

MULTIFACETED APPROACHES TO PEACE BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

Delves into the intricate web of peace building efforts in Afghanistan, a country marred by decades of conflict and instability. Through an analysis of multifaceted approaches, ranging from grassroots initiatives to international interventions, it explores the complexities of navigating cultural, political, and social dynamics in the pursuit of sustainable peace. Drawing upon a diverse range of scholarly sources and real-world case studies, the paper aims to shed light on the challenges and opportunities inherent in peace-building endeavors within Afghanistan's complex landscape. By examining the interplay between local dynamics and global influences, it seeks to provide insights that can inform future strategies for fostering peace and stability in the region.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Conflict resolution, Multifaceted Approaches, Economic perspectives, Local Legitimacy, Jirgas

Introduction

The pursuit of peace in Afghanistan has been a complex and multifaceted challenge, marked by decades of conflict, foreign intervention, and internal strife. As one of the most enduring conflict zones in contemporary history, Afghanistan's path to peace requires a comprehensive understanding of its socio-political landscape, cultural dynamics, and the myriad forces at play. This paper explores the diverse strategies employed in peace building efforts, analyzing their effectiveness and interconnections. Afghanistan's history of conflict is deeply rooted in a mix of geopolitical interests, ethnic divisions, and socio-economic disparities. Since the late 20th century, the country has experienced successive waves of violence, including the Soviet invasion, civil war, the rise and fall of the Taliban, and the prolonged presence of international military forces. Each phase of conflict has left a profound impact on the Afghan society, necessitating a multifaceted approach to peace building that goes beyond mere cessation of hostilities. Peace building in Afghanistan involves a range of actors and strategies. At the grassroots level, local initiatives focus on reconciliation and community development, leveraging traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and fostering local leadership. National efforts are centered on political reforms, inclusive governance, and the integration of former combatants into civilian life. Internationally, diplomatic negotiations, economic aid, and developmental programs aim to stabilize the region and create conditions conducive to long-

term peace. This paper delves into the successes and limitations of these varied approaches, drawing on case studies and empirical data to evaluate their impact. By examining the interplay between local customs and international frameworks, and between short-term stabilization and long-term development goals, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the peace building process in Afghanistan. Furthermore, it highlights the critical importance of inclusivity, resilience, and adaptability in constructing sustainable peace strategies. Through a comprehensive analysis of these multifaceted approaches, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on peace building in conflict-affected regions, offering insights that could inform future efforts in Afghanistan and beyond. By recognizing the interconnectedness of local, national, and international dynamics, the paper underscores the necessity of a holistic strategy in the quest for enduring peace.

Literature review

The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has lasted for decades, posing significant challenges to regional peace and stability. To resolve the conflict between the Taliban and opposition groups, new approaches must be applied to contentious issues and peacebuilding efforts. This study explores the role of domestic and international interactions in resolving the Afghan conflict and assesses the effectiveness of new policies and strategies within a peacebuilding framework. It highlights the potential of political transition and power sharing as viable solutions, backed by a literature review and critical examination of past policies. The study also contributes to the literature on consociationalism as a theoretical framework for conflict resolution and offers practical insights for its implementation in Afghanistan. Policymakers, academics, and practitioners can utilize the findings to address future conflicts more effectively in Afghanistan and other divided societies (Qayomi 2023). Afghanistan's post-conflict status is uncertain despite improvements since 2001, with widespread insecurity and a fragile peace influenced by complex factors. Rural development is critical for sustainable peace, as most Afghans live in rural areas. This paper examines the historical context, current state and peace-building efforts, the role of foreign military, and lessons from global and local participatory rural development initiatives, focusing on the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Fieldwork in 29 villages across five provinces revealed similar NSP issues, highlighting the need for effective rural development policies to support peace (Zakhilwal & Thomas 2005). Analyzes Indonesia's role in promoting peace in Afghanistan, with a focus on peacebuilding efforts. President Joko Widodo reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment during his 2018 visit to Kabul. Using Literacy's pyramid model of peacebuilding, which includes top leadership, middle range leadership, and grassroots leadership, the study shows Indonesia's involvement at all levels. At the top level, Indonesia promotes Intra-Afghan Talks. At the middle range, it conducts capacity-building programs and engages religious leaders (ulama). At the grassroots level, it empowers Afghan women as peace agents. Indonesia's comprehensive approach positively influences the Afghan peace process (Farizan & Heryadi 2020). The peace-building process in Afghanistan has garnered significant scholarly interest, with various social scientists proposing alternative solutions to achieve peace and political stability.

This study aims to contribute to these efforts by exploring a viable power-sharing mechanism for inclusive governance and lasting peace in Afghanistan. It specifically evaluates the consociational model of power sharing. However, the study finds that this model's applicability to Afghanistan is questionable due to the lack of favorable conditions and the adversarial, non-accommodative behavior of Afghan elites. The paper concludes that the effectiveness of the consociational model as a peace-building tool differs across contexts and is not universally suitable for all conflict-ridden societies (Ali & Mushtaq 2017). The Afghan people have endured significant hardships from the war on terror, security issues, and political and economic instability since the US invasion in 2001. As a key neighboring country, Pakistan can play a crucial role in fostering peace and stability by facilitating the peace process. Both the US administration and Afghan government urge Pakistan to influence the Taliban to engage in talks. This study examines Pakistan's involvement in the peace process, emphasizing that a stable Afghanistan benefits the entire region. Key issues include establishing a governance system, constitutional agreements, and a viable power-sharing formula acceptable to all parties. A successful peace deal requires strong commitment from all stakeholders. Pakistan must continue to support Afghanistan's stability and actively participate in peace negotiations for regional interests (Idrees et.al 2019).

Peacebuilding Efforts at the Wake of US Intervention in Afghanistan

The collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the United States and its Western allies to promote their ideology and values, particularly through state-building efforts in fragile and weak states. The peacebuilding project in Afghanistan, launched after the U.S. intervention, followed this approach. Initially, the Bush administration aimed to dismantle Al-Qaeda and defeat the Taliban. President Bush emphasized that these adversaries must be brought to justice, without negotiation (Archive 2003). Thus, the primary focus was on defeating terrorism, making peace a secondary goal within the state-building effort. The strategy assumed that defeating the Taliban would lead to a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference on Afghanistan was seen as a means to establish order and build the Afghan state. The process was flawed, excluding key players in the conflict, such as the Taliban and the Hizb-e-Islami party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who had significant

Pashtun support (Erlanger 2001). This exclusion alienated ethnic Pashtuns, particularly during the Karzai administration, which was dominated by former warlords and Northern Alliance affiliates. This division polarized the country along ethnic, regional, and linguistic lines. The Obama administration later adopted a more lenient approach towards the Taliban, aiming to weaken them and push for negotiations. This was evident in the establishment of a Taliban political office in Doha, Qatar (Rosenberg and Rubin 2013). These talks yielded little progress as the conflict escalated. The 2014 presidential elections highlighted a divided Afghanistan, struggling with ideological, ethnic, and linguistic differences. The intervention of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry led to the formation of a National Unity Government (NUG) with Dr. Ashraf Ghani, as President and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as Chief Executive Officer, but this did not resolve the divisions. The emergence of Western-educated technocrats further complicated governance.

The Trump administration took a different approach, formally engaging in peace talks with the Taliban, resulting in the February 2020 agreement (Mashal 2020). Many Afghans and international observers view this agreement as a face-saving measure for the U.S. and an election strategy by the Trump administration.

Political Transformation and Peacebuilding Opportunities

After the U.S. signed a peace deal with the Taliban, the former Afghan government held discussions with the Taliban's political leadership in Doha, Qatar, to seek ways to end the conflict and achieve a political resolution. Over the two years of negotiations before the Taliban took control of the country, international powers, especially the U.S., aimed to foster trust between the conflicting sides and advance the peace process. Despite the U.S.'s support for the peace talks, the former Afghan government and the Taliban failed to build a trusting relationship, hindering their ability to reach a political solution. Consequently, the U.S. and its allies decided to withdraw from Afghanistan. On August 15, the Taliban seized Kabul, marking their return to power for the first time since they ruled most of the country from 1996 to 2001. With the collapse of the previous government, the Taliban became the de facto rulers, forming a new government and state system.

There are several reasons why the Doha process and the U.S. approach to peacebuilding in Afghanistan failed. The U.S. underestimated the Taliban's strength and overestimated the Afghan Army and politicians' willingness to fight. For twenty years prior to the peace agreement with the Taliban, the U.S. and the previous Afghan government relied on military peace building to reduce violence and stabilize the country. The U.S., as the dominant partner, prioritized a military approach to defeat the Taliban and stop the violence. This focus on military solutions prevented a clear and effective strategy for engaging directly with the Taliban to find a political settlement. As a result, when the U.S. initiated peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, it committed to withdrawing its troops, losing advantage to persuade the Taliban to negotiate a political settlement. By the time, the U.S. shifted its policy to engage the Taliban in negotiations to end the war, it was too late. The Afghan conflict involves numerous domestic and international stakeholders, including Pakistan, Russia, Iran, India, and China. Achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan requires aligning the U.S. approach with the regional powers' strategies for peacebuilding. Without regional cooperation, U.S. peacebuilding efforts were destined to fail. The former Afghan government under President Ghani failed to build consensus for peace negotiations, facing internal disputes with key figures like Dr. Abdullah, former Chairman of the Afghanistan High Council for National Reconciliation. Over the past decade, as the U.S. gradually withdrew its forces, the ruling class in Kabul prioritized personal power and wealth over improving governance and military capabilities, leading to political crises and administrative paralysis. The peace process has been important to both the Taliban and the Afghan people, but they have vastly different views on peace. The lack of coordination and cooperation among internal stakeholders, international players, and regional actors was a major reason the U.S. approach to the Doha peace process failed to bring peace to Afghanistan. Since the Taliban took over the country, they have not formed an inclusive government or compromised with opposition groups to achieve lasting

peace. Despite these challenges, regional and international powers have not recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. To address these issues and find a comprehensive solution, it is crucial to revive and reorganize the Doha peace process to reach a political settlement between the Taliban and other political parties. This effort requires developing a new framework

That emphasizes collaboration among local, regional, and global strategies for peacebuilding, aiming to fully implement the Doha agreement and achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan (Qayomi 2023).

Methods and Material

The current study presents a qualitative analysis of the available and relevant data on the issue. The first section is introductory which gives an orientation about the study. The second section elaborates the available literature on the peacebuilding in Afghanistan, its success, and failure. The third section analyses the Economic perspectives for peacebuilding in Afghanistan and conflict resolution and at last, this section proposes 'what would be a viable and workable peacebuilding strategy for Afghanistan?

This research paper will focus mainly on the hybrid theory and the global approach to peacebuilding. The main reason for advocating hybrid theory is to achieve greater efficiency and sustainability in peacebuilding efforts. With hybrid, these activities are likely to face less resistance from local stakeholders, locally derived solutions are also deemed more suitable for addressing sovereignty issues. Peacebuilding is often criticized for being an externally imposed activity on post-conflict nations, but emphasizing self-determination helps mitigate this criticism. The research aims to uncover new strategies and policies for peacebuilding, providing a comprehensive analysis of the subject. It will cover various aspects of conflict resolution, including external- domestic interactions, local, regional, and international approaches to peace negotiations, conflict prevention, management, resolution, and transformation, as well as post-conflict reconciliation, peace agreements in historical context, and political transitions. Achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan necessitates the active collaboration of local, regional, and global peacebuilding strategies.

Economic perspectives for peacebuilding in Afghanistan

The review of economic reconstruction in post-war peacebuilding highlights several lessons for Afghanistan. Economic factors are critical for peacebuilding, and policies must balance economic and political objectives. There is no universal blueprint for reconstruction; policies must be tailored to Afghanistan's context to avoid past mistakes. Key lessons include the importance of demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants, adapting conventional wisdom to post-war realities, maintaining flexibility, and ensuring intensive monitoring and evaluation (Woodward 2002). Prioritizing employment generation, enhancing budgetary support and national institution building, carefully selecting aid recipients, and recognizing the potential distortions caused by large peace missions. Afghanistan must take charge of its reconstruction, focusing on job creation, stimulating the economy, and ensuring fair distribution of benefits. Donors should support Afghanistan's planning and implementation capabilities without

overwhelming them and should provide sensitive funding to bolster budgetary support and peacebuilding activities (Suhrke 2002).

Multifaceted approaches

Multifaceted approaches for peace building involve employing a variety of strategies and methods to address the complex factors contributing to conflict and promote sustainable peace. These approaches often include dialogue and mediation, conflict resolution training, community engagement, economic development initiatives, education and awareness programs, transitional justice mechanisms, and strengthening governance and institutions. By addressing multiple dimensions of conflict simultaneously, these approaches aim to build peace from the grassroots level up to national and international levels.

Conflict resolution

In today's global context, conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining peace and preventing disputes, rivalries, and incompatibilities. Prominent leaders, scholars, and civil society emphasize its importance. Conflict resolution involves peaceful, non-violent methods such as diplomacy, communication, negotiation, and mediation. Conflict resolution is vital in balancing and transforming societies by addressing human crises and preventing wars. It promotes social justice, harmony, and global equity. Conflicts arise from various causes, including personal, racial, class, political, and economic differences. Understanding these conflicts requires recognizing the diverse interests and values of individuals and groups. Conflicts often emerge from clashes over limited resources and perceived exploitation. In modern politics, these dynamics can be seen in the divide (Wani 2017).

Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

Peacebuilding in Afghanistan is a complex and multifaceted challenge due to its prolonged conflict, diverse ethnic composition, and geopolitical significance. Among various peacebuilding theories, Hybrid Peacebuilding is particularly suitable for Afghanistan. This approach combines local and international efforts, emphasizing the integration of traditional, community-based methods with modern state-building practices.

Local Legitimacy and Ownership

Afghan ownership of the peace process is essential for its legitimacy, sustainability, and cultural relevance. When led by Afghans themselves, the process gains credibility among the local population, fostering trust and support crucial for lasting peace. It empowers local leaders and institutions, building their capacity in conflict resolution and governance while promoting national unity and cohesion. Afghan ownership reduces external influence, safeguarding Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence. Ultimately, it ensures that peace initiatives are tailored to local needs and contexts, enhancing their effectiveness and long-term impact on the country's stability and development.

Afghanistan's rich tradition of local governance and dispute resolution through tribal elders and councils (Jirgas and Shuras) plays a critical role in community cohesion. Hybrid peacebuilding

leverages these indigenous structures to enhance legitimacy and ensure that peace initiatives resonate with local populations.

Jirgas

In Afghanistan, "Jirgas" are traditional assemblies of leaders and elders that play a crucial role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Originating from Pashtun culture, a Jirga is a respected community gathering where decisions are made through consensus, providing a platform for dialogue and negotiation to mediate conflicts and find peaceful solutions. They have deep cultural and historical roots, giving them a high degree of legitimacy and respect among local populations. While traditionally male-dominated, efforts to include women and youth have been made to ensure broader representation and more comprehensive peace agreements. Jirgas focus on restorative justice, emphasizing reconciliation and community cohesion over punitive measures, which is essential for healing and rebuilding trust in post-conflict settings. In areas with weak or absent formal state structures, Jirgas often serve as a form of local governance, maintaining social order and addressing community needs. There are also efforts to integrate Jirgas with formal state justice systems, creating a hybrid model that combines traditional and modern approaches to governance and justice. Jirgas are vital to Afghanistan's peacebuilding efforts, leveraging traditional practices to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and stability in communities.

Shuras

Shuras, derived from the Arabic word "shura" meaning consultation, are traditional councils used in Afghanistan for decision-making and conflict resolution. In peacebuilding, Shuras engage local elders and influential leaders to address and resolve conflicts, facilitate dialogue, and build consensus among community stakeholders. Operating within the framework of local traditions and Islamic principles, their decisions are culturally relevant and legitimate to the local population. Shuras effectively mediate disputes such as land issues, family conflicts, and inter-tribal disagreements, preventing escalation into violence. While independent, they often interact with

Formal government institutions, bridging local communities and the state, and enhancing governmental peacebuilding efforts. By providing a platform for inclusive dialogue, Shuras ensure that diverse community voices, including those of marginalized groups, are heard and addressed, making them integral to sustainable peace in Afghanistan's complex sociopolitical landscape.

Cultural Sensitivity

A hybrid approach respects and incorporates Afghanistan's cultural and religious norms, crucial for gaining the trust of the Afghan people. It avoids the pitfalls of purely external, top-down interventions that often lack cultural relevance and local buy-in.

Flexibility and Adaptability

The hybrid model allows for a more flexible and context-specific approach to peacebuilding, adapting strategies to the unique social, political, and economic landscapes of different Afghan regions.

Complementary Strengths

By combining the resources, expertise, and institutional support of international actors with the intimate local knowledge and authority of Afghan communities, hybrid peacebuilding maximizes the strengths of both sides. International actors can provide financial resources, technical expertise, and diplomatic advantage, while local actors ensure that peace initiatives are culturally appropriate and locally accepted.

Building Inclusive Governance

Hybrid peacebuilding promotes the development of inclusive political institutions that can mediate between different ethnic and tribal groups, fostering a more stable and unified national identity. This is essential in a country like Afghanistan, where exclusionary politics have often fueled conflict.

Sustainable Peace

By rooting peacebuilding efforts in local contexts and ensuring that international frameworks support them, hybrid peacebuilding aims for sustainability. Local ownership ensures that peace is maintained beyond the presence of international forces, addressing root causes rather than just symptoms of conflict.

International and Modern Approaches

With the Taliban taking control of the Afghan government, the international approach towards peacebuilding and stability in Afghanistan must pivot to address several critical aspects. This includes diplomatic engagement with the Taliban to understand their governance intentions and ensure adherence to international norms, such as human rights and inclusivity. Maintaining humanitarian assistance is essential to address immediate needs among vulnerable populations. Security efforts should focus on stabilizing the country and preventing the resurgence of terrorism. Regional cooperation remains crucial for managing refugee flows and preventing cross-border instability. A sustained international commitment to Afghanistan's long-term development and stability is imperative, encompassing economic support, governance reforms, and efforts to promote social cohesion amidst significant political changes (Doe 2021).

State-building Efforts

These include establishing and strengthening governmental institutions, promoting the rule of law, and enhancing the capacity of the Afghan state to govern effectively and provide services to its citizens.

International Support and Aid

Peacebuilding efforts often involve significant financial and technical support from international organizations, NGOs, and foreign governments.

Conclusion

The intricate tapestry of Afghanistan's journey towards peace underscores the necessity of employing multifaceted approaches to address the underlying causes and manifestations of conflict. This research has demonstrated that effective peace building in Afghanistan requires a holistic strategy that integrates grassroots initiatives, national reforms, and international support. Local peace building efforts, rooted in traditional conflict resolution and community engagement, play a crucial role in fostering trust and cooperation among diverse ethnic and social groups. These grassroots movements are vital for creating a foundation of peace that is resilient and culturally sensitive. At the national level, the pursuit of inclusive governance and political reforms is essential for bridging divides and promoting stability. The integration of former combatants and the promotion of human rights are pivotal in transforming a fractured society into a cohesive one. National policies must be designed to address socio-economic disparities, which are often at the heart of prolonged conflicts. Internationally, sustained diplomatic engagement, economic aid, and developmental programs have shown to be indispensable in supporting Afghanistan's peace building efforts. However, the international community must ensure that its involvement respects Afghan sovereignty and aligns with the aspirations of the Afghan people. Long-term peace Building in Afghanistan requires a concerted effort to harmonize international aid with local needs and priorities. This study underscores that peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved through a singular approach. It necessitates the concerted efforts of local communities, national authorities, and international stakeholders, each playing a complementary role. The interplay between these levels of intervention highlights the complexity of peace building and the need for a coordinated, inclusive strategy that adapts to evolving circumstances.

In conclusion, the path to sustainable peace in Afghanistan is arduous but attainable through a multifaceted approach that emphasizes inclusivity, adaptability, and resilience. By learning from experiences and continually refining strategies to address the root causes of conflict, Afghanistan can move towards a future marked by peace and development. The insights gained from this research can serve as a valuable guide for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars engaged in peace building efforts not only in Afghanistan but also in other conflict-affected regions worldwide.

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