the Interim Authority shall be consistent with Security Council resolution 1378 (14 November 2001) and other relevant Security Council resolutions relating to Afghanistan.

6) Rules of procedure for the organs established under the Interim Authority will be elaborated as appropriate with the assistance of the United Nations.

This agreement, of which the annexes constitute an integral part, done in Bonn on this 5th day of December 2001 in the English language, shall be the authentic text, in a single copy which shall remain deposited in the archives of the United Nations. Official texts shall be provided in Dari and Pashto, and such other languages as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General may designate. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General shall send certified copies in English, Dari and Pashto to each of the participants.
Excerpts from the Afghanistan Compact

The Afghanistan Compact
The London Conference on Afghanistan
31 January – 1 February 2006

THE AFGHANISTAN COMPACT

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community:

Determined to strengthen their partnership to improve the lives of Afghan people, and to contribute to national, regional, and global peace and security;

Affirming their shared commitment to continue, in the spirit of the Bonn, Tokyo and Berlin conferences, to work toward a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, with good governance and human rights protection for all under the rule of law, and to maintain and strengthen that commitment over the term of this Compact and beyond;

Recognising the courage and determination of Afghans who, by defying violent extremism and hardship, have laid the foundations for a democratic, peaceful, pluralistic and prosperous state based on the principles of Islam;

Noting the full implementation of the Bonn Agreement through the adoption of a new constitution in January 2004, and the holding of presidential elections in October 2004 and National Assembly and Provincial Council elections in September 2005, which have enabled Afghanistan to regain its rightful place in the international community;

Mindful that Afghanistan’s transition to peace and stability is not yet assured, and that strong international engagement will continue to be required to address remaining challenges;

* Excerpts from the original document of the Afghanistan Compact
  <http://www.unama-afg.org/news/_londonConf/_docs/06jan30-AfghanistanCompact-Final.pdf>
Resolved to overcome the legacy of conflict in Afghanistan by setting conditions for sustainable economic growth and development; strengthening state institutions and civil society; removing remaining terrorist threats; meeting the challenge of counter-narcotics; rebuilding capacity and infrastructure; reducing poverty; and meeting basic human needs;

Have agreed to this Afghanistan Compact.

PURPOSE

The Afghan Government has articulated its overarching goals for the well-being of its people in the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals Country Report 2005 – Vision 2020. Consistent with those goals, this Compact identifies three critical and interdependent areas or pillars of activity for the five years from the adoption of this Compact:

1. Security;
2. Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and
3. Economic and Social Development.

A further vital and cross-cutting area of work is eliminating the narcotics industry, which remains a formidable threat to the people and state of Afghanistan, the region and beyond.

The Afghan Government hereby commits itself to realising this shared vision of the future; the international community, in turn, commits itself to provide resources and support to realise that vision. Annex I of this Compact sets out detailed outcomes, benchmarks and timelines for delivery, consistent with the high-level goals set by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The Government and international community also commit themselves to improve the effectiveness and accountability of international assistance as set forth in Annex II.

PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

As the Afghan Government and the international community embark on the implementation of this Compact, they will:

1. Respect the pluralistic culture, values and history of Afghanistan, based on Islam;
2. Work on the basis of partnership between the Afghan Government, with its sovereign responsibilities, and the international community, with a central and impartial coordinating role for the United Nations;

3. Engage further the deep-seated traditions of participation and aspiration to ownership of the Afghan people;

4. Pursue fiscal, institutional and environmental sustainability;

5. Build lasting Afghan capacity and effective state and civil society institutions, with particular emphasis on building up human capacities of men and women alike;

6. Ensure balanced and fair allocation of domestic and international resources in order to offer all parts of the country tangible prospects of well-being;

7. Recognise in all policies and programs that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities;

8. Promote regional cooperation; and

9. Combat corruption and ensure public transparency and accountability.

SECURITY

Genuine security remains a fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability and development in Afghanistan. Security cannot be provided by military means alone. It requires good governance, justice and the rule of law, reinforced by reconstruction and development. With the support of the international community, the Afghan Government will consolidate peace by disbanding all illegal armed groups. The Afghan Government and the international community will create a secure environment by strengthening Afghan institutions to meet the security needs of the country in a fiscally sustainable manner.

To that end, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and partner nations involved in security sector reform will continue to provide strong support to the Afghan Government in establishing and sustaining security and stability in Afghanistan, subject to participating states’ national approval procedures. They will continue to strengthen and develop the capacity of the national security forces to ensure that they become fully functional.
All OEF counter-terrorism operations will be conducted in close coordination with the Afghan Government and ISAF. ISAF will continue to expand its presence throughout Afghanistan, including through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and will continue to promote stability and support security sector reforms in its areas of operation.

Full respect for Afghanistan’s sovereignty and strengthening dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours constitute an essential guarantee of stability in Afghanistan and the region. The international community will support concrete confidence-building measures to this end.

GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Democratic governance and the protection of human rights constitute the cornerstone of sustainable political progress in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government will rapidly expand its capacity to provide basic services to the population throughout the country. It will recruit competent and credible professionals to public service on the basis of merit; establish a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels of Government; and implement measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice and the rule of law and promoting respect for the human rights of all Afghans.

The Afghan Government will give priority to the coordinated establishment in each province of functional institutions – including civil administration, police, prisons and judiciary. These institutions will have appropriate legal frameworks and appointment procedures; trained staff; and adequate remuneration, infrastructure and auditing capacity. The Government will establish a fiscally and institutionally sustainable administration for future elections under the supervision of the Afghanistan Independent Electoral Commission.

Reforming the justice system will be a priority for the Afghan Government and the international community. The aim will be to ensure equal, fair and transparent access to justice for all based upon written codes with fair trials and enforceable verdicts. Measures will include: completing legislative reforms for the public as well as the private sector; building the capacity of judicial
institutions and personnel; promoting human rights and legal awareness; and rehabilitating judicial infrastructure.

The Afghan Government and the international community reaffirm their commitment to the protection and promotion of rights provided for in the Afghan constitution and under applicable international law, including the international human rights covenants and other instruments to which Afghanistan is party. With a view to rebuilding trust among those whose lives were shattered by war, reinforcing a shared sense of citizenship and a culture of tolerance, pluralism and observance of the rule of law, the Afghan Government with the support of the international community will implement the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Afghan Government with the support of the international community will pursue high rates of sustainable economic growth with the aim of reducing hunger, poverty and unemployment. It will promote the role and potential of the private sector, alongside those of the public and non-profit sectors; curb the narcotics industry; ensure macroeconomic stability; restore and promote the development of the country’s human, social and physical capital, thereby establishing a sound basis for a new generation of leaders and professionals; strengthen civil society; and complete the reintegration of returnees, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants.

Public investments will be structured around the six sectors of the pillar on economic and social development of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy:

1. Infrastructure and natural resources;
2. Education;
3. Health;
4. Agriculture and rural development;
5. Social protection; and
In each of these areas, the objective will be to achieve measurable results towards the goal of equitable economic growth that reduces poverty, expands employment and enterprise creation, enhances opportunities in the region and improves the well-being of all Afghans.

**COUNTER-NARCOTICS – A CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITY**

Meeting the threat that the narcotics industry poses to national, regional and international security as well as the development and governance of the country and the well-being of Afghans will be a priority for the Government and the international community. The aim will be to achieve a sustained and significant reduction in the production and trafficking of narcotics with a view to complete elimination. Essential elements include improved interdiction, law enforcement and judicial capacity building; enhanced cooperation among Afghanistan, neighbouring countries and the international community on disrupting the drugs trade; wider provision of economic alternatives for farmers and labourers in the context of comprehensive rural development; and building national and provincial counter-narcotics institutions. It will also be crucial to enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards official corruption; to pursue eradication as appropriate; to reinforce the message that producing or trading opiates is both immoral and a violation of Islamic law; and to reduce the demand for the illicit use of opiates.

**COORDINATION AND MONITORING**

The Afghan Government and the international community are establishing a Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board for the implementation of the political commitments that comprise this Compact. As detailed in Annex III, this Board will be co-chaired by the Afghan Government and the United Nations and will be supported by a small secretariat. It will ensure greater coherence of efforts by the Afghan Government and international community to implement the Compact and provide regular and timely public reports on its execution.
### List of Youth Organizations in Afghanistan

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<tr>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
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<tr>
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* We acknowledge the generosity of Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) for permitting us to reprint the names of youth organizations in Afghanistan collected as a part of the study conducted by them. See T. Murer, J. Nader, S. Schmeidl, *Mapping Youth Organizations in Afghanistan*, ACSF, 2005.
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Resource Persons’ Profile

Abas Baser is First Secretary, Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi. He represented Ghazni province in Emergency Loya Jirga and also acted as Deputy to the Office of Afghanistan Constituent Commission in Tehran for four months. Later, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Deputy Director in Cultural Relationship Department. He is a prolific writer and has written more than one hundred political and legal articles which have been published in various Afghan newspapers and magazines. He has an M. Phil in International Legal Studies.

Abdul Ghafoor Liwal is currently the Director, Regional Studies Centre of Afghanistan. He has been the Director of Department of Cultural and Social Affairs and media Consultant with the Office of the Administrative Affairs from 2005-06. A recipient of the Humphrey Fellowship in Journalism, Mr. Liwal has been a consultant for the Centre for the Languages of the Central Asian Region in Indiana University, USA. He has been a spokesman and press officer for the Secretariat of Constitutional Commission of Afghanistan. He was Editor at the Institute of War and Peace and the Chief Editor and reporter of the Pashto service (Kabul Bureau) of Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. Mr. Liwal is an alumnus of the University of Maryland (College Park) College of Journalism, USA, with eight books to his credit.

A.K. Rashid is currently Visiting Professor at the Centre of Persian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi wherein he has developed the Pashto Program of study upto Advanced Diploma Level. He has authored several books and articles pertaining to Pashto and Dari Studies. His works include; Criticism in Pashto and Dari, Resistance Literature in Pashto, History of Pashto Criticism. He has also translated Meghdootam and Vikram Urwasiya of Kalidasa into Pashto and Dari. He has penned four collections of short stories in Pashto. Prof. Rashid was awarded his Ph.D degree by the Department of Persian, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

I.P. Khosla is presently on the Board of Directors, Indo-Afghan Foundation. He completed his education from St. Stephens College, University of Delhi and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, UK.
Mr. Khosla joined the Indian Foreign Service, and served initially in Vienna and Algiers, where he helped to establish the Embassy. He has also served as Counsellor (POL) in London. Thereafter, he served as India’s Ambassador to Bhutan, Bangladesh (as High Commissioner), and as Ambassador to Afghanistan and The Netherlands. He also served as Secretary to the Indian Government in the Ministry of External Affairs. He has written extensively on security issues including non-traditional security, as well as on other matters relating to India’s external interests, particularly India’s relations with South Asian neighbors and SAARC countries.

**Jawed Nader** is a student of Management Sciences at Bangalore University, India. Born in Ghazni, Afghanistan, Jawed Nader migrated to Peshawar, Pakistan at the age of five. Upon returning to Afghanistan in 2002, he worked with Swisspeace Foundation, and Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) to strengthen the role of different segments of Afghan civil society, particularly the youth in the peace and reconstruction processes of Afghanistan. He has been associated with student initiatives like Young Leaders Forum and Agahi Foundation in Kabul. Mr. Nader has briefly worked for the Government of Afghanistan as part of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Peace Jirga’s organization team. He has represented Afghan Youth in the first Pan-Asian Youth Leadership Summit, 2004, in Hiroshima, Japan and participated in Afghan and German youth dialogue in Berlin, Germany in 2005.

**Philipp Ackermann** is working as Minister Counsellor (Head of Political Department) in the German Embassy to India in New Delhi. He received a Ph.D in Art History from Bonn University and subsequently, joined the German Foreign Service. Among other appointments, Mr. Ackermann has served as an exchange diplomat in the Foreign Office of the Netherlands. Eventually, he was assigned to the German Embassy in Morocco and served as First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations in New York before becoming first the principal speechwriter to former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and then a member of the inner cabinet of Foreign Minister, Frank Walter Steinmeier. In 2006, he was assigned to be the civilian head of the German Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kunduz, Afghanistan.

T.C.A. Raghavan is currently Joint Secretary dealing with Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. He holds a Masters degree in Modern Indian History and a Ph.D in Modern History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. A member of the Indian Foreign Service since 1982, he has served in Kuwait, Bhutan and the UK interspersed with postings in New Delhi in the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce. From February 2003 till March 2007, Dr. Raghavan was posted in Pakistan as Deputy High Commissioner of India.
Participants’ Profile

Adrian Norfolg is currently Political Counselor at the Canadian High Commission, New Delhi. Before joining the Foreign Service, he was involved in development work in Africa and Asia, including for 5 years (1988-93) as Field Director in Sri Lanka for the World University Service of Canada, an NGO involved in providing vocational training programs and employment opportunities to youth affected by the civil wars in that country.

Alexis Ringwold is a Fulbright Scholar to India based at The Energy and Resources Institute. Her research is focused on climate change, clean energy technologies and the appropriate business models for scale and replication to help India pursue a more sustainable energy path; she is currently publishing a paper on “India Renewable Energy Trends.” Alexis’ previous work experience includes the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris, Ecologic-The Institute for International and Environmental Policy in Berlin, and independent research on international renewable energy policies at the German Parliament with the Environment Committee. She is a graduate from Yale University with a Master of Environmental Management and a B.A. in Political Science.

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