



THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
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The Interplay Between False Readiness and Negative Hybrid Peace
The Doha Peace Process in Afghanistan (2018-2021)

Master's Thesis

Samiul Haq Qayomi

Master of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies

May 2025



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DEDICATION

The present thesis is dedicated to:

My beloved mother, whose unwavering love and sacrifices have been inspiring;

My dear father, Abdul Qayom, who first taught me how to read and write, as well as has dedicated over forty years of his invaluable life to the service of public education;

My wife, Nilofar Qayomi, whose steadfast support, encouragement, and patience were vital and determinant to this great achievement; and

My son, Yama Qayomi, whose early curiosity encouraged my efforts throughout this thesis.



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“Whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah”

Mankind is inherently a social being who is inclined to form communities and societies (attributed to Aristotle, 1885). The essence of society lies in the necessity of collaboration among individuals. In the absence of cooperation to meet one another's needs, the formation of a society does not make sense. To enhance social solidarity and cooperation, it is essential to recognize, appreciate, and acknowledge the good deeds we extend to each other. Completing my master's degree has been a journey filled with challenges, growth, and invaluable support. I am deeply grateful to the individuals and institutions that played a significant role throughout this process, each contributing in unique ways to make this achievement possible. In this context, my wholeheartedly thanks are, hereby, extended to the Social Science University of Ankara for the chance given to me to pursue my graduate studies. Additionally, my profound thanks go to the esteemed management of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) for their generous support in granting me a great opportunity to make this achievement happen concurrently with my professional responsibilities.

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ABSTRACT

Genuine commitment of disputing parties to settle conflict peacefully is an essential element of a successful negotiation. Established theories in conflict resolution assert that conflicting parties likely want to resolve their dispute peacefully once they enter negotiations. In protracted conflicts, however, this is not always the case, as conflicting parties may initiate peace talks for reasons other than reaching a negotiated settlement. Moreover, hybrid peace building model has been prescribed as the most appropriate for the conflicting societies. Nonetheless, the aforementioned dominant argument in conflict resolution, as well as the hybrid model of peace flopped in Afghanistan, particularly concerning the Doha peace process (or intra-Afghan negotiations).

The present dissertation argues that the failure of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN) was due to the interplay between the false readiness of the conflicting parties and negative hybrid peace efforts. Neither the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan nor the Taliban demonstrated sufficient interest in a negotiated resolution to the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations. This deficiency in commitment is about power dynamics and the US-Taliban agreement signed on February 29, 2020 in Doha, which influenced the approaches of the parties to the pursuit of peace.

The study deploys “False Readiness Theory” as its main theoretical framework and negative hybrid peace as the central conceptual base to demonstrate their intersection in the context of Afghanistan peace process. Data was collected qualitatively from primary and secondary sources, mainly through interviews with negotiating team members and former officials of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. This thesis critically exposes the deep connection between false readiness theory and the negative hybrid peace approach in the intra-Afghan peace negotiations, directly challenging the dominant view that the hybrid peace model best suits conflict-affected societies. It further examines the model’s theoretical and practical implications, while highlighting key limitations and offering recommendations.

Key Words: Intra-Afghan Negotiations, US-Taliban Agreement, False Readiness, Negative Hybrid Peace

ÖZET

İhtilafı tarafların anlaşmazlığı barışçıl bir şekilde çözmeye yönelik samimi taahhütleri başarılı bir müzakerenin temel unsurudur. Çatışma çözümünde yerleşik teoriler, çatışan tarafların müzakerelere başladıklarında muhtemelen anlaşmazlıklarını barışçıl bir şekilde çözmek isteyeceklerini ileri sürer. Ancak uzun süren çatışmalarda durum her zaman böyle değildir, zira çatışan taraflar müzakere edilmiş bir çözüme ulaşmaktan başka nedenlerle de barış görüşmelerine başlayabilirler. Dahası, çatışan toplumlar için en uygun model olarak hibrit barış inşası modeli öngörülmüştür. Bununla birlikte, çatışma çözümünde yukarıda bahsedilen baskın argüman ve melez barış modeli Afganistan'da, özellikle Doha barış süreci (veya Afganistan içi müzakereler) ile ilgili olarak başarısız olmuştur.

Bu tez, Afganistan İç Müzakerelerin başarısız olmasının, çatışan tarafların yanlış hazırlıkları ile olumsuz hibrit barış çabaları arasındaki etkileşimden kaynaklandığını savunmaktadır. Ne Afganistan İslam Cumhuriyeti hükümeti ne de Taliban, Afganistan içi müzakereler sırasında çatışmanın müzakere yoluyla çözümüne yeterli ilgiyi göstermemiştir. Taahhütteki bu eksiklik, güç dinamikleri ve 29 Şubat 2020'de Doha'da imzalanan ve tarafların barış arayışına yaklaşımlarını etkileyen ABD-Taliban anlaşmasıyla ilgilidir.

Çalışma, ana teorik çerçeve olarak “Sahte Hazırbulunuşluk” ni ve Afganistan barış süreci bağlamında bunların kesişimini göstermek için merkezi kavramsal temel olarak negatif hibrit barışı kullanmaktadır. Veriler, ağırlıklı olarak müzakere ekibi üyeleri ve Afganistan İslam Cumhuriyeti'nin eski yetkilileriyle yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla birincil ve ikincil kaynaklardan niteliksel olarak toplanmıştır. Bu tez, sahte hazırbulunuşluk teorisi ile Afganistan içi barış müzakerelerindeki olumsuz hibrit barış yaklaşımı arasındaki derin bağlantıyı eleştirel bir şekilde ortaya koymakta ve hibrit barış modelinin çatışmadan etkilenen toplumlara en uygun model olduğu yönündeki hâkim görüşe doğrudan meydan okumaktadır. Ayrıca, modelin teorik ve pratik çıkarımlarını incelerken, temel sınırlamaları vurgulamakta ve öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan İç Görüşmeler, ABD-Taliban Anlaşması, Sahte Hazırbulunuşluk, Negatif Hibrit Barış

DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Islamic Republic (Republic, Government): Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Taliban: The Islamic Taliban Movement

IAN: Intra-Afghan Negotiation (interchangeably used with Doha Peace Process)

US-Taliban Agreement: Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America, signed on 29 February 2020 in Doha, Qatar

Doha Agreement: US-Taliban Agreement

SRAR (or the Envoy): Special Representative of the United States for Afghanistan Reconciliation (namely for Doha peace process)

FR: False Readiness Theory

CR: Conflict Resolution

MHS: Mutual Hurting Stalemate

CPA: The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed in January 2005 between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)

PDPA: People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (in Persian: *Hezb-e-Demokratik-e-Khalq-e-Afghanistan*)

US: United States of America

NRP: National Reconciliation Program

UN: United Nations

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UNOSOM: The United Nations Operation in Somalia

SNA: Somalian National Alliance

SSR: Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union or the Soviet)

ANSF: National Security Forces of Afghanistan

HPC: High Peace Council [of Afghanistan]

TTP: Tahrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

UNAMIR: United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

BSA: Bilateral Security Agreement with the US

HCNR: High Council for National Reconciliation [of Afghanistan]

UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

RNT: The Islamic Republic Negotiations Team

Head of the Republic Negotiation Team: Masoom Stanikzi

Senior Advisor: Senior Advisor to the State Ministry for Peace of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Shoaib Rahim)

Chargé d'affaires: Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Qatar (Azimullah Worsaji)

Spokesperson: Spokesperson and member of the Islamic Republic negotiation team with the Taliban (Nader Nadery)

A member of the Islamic Republic Negotiation Team: Ghulam Farooq Majrooh



FIGURES

Figure 1- Pg. 21: Readiness Theory: Conditions for Commencement of Negotiations

Figure 2 – Pg. 24: False Readiness: Opening Negotiations

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

The current Chapter attempts to paint a clear and explicit picture of the study's topic, research questions, aims, arguments, and methodology. It further recapitulates the overall work conducted in this thesis.

1.1 Problem Statement and Argument

The Islamic Taliban Movement regarded their first regime (from 1996 to 2001) as legitimate government. They viewed overthrow of their rule by the United States of America and its allies as occupation. Therefore, the Movement never accepted to recognize the US-backed Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which was established during Bonn Conference in 2001. The Taliban considered the Islamic Republic to be mere puppet of the United States, having persistently refused to enter in direct negotiations with it. Instead, the Movement opted to talk with the United States to end the, what they termed, 'occupation'. Ultimately, after multiple rounds of negotiations—conducted without the Islamic Republic—the Taliban and the US reached an agreement in February 2020 in Doha. As part of this accord, the Taliban agreed to engage in direct talks with the Islamic Republic, but not as their sole counterpart. Rather, they viewed the government as one of the factions amongst the domestic political community. This viewpoint is also evident in the name of the peace negotiations, being referred to as 'the intra-Afghan negotiations' (IAN). The term intra-Afghan negotiation refers to peace talks between not only the Islamic Republic and the Taliban, but also a broader spectrum of political factions that lasted from 2020 to 2021. The precise reference of the term 'intra-Afghan negotiations' is difficult to identify; however, within the context of this thesis, it primarily gained significance in connection with the US-Taliban agreement. This term is mentioned on the first page, paragraph 3, of the said agreement, where it emphasized the need for commencement of peace talks between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic on March 10, 2020. Additionally, it has been used interchangeably with 'intra-Afghan talks' and 'intra-Afghan dialogues' throughout the peace efforts in Afghanistan. The current thesis has opted to use 'intra-Afghan negotiations' to encompass all these concepts, which is also utilized sometimes interchangeably with the Doha Peace Process.

The intra-Afghan negotiation failed to produce a peaceful resolution to the country's conflict, despite being a unique chance in the history of peace attempts between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, various authors and academics worked on the causes of the talks' failure. Dostyar & Farahi (2022), for instance, argued that parallel structures and leadership issues in the Republic camp were two factors that hindered the intra-Afghan peace negotiations. Others, such as Ibrahim (2022), Helali (2024), Verma (2021), and Tastemirova, Badloon, and Gabitova (2023), contended that the Taliban used negotiations to achieve their strategic objectives rather than to reach an agreement. These authors and researchers emphasized on the US-Taliban agreement's contribution to the collapse of the intra-Afghan negotiations by giving the Taliban a sense of victory over the Republic.

While these works have offered valuable insights about the Taliban's position and how their willingness for peace was influenced by the US-Taliban agreement (can also be called Doha Agreement), they have largely overlooked the Islamic Republic's approach or the influence of the Doha agreement on the Republic's stance during the peace talks. As an attempt to fill this gap, the current study argues that neither the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan nor the Taliban demonstrated sufficient interest in a negotiated resolution to the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations. This deficiency in commitment to peace was due to the US-Taliban agreement influence on both parties. On one hand, the Islamic Republic adopted a reactive stance to the agreement and thus made no compromise on a new set-up of power-sharing. On the other, the Taliban, believing that the agreement undermined the Republic, no longer possessed motivation to pursue the peace talks with the government. Consequently, the false readiness of the conflicting parties in the talks coupled with negative hybrid peace efforts that stemmed from the US-Taliban agreement led the intra-Afghan negotiations to failure.

1.2 Research Questions

- A.** To what extent were the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban committed to achieving a negotiated settlement for the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations?
- B.** In what ways did the US-Taliban Agreement influence the parties in terms of achieving peace?

1.3 Research Purpose

In response to a question posed by Lutfullah Najafizadah of TOLONews (2021) concerning the Taliban's desire for peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan

Reconciliation (SRAR- also called special envoy in this thesis), pointed out a finger at both the government and the Taliban, implicitly stating that they were not serious about the talks due to not being ready to agree upon “what to give and what to receive.”

As a matter of concern, during the negotiations, the question of commitment was addressed by Serajuddin Haqqani, the current interior minister and deputy Supreme Leader of the Taliban, in his op-ed “*what we, the Taliban, want*” published in New York Times (2021). Apparently convinced the killing must stop, he, in that op-ed, expressed Taliban’s commitment “to work with other parties to agree on a new and inclusive political system where no Afghan feels excluded.” Similarly, President Ashraf Ghani of the Islamic Republic also pledged to make sacrifices for peace; however, he blamed the Taliban having no will for that (TOLONews, 2021). Given these illustrations, the current study aims to explore:

- (I) The Taliban and Islamic Republic’s commitments for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, compared to one another, during the intra-Afghan negotiations, which was conducted in September 2020 to August 2021;
- (II) Whether or not both parties’ approaches to peace negotiations were influenced, positively or negatively, by the US-Taliban agreement;
- (III) Lastly, through conducting a comprehensive examination of the Doha peace process, with the intra-Afghan negotiations at its core, the thesis at hand intends to reveal any potential relationship betwixt False Readiness Theory and Negative Hybrid Peace conceptual layout.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The False Readiness and Negative Hybrid Peace concept combined are applied to analyze the failure of the Doha peace process in Afghanistan, namely the intra-Afghan negotiations. The false readiness theory (FR), introduced by Schwartz and Gilboa (2021), highlights strategic use of peace negotiations by conflicting parties to achieve their goals other than reaching a negotiated agreement. Meanwhile, Oliver Richmond (2015) coined the notion of Negative Hybrid Peace as a critique to the Liberal and Hybrid Peace models, emphasizing the persistence contradictions between local and international peacebuilding approach and that hybrid peace theory holds potential for a peace process to be influenced by international actors, ultimately resulting in a hybrid negative peace. Detailed discussion about the theoretical framework shall be carried out in Chapter Two.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Research Type and Design

The underlying research is a single case study. According to Yin (1994- cited by Sinha, 2017), case studies are either single-case design or multi-case design. As the name suggests, a single case study focuses on a single subject or one specific case with an in-depth analysis rather than a large group of population. Single case design is considered as appropriate for studying a case which holds potential to conform or challenge a theory. This design is well aligned with the subject of the present dissertation as it conforms a theory (false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace) while challenging the argument made by the advocate of hybrid peace in general. Furthermore, this study deployed qualitative research method to understand the subject under investigation. This approach, which is usually used together with single case study design, aims to explore and interpret views of a group of people about a certain phenomenon. The common ground between single case study and qualitative method is that both concentrate on detailed exploration of a case. This method, therefore, is well-suited for the present study as it enables the author to reflect and analyze better the stories collected from the research participants concerning the topic.

1.5.2 Data Collection Techniques, Sampling, and Ethics Principles

This study has used primary and secondary data. To achieve this goal, the present dissertation deployed semi-structured interview and process tracing techniques along with utilizing available relevant documents and opinions. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection technique that combines structured and open-ended interviews. In this technique, the research questions are formulated in advance, while the researcher holds flexibility, during the interview, to navigate through the topic as per the responses received from the interviewees.

Regarding the process tracing, it is a qualitative method in case studies that encompasses an in-depth investigation of key events within a process and their relationship to the outcome. Punton and Welle (2015) assert that this methodological technique not only determines whether an event occurred, but also shows why it took place. The term ‘trace’ is characterized by Beach (2020) as ‘pieces of evidence whose mere existence provide proof’. Additionally, according to Collier (2011), process tracing concentrates on unfolding key moments in a process overtime. To effectively grasp these moments, it is important to illustrate them with adequate clarity. He further notes that identifying key events related to a process plays a vital role in comprehensive analyze of change and sequence. This method is well aligned with the present study since it

has delved into the key events occurred within the historical context of Afghanistan's conflict and peace process. Interconnection among these events has also been explored. The key events that are stipulated in the current dissertation are analyzed to comprehend the perspectives of the conflicting parties concerning peace and their relation to the intra-Afghan negotiations. For instance, analyzing of the US-Taliban agreement in relation to the intra-Afghan negotiations, which seeks to expose the casual relationships between these two events, is well-fallen within the scope of the process tracing method.

This dissertation sought to figure out the positions of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban in the intra-Afghan peace negotiations. Therefore, it deemed suitable and relevant to select the former members of the negotiation team and the officials of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for interview. A total of five interviews were conducted within the time interval spanning from October to December 2024. The interviewees consisted of three members from the Islamic Republic's negotiation team, including head of the team, alongside with a former senior advisor to the State Ministry for Peace and then Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic in Doha, Qatar. Three participants were interviewed in English, while interviews with Islamic Republic negotiations team member Ghulam Farooq Majrooh and Chargé d'affaires Azimullah Worsaji were conducted in Persian. These interviews were later translated into English. As far as the Persian interviews are concerned, the author employed back-translation and comparative approach to ensure accuracy of the English text with the original version. All the quotations from the interviewees that have been cited in this thesis were received on the operation dates, noted in relevant parts of Chp.3, of the respective interviews, conducted via WhatsApp, E-mail and Google Meet communication instruments. The author encountered several challenges while utilizing these instruments, including difficulty in reaching certain participants, delays in responses, differences in schedules, and the failure of some individuals to honor their commitments. For instance, a senior member of the Taliban negotiation team responded to the author's request after several days of waiting, assuring that he would address the research questions; however, he ultimately did not fulfil his promise. This was part of the author's significant efforts to engage Taliban members for their insights. Similarly, contact was carried out with a member of the Islamic Republic negotiation team, but despite several days of follow-up, there was no response to the messages. Additionally, though, the signatures were received, the process of obtaining them from some research participants for their informed consent posed another challenge primarily due to their lack of technological knowledge as well as the complexities associated with the electronic

signature on the Research Participants Form. These hurdles significantly slowed the data collection process, which could have been more smooth, efficient and comprehensive if interviews had been conducted in person. Lastly, the author adhered strictly to research ethical principles, as he received the attached (to this thesis) Ethics Committee Approval for the present dissertation.

Furthermore, this study used purposive sampling, which is a non-random sampling technique. This means the interviewees were not selected randomly; rather the decision related to the individuals to be included in the research for data collection was taken by the author based on their “knowledge of the research subject, accessibility and willingness to participate in this study”, as Rai and Thapa (2015) stated. The aim is to concentrate on individuals with similar and particular characteristics that are of interest and enable the researcher to answer the research question. According to Ishak & Abu Bakar (2014), three situations call for the use of purposive sampling in case studies: (1) the case is required to be unique; (2) the population’s members would be hard to reach; and (3) a case is needed to select for in-depth investigation. The author believes that this sampling technique is relevant to the case in question. Because the research subject is new to a great deal of extent, it was difficult to reach to majority of the individuals for interview, and an in-depth examination of the case was carried out as shall be seen in the coming chapters.

The selection of research participants was guided by their expertise and direct knowledge of the research topic, ensuring that they served as first-hand sources with valuable insights. In addition to their subject-matter proficiency, their accessibility to the author played a crucial role in the selection process, facilitating communication and engagement. Given the researcher’s comprehensive understanding of their professional backgrounds and areas of expertise, he was able to independently identify the most suitable participants. Moreover, the participants had previous engagements in research and public discussions related to the Doha Peace Process, which indicated a high likelihood of their willingness to contribute to this study. This prediction was confirmed through their participation to the current study. However, concerning to some of the participants, the author sought assistance, without compromising selection criteria, from relevant individuals to obtain their contact details. The author maintained a strictly professional relationship with all participants, engaging with them solely in the capacity of a researcher. This neutrality helped uphold objectivity, ethical integrity, and methodological professionalism throughout the interview process.

1.5.3 Rational for Selection of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations as the Case

The Doha peace process (or intra-Afghan peace negotiations) has been selected as the case for the present thesis for multiple compelling reasons. First, the conflict in Afghanistan has remained unresolved, and one of the direct parties (the Taliban) involved in the intra-Afghan negotiations currently rules the country. This makes their role in reshaping Afghanistan's future significantly important. Examining the Taliban's approach throughout the intra-Afghan negotiations will offer valuable lessons for developing appropriate strategies regarding future peace efforts in which the Taliban will be a key player. Secondly, this case provides a great deal of opportunity to test the False Readiness Theory (FR) as a new perspective in the field of conflict resolution. Additionally, the intra-Afghan negotiations holds unique potential to critically assess hybrid peace model, thereby making important contribution to the field. Thirdly, the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, after twenty years experiencing of governance and some level of democracy, has profoundly shocked the society. This critical juncture of the history which resulted from the intra-Afghan negotiations motivated the author to attach importance to the case as it can lead us to a better comprehending of government's weaknesses along with the type of peace and governance that were enacted in Afghanistan during more than the past two decades. Lastly, the author has closely observed developments in Afghanistan. This expertise enables him to produce a qualified work for the field.

1.5.4 Results

The results (or findings) of this thesis have been detailed in Chapter Three, where they are analyzed thematically with regards to the research questions. An outstanding portion of the data consist direct quotations from the interviewees and other relevant sources. Readers are advised to undertake the following steps to verify the results.

- Critically assess and compare the findings with existing literatures and sources;
- Cross-reference the research participants' perspectives and compare them with other sources cited in the results;
- Critically evaluate quotations and sources, examining whether they are contextualized within the dissertation;
- Lastly, scrutinize the references and evaluate their relevance to the topic.

1.5.5 Validity and Credibility of the Results

The peace initiatives between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, which emerged in the years following the Republic's establishment in 2001, have generally been referred to as intra-Afghan negotiations or dialogue. However, to maintain a clear focus on the study's objectives, this dissertation delineates a specific timeframe, concentrating on the Doha peace process—from 2018 to 2021—which encompasses both the US-Taliban peace talks and the intra-Afghan negotiations. Furthermore, the author has selected individuals for the interview who were directly involved in the peace process. These individuals include members of the negotiation team and former officials of the Islamic Republic. To enhance reliability and validity of the findings, the identities of the research participants have been disclosed with their informed consent. All the interviewees are public figures and made their overarching opinions about the intra-Afghan negotiations publically available. Therefore, one may assess their comments presented in this thesis compared to their perspectives that are available online by researching their names on Google, YouTube, and etc.

Additionally, the author utilized data gathered not only from the local and external decision-making officials but also from trustworthy independent sources such as the United Nations, US Institute of Peace, Guardian, and New York Times etc. The perspectives that have been referenced in this study can be easily accessed either via links or citations provided in the references list. To ensure the internal validity—particularly whether the thesis addresses its intended aims—a clearly defined questionnaire was formulated and distributed with the interviewees. This approach maintains the concentration of the participants on the subject while responding. As can be seen in the questionnaire enclosed to the present thesis, each question is strictly aligned and connected with the primary objectives and research questions of the current study. This initiative assisted the interviewees and the author to avoid any potential distractions from topics that are within the intended scope of the dissertation. The internal validity of this research was further elevated by deployment of the process tracing method, establishing a temporal order of the events. Adhered to this method, the author effectively focused on identifying and analyzing the significant events occurred during the peace process, linking them to the study's intended purpose. This approach enabled the author to maintain his focus within the defined scope, thereby minimizing redundant discussions.

1.5.6 Contribution of the Study

Though, Chapter Four provides a comprehensive discussion about contribution of this thesis to the field, both in theory and practice, the key points can be summarized as follows:

- The study promotes applicability of the false readiness theory as a new development in conflict resolution. This thesis is—arguably—only the second case in which the theory has been applied.
- This dissertation challenges the argument which defines hybrid peace as the best suited for the conflicting societies. Alternatively, it supports hybrid negative peace approach in the peace process of Afghanistan, thereby suggesting a prudent perspective regarding hybrid peace model.
- This thesis presents evidences that expose an intertwined relationship between the false readiness theory and the negative hybrid peace concept, suggesting potential avenues for developing a new theoretical concept.
- The study successfully addressed the gap in the literature concerning the Islamic Republic's approach towards the intra-Afghan peace negotiations.
- The study further offers valuable insights for strategists to avoid any miscalculation at the onset of negotiations. Rather, they are advised to encourage readiness of the parties involved before negotiations.
- The present work enlightens strategists and scholars that the exclusion of a key internal player fosters mistrust and followed by a deficiency in commitments and collaboration necessary for the success of peace endeavors.
- This study offers critical insights and cautions practitioners that reliance and trust on international actors should not be overstated.
- Last but not least, the present work may serve as a credible attempt to attract pertinent lecturers, researchers, and students to the case of Afghanistan in the Social Science University of Ankara, as the author observed the absence of this case in the materials during his studentship.

1.5.7 Limitations

One of the primary challenges faced during the research was time constraint, as the author is a full-time employee. The opportunity to work on the current study was limited to after business hours only. This limitation may have impacted on the study. The findings could have been broader if an expanded period of time had been available to the author. Security concerns may have also impacted this thesis. The author would travel to Afghanistan to obtain the Taliban's

perspective on the topic at hand but he could not visit the country due to security concerns that arose from the current situation there. Conducting direct interview with the Taliban's relevant officials would have certainly enriched the study's results. Nevertheless, the author sought to mitigate this limitation through utilizing opinions publically available from the Taliban and other pertinent credible sources.

Additional limitation that the author encountered was insufficient time allocated by the interviewees. The author would be able to further delve into the subject provided that the interviewees had allowed him adequate time to respond his questions. This would have, in turn, yielded more substantial insights into the topic under examination.

Lastly, this study has provided pivotal insights into the relation between False Readiness Theory and Negative Hybrid Peace via investigating the Doha peace process in Afghanistan. However, to substantiate a direct relationship between these theories, further research is recommended across various cases. The wider discourse on the limitations of the present study is presented in Chapter Four.

1.5.8 Chapter Breakdown

The current research is composed of four chapters. Chapter One contains introduction, while Chapter Two will present the main theoretical framework and literature review. The findings will be presented under Chapter Three, and consequently Chapter Four discusses the results, implications, limitations, recommendations, and over all conclusion. Every single chapter starts with an introduction and ends with a conclusion.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed overarching direction of the present thesis, encompassing the purpose of the dissertation, research questions, core argument, and methodology. An attempt has been made to mitigate any potential ambiguity regarding the whole points noted. The author endeavored to show what is he seeking for, which kind of data did he use, how did he obtain the data, how can these data be trusted, what did he found, and lastly what is the contribution and limitation of his work to the field. By a thoroughly focus on the explanations that have been presented in the current chapter, an audience may receive answers to all these questions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT AND PEACE EFFORTS, AND THE INTRA-AFGH NEGOTIATIONS

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is comprised of two expanded sections. First section will discuss the theoretical framework, which consists of False Readiness and Negative Hybrid Peace. The second section shall delve into the conflict and peace efforts in Afghanistan including Doha peace process (intra-Afghan negotiations) both historically and conceptually. The chapter will also conduct a critical evaluation of each topic presented whether within the theoretical framework or the historical and conceptual aspects of the conflict and peace in Afghanistan.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Section One: *False Readiness Theory*

The question of why some peace negotiations in intrastate conflicts conclude in failure to reach a negotiated settlement has been regularly raised in the literature concerning the conflict resolution (CR). To address this question, scholars have deployed a variety of case studies and theoretical frameworks related to peace and conflict studies. According to Arévalo (2024), peace negotiations take place in a complex environment. A peace negotiation requires being viewed to be complex due to the presence of multiple actors, multiplicity of interests, issues, the complex nature of the negotiating task and worldviews of the parties, as well as the negotiating content. The parties are, therefore, characterized by uncertain readiness in such an environment. This means that it is not “pre-determined” whether negotiating sides to exert attempts and strive decisively on the way to an agreement or to use negotiations for other goals. The uncertain readiness theory, in brief, asserts that there is no deterministic relationship between negotiation outcomes and conflict variables. However, Arévalo emphasizes on significance for design of peace process as a key determinant related to the developments and outcomes of the talks. A range of decisions that constitutes establishing structure of a peace process is referred to as “process design”. Peace process design is about a set of responses to the questions “why, what, who, how, when, and where” in peace talks. As also stated above, it is essential not to disregard the significance of certain elements in relation with the course and

outcomes of negotiations, such as external factors, unanticipated occurrences, or inadequate negotiation tactics, even in a well-designed peace process.

Although the process design is the turning point in the Arévalo argument for a possible successful peace talks, Haass (1990) emphasizes that timing of the efforts is essential to a fruitful peace process. According to this perspective, the reason why negotiations fail is not because mediators fail to reach just agreements, but rather because the broader context of the conflict fails to receive sufficient attention. It seems that contrary to Arévalo, Haas connects outcome of peace negotiations to the timing or the right moment of initiating efforts to begin the negotiations, potentially indicating a deterministic relationship between negotiation outcomes and conflict variables.

Bakiner (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of Türkiye's (2012-2015) and Colombian peace processes (2012-2016). He highlighted the critical role of "negotiation framework" for the possibility of achieving a peace deal. The negotiations framework, according to him, is composed of "legal guarantees, information management mechanism, and scope of inclusivity" in peace talks. Responses to questions on whether peace talks should be given a legal basis, in what manner and through what means the public should be informed about the talks, and which international or domestic actors should take part in the negotiations will all have an impact on the peace talks outcome. Ultimately, Bakiner concludes that while the absence of a public, legalized, and inclusive approach contributed to the failure of the peace negotiations in Türkiye, the incorporation of these elements made the Colombian peace process successful. Other researchers like Villaveces (2003), emphasizes on the military, economic, and external engagement that influence the end result of peace negotiations. They additionally highlight the importance of factors like lack of third party support, adoption of violence during the talks, objectives and strategies of each party, and the agenda and negotiation design. Last but not least, in order to explore the factors behind the success or failure of peace negotiations, Zartman (2000), Pruitt (1997, 2005), and Schwartz & Gilboa (2021) suggest deployment of ripeness theory, readiness theory and false readiness theory respectively. Both the ripeness and readiness theories argue that a conflict is more likely to resolve if the parties perceive a Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS) and a Way Out (likelihood of a negotiated agreement). Zartman describes the MHS as "a concept that when the parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them (although not necessarily in equal degrees or for the same reasons)". One additional component for ripeness theory is the existence of a sense of urgency. This means that the condition

provided by MHS must be seized to full advantage for the commencement of negotiations before it passes. It is a sense that pain can be increased for the parties if the ripe moment is not used in favor of negotiations. On the other hand, the MHS and Way Out are interpreted as Motivation and Optimism respectively in the readiness theory. The parties are motivated to negotiate, according to the readiness theory, by pressure from a third party or the sense that the conflict is no longer functional. To be optimistic is to have belief in reaching to a mutually agreeable solution. Ripeness theory focuses more specifically on the conditions and timing for a third party intervention that lead to a negotiation, while readiness theory is broader, concentrating on psychological variables on each party independently rather than both parties simultaneously. Finally, the false readiness theory argues that a disputing party may engage in negotiations with different objectives in mind than a sincere desire for a solution. This theory seeks to fill the gap left by the existing predominant conflict resolution theories, particularly Ripeness and Readiness, which typically assume that a party entering negotiations genuinely wants peace.

This dissertation deploys ‘False Readiness’ (Schwartz & Gilboa, 2021) as part of its theoretical framework to study the causes behind the failure of the Doha peace process, namely peace talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, held in Doha between 2020 and 2021, focusing on the commitments of the negotiating parties to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Despite the fact that the conflicting parties engaged in direct negotiations, the outcome was a military victory for the Taliban. Such a development led the author of this study to seek, as a primary objective, whether or not the parties to the negotiations utilized the peace talks as a means of achieving their strategic goals other than a negotiated agreement. Given the purpose of the study, the false readiness theory serves as the most pertinent theoretical framework because it mainly argues that entering into negotiation do not always mean that the parties sincerely want peace; rather, it is possible that the disputants engage in talks as a tool to achieve their strategic goals. This goes opposite to the ripeness and readiness theories, which view the start of negotiations as a sign of the parties’ genuine desire for a negotiated settlement. In the paragraphs that follow, the alignment of the selected theoretical lens with the case study will be further discussed.

Additionally, as shall be explored in due course, the false readiness theoretical part of this thesis falls under the realism school of thoughts to negotiations since cost-benefit analysis is an identical ingredient of it.

2.1.2 Why False Readiness Theory?

False readiness theoretical concept has been map-out to study protracted conflicts where disputing sides agree to initiate negotiations and attend rounds of talks, but ultimately fail to come to an agreement. Generally, this theory suggests that one or both negotiating parties enter the negotiations to employ the process for a long-term strategic goal and interest other than reaching a peace agreement. Cost-benefit analysis, in which concluding a conflict might cost more than other options, is used by the false actors (Schwartz, & Gilboa, 2021).

As mentioned earlier, the theory is comprehensibly compatible with the case and purpose of this study since it focuses on (i) protracted conflicts, (ii) failed negotiations, and (iii) commitments or readiness of negotiating parties to a negotiated resolution of a conflict. Firstly, the war has lasted for more than forty years in Afghanistan, twenty of which have been fought between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban over issues of identity, ideology, and power. This makes the conflict defined protracted. Secondly, the conflicting parties entered to the negotiations after two decade of war but they failed to reach an agreement. Lastly, either sides at the outset expressed their will to settle the conflict peacefully (Haqqani, 2021; TOLONews, 2021). Nevertheless, as stated by the Special Representative of the United States for Afghanistan Reconciliation in an interview with TOLONews (2021), neither the Taliban nor the Islamic Republic was ready to agree upon “what to give and what to receive” during the peace talks. This is in contrary to what Haqqani, one of the Taliban leaders, and the government had expressed publicly.

The current study will examine readiness of the conflicting parties for a negotiated solution, as well as the ways in which the US-Taliban Agreement influenced their motivations and optimisms to continue peace negotiations. According to Schwartz & Gilboa,

“Motivation is to gain a better strategic position for a more effective battle against the adversary. Losing allies, especially a superpower or a regional power, or a dramatic re-alignment of forces, could also push a false readiness party toward negotiation. [On the other hand] *Optimism* in false readiness concept means an actor’s conviction that gains can be made, and that the adversary and mediators would not detect the disputant’s real intentions and goals.”

All the above-mentioned explanations conclude that the false readiness theory is distinctly aligned with the purpose of this research and supports the study to provide a competent analysis of the subject in question. In the succeeding paragraphs of this part, the term negotiation, approaches to negotiation, ripeness and readiness as the two major conflict resolution theories, plus the false readiness theory shall all be spelled out both as concepts and practices. This is

being undertaken to present a clear illustration of logical connection between the major concepts reflected above and the theoretical framework, as well as the case study.

2.1.3 Negotiation: Definition, Practice and History

Diverse definitions of negotiation are presented in the literature. Zartman (2007) described negotiation as “giving something to get something.” Henry Kissinger in his book “Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy” which has been cited by Alfredson & Cungu (2008), defined negotiation as a process of compounding conflicting stances into a “common position” under a unanimous decision rule. Negotiation can also be viewed as series of interlocking options wherein a conflicting party has to decide whether or not negotiation is in his or her interest. In any case, a negotiating party shall decide on a strategy to be adopted during the negotiation (Raiffa, 1984).

According to the noted scholar in Peace and Conflict Studies, Zartman, there are three stages to a conflict where negotiations plays role. First, when a conflict has not yet occurred and is solely an issue. Negotiation is utilized at this point to keep a conflict from getting worse. Secondly, negotiation is used during an active conflict to come up with a solution and resolve it. Finally, if a conflict escalated to a crisis, negotiation is initiated to de-escalate and put an end to the violence. In light of these clarifications, the case and false readiness theory in this dissertation falls within the second function of negotiations.

To demonstrate the old history of engagement of mankind with the notion of negotiation, Zartman cites Abraham conversation with God about the fate of Sodom in the Genesis 18:16-33. During the conversation, God revealed of His plan to judge upon the city if its sinfulness is proven. Abraham wondered and asked God whether He would “sweep away the righteous with the wicked”, and in that way the conversation continued. As a result, negotiation has been practiced for millennia as an ordinary means of addressing conflicts in the primary sense. Yet this hadn’t been a systematic or process-oriented practice. According to Zartman, in order to appropriately conceptualize the negotiation process, some essential research was conducted in the 1960s, which marked the beginning of systematic study on the process as an emerging area. In this regard, he makes reference to Ikle’s *How Nations Negotiate* (1964), Walton and McKersie’s *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations* (1965), and Schelling’s *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960). The field received significant momentum from Schelling’s exploration of power elements, Ikle’s characterization of various process types, and Walton and McKersie’s categorization of process-driven outcomes.

It is worth mentioning that mediation as an indispensable component of negotiations has a significant impact on how peace talks end. The employment of mediation as a means of resolving conflicts has been increased. 128 out of the 434 international crises that happened between 1918 and 2006 included mediation in some way (Beardsley et al, 2006). Here the term mediation refers to “involvement or the intervention of a third party, who can be an individual, a group, an organization or a state, into a conflict between two or more states or other actors” as stated by Bercovitch (2011). The absence of this component in the peace talks of Afghanistan raises further concerns about the parties’ genuine commitment to reaching a peace agreement.

Concerning the effectiveness of negotiation in resolving civil wars, such the one in Afghanistan, researchers are divided into two categories; some of them like Walter (1997), who is cited by (Joshi & Quinn, 2015), argues that civil wars rarely conclude in a negotiated agreement as “the incentives to cheat one’s rival if given the chance are just too high”. Walter claims that of the civil wars waged between 1940 and 1990, eight had reached negotiated solutions that put an end to the fighting for at least five years. Nevertheless, she argues there are certain opportunities for civil war negotiations to go effectively when a third party is involved. Inversely, the findings of Joshi & Quinn (2015) as well as Höglbladh (2012) indicate a significant rise in the negotiated settlements of civil conflicts. From 1975 to 2011, approximately two hundred civil conflicts were settled through negotiations, of these, sixty percent resulted in the termination of conflicts for at least five years, noted Höglbladh.

Despite all that have been said, the way in which Afghanistan’s civil war (between the Taliban and the government) concluded while the negotiations were going on, along with other current civil wars such as those in Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and the increasingly escalation between the Pakistani government and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), keep highlighting to the need for more studies on the subject of negotiations and civil war resolution.

2.1.4 Negotiations Approaches: Communications-based and Realist-based

There is no consensus among the scholars on a unified categorization of the schools of thought and approaches in negotiation (Alfredson & Cungu, 2008). For instance, Raffia (1982) presents a typology of approaches focusing on the “symmetry-asymmetry” and “prescription-description” dimensions, as cited by Alfredson & Cungu (2008). On the other hand, Druckman (1997) outlines four distinct approaches to negotiation: “as bargaining game, as diplomatic politics, as puzzle solving, and as organizational management.” The additional approaches in this varied typology include distributive, integrative, behavioral, procedural, structural, and

strategic. Last but not least, the thoughts pertaining to negotiations have also been classified into communication-based and realist-based approaches by Hampson, Crocker, and Aall (2007). Nevertheless, practically a combination of all the said approaches is used in negotiations, argued Alfredson & Cungu. In the following lines, the communication-based and realist-based approaches shall briefly be explored, as they are relatively fallen within the scope of the context of this dissertation. In capacity of this kind, it is not proportionately feasible to delve into all types of negotiations approaches noted before.

2.1.4.1 Communication-based Approach

The communication-based approach stresses on negotiations as a means in building trust and altering the parties' perceptions on one another and the conflict as well. Through informal discussions, free exchange of ideas, and other relevant measures, disputing parties could begin to develop trust. The parties may eventually engage in fruitful negotiations as a result of this direct communication and exchange of concessions. This approach suggests that some conflicts stem from misperceptions of disputants. Change in the "perception, attitudes, values, and behaviors" of the parties should, therefore, be the main goal of negotiation process. The importance of a third party to create communication channels between the parties and other social groups is a further aspect that the communication-based approach emphasizes. This approach virtually focuses on pre-negotiation stage indeed (Hampson, Crocker & Aall, 2007). The communication-based approach concentrates on the steps leading up to a "handshake moment," as described by Bell & Wise (2022). This perspective can also be referred to as back-channel talks. The communication or back-channel phase aims to pave the way for moving the conflicting parties from "winning the war" to "winning the peace" understanding and ultimately to an open negotiation. Two successful examples of back channel negotiations are given by Bell and Wise. First, the Belfast Agreement in 1998, which came about as a result of secret negotiations between the British government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Second, the negotiations between Nelson Mandela and the apartheid government of South Africa back in 1985–90. Although covert communication is essential in transforming the perceptions and behaviors of the warring parties, it also has some bearing on the inclusiveness of the negotiation process in the event that this stage does not result in public negotiation. One potential source of limitation could be prioritizing the armed actors' preferences and demands over other stakeholders, such as civil society, victims of conflict, and so forth.

With respect to Afghanistan, the aforementioned approach was not employed during the negotiations as will be seen in Chapter Three. Potentially, because there was no mutually accepted formal mediator to encourage the conflicting sides in that path, among other factors.

2.1.4.2 Realist-based Approach

Generally speaking, there are two types of approaches to peace-making process, encompassing liberalism and realism. The former believes that the state's monopoly right to employ force, social justice, democratic participation, and establishment of the rule of law can all help to eliminate conflict. However, the latter contends that the conflicts are in-born and thus impractical to eradicate, generated by causes such as the presence of territorial disputes, polarization and fragmentation processes, conflicting interests of states and societies, and support for allies. According to some realist schools of thought (namely offensive perspective) maximizing a state's power is the cornerstone of the national interest; anything that imposes costs on the state reduces its power. Realists virtually view peace-making via this lens. Therefore, depending on their position of power and interest, states either build peace on their own terms or maintain a state of conflict and instability (David, 2001; Baihuzhakava, 2022). In this context, any peace and conflict actor, a group for example, who approaches conflict resolution from a realism perspective, can take position of the "state". Those actors in this study include Taliban and the government as it is visible under the results presented in the chapter three.

Additionally, the realist perspective grounds its comprehension of the negotiation, as part of peace-making process, on utility maximization in favor of a negotiating party's interest and power. The process in this aspect is seen as a cost-benefit calculation where the disputing parties' expectations of utility extensively influence the "negotiation incentive, behavior, and outcomes." According to Hampson, Crocker & Aall (2007), a number of scholars in the relevant literature stress on the "costing" aspect which holds that the total cost of the conflict, including projected future costs, should be compared to the cost of the negotiated outcome. This is exactly as the same as was explained in the prior paragraph concerning the state approach to peace-making in a broader term. Some others contend that because the parties lack mutual trust, there is a serious problem having "concession and commitments" among them. Therefore, the communication is inefficient for establishing trust. As an alternative, a particular approach for managing the risk of the parties' negotiation commitment should be developed, such as coming up with security guarantees and enforcement mechanisms, which are usually

provided by a third party. The aim is to lower cost of negotiations while upheaving the cost for non-compliance, indicated by Hampson, Crocker, and Aall.

To sum up, instead of a must negotiated solution for the conflict, the parties in this approach see the negotiation based on their interests. It could be concluded that “cost-benefit” and “trust” issues serve as a bridge between false readiness theory deployed in this study and the realist-based approach comparing the features of each (for further evaluation of this claim, refer to the false readiness theory to be discussed in this chapter)

2.1.5 Ripeness Theory

Ripeness theory has been considered to be the most prevalent theory in the field of conflict resolution thus far. William Zartman, an acknowledged scholar of Peace and Conflict Studies, came up with the theory in the 1980s. He published multiple books and articles about it, including those in 1986, 1989, 200, 2001, and 2007, to name a few. This theory explains why and when disputing parties begin negotiation for an agreement (Schiff, 2021; Zartman, 2000; Cantekin, 2016). According to the theory, negotiations will not begin unless specific conditions are materialized. Those conditions encompass Mutual Hurting Stalemate (MHS) and the conflicting parties’ perception of a Way Out. The first component pertains to the importance of timing for mediation, while the second concerns a perception wherein both sides wish a resolution to the conflict but do not know how to determine it. A stalemate takes place when the two sides find themselves in a costly deadlock and have no way to win the conflict unilaterally. This is the accurate time for mediation and negotiation to get started. This theory claims that in the absence of MHS, disputing parties do not engage in genuine negotiation. Zartman recommends a mediator to use coercion (means force or power) in the absence of MHS to escalate the conflict into it (Kuperman, 2021). When the parties engage in negotiations, it is likely that they sincerely want to reach an agreement. The coercion mediation is referred to as “muscular mediation” by Kuperman (2021). He emphasized that muscular mediation might be effective even in the absence of MHS, but it will also backfire in the existing of the conditions below:

“(1) The coerced agreement threatens a vital interest of a party; (2) that party has the potential to escalate violence against the opposing side’s civilians; (3) the muscular mediator does not deploy sufficient military forces to deter or prevent such escalation.”

Muscular mediation needs to be avoided when one or both of the criteria indicated above are present. In such a scenario, non-coercive techniques like problem-solving workshops or track-two diplomacy may be utilized to enhance the perception of a MHS without shifting the balance

of power. For further information on how the coercion mediation was implemented in Bosnia case, reference is made to the article titled “Muscular Mediation and Ripeness Theory” authored by Kuperman. On the other hand, Bercovitch (2011) characterizes mediation as “facilitative, non-coercive,” meaning that it should not force the parties to submission, which is in contrast to the notion of coercive mediation. This suggests that, when it comes to the mediation role, Bercovitch does not support ripeness theory approaches.

The author of the thesis believes that forcing the parties to negotiating table by coercive mediation may temporarily convince them to engage in peace talks, but there is a risk that they will not truly be committed to a long-term solution. Stated differently, ownership and leadership of peace process can be questioned if the mediator begins to dictate his or her opinions.

Contrastingly, False Readiness Theory criticizes assumption of the ripeness theory which says that when the conflicting parties engage in negotiations, it is likely they sincerely want to reach an agreement. The false readiness theory argues that parties might start negotiations for motivations other than wishing to come to an agreement (Schwartz & Gilboa, 2021). Furthermore, the parties may decide to negotiate before the time is ripe, as was the case with the Israel-Jordan negotiations in 1993–1994¹. The Jordanian- Israeli negotiation was guided by their perceptions concerning the opportunities and threats rather than a painful impasse and non-win scenario (Schiff, 2021). The ripeness theory fails to be good enough for explaining the factors behind a negotiation’s failure other than not being ripe, as Arévalo (2024) argues. There are also successful stories of application of the ripeness theory. It was used to explain the case of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1990 – 1995, as well as El Salvador (Mooradian, & Druckman, 1999; Pugh, 2009; Arévalo, 2024), to mention some.

2.1.6 Readiness Theory

Readiness theory is the evolved version of the ripeness theory, which was coined by Pruitt (2005) as an attempt to fill the gaps of the ripeness theory. Pruitt defines readiness in negotiation to be “the extent to which an individual disputant is interested in negotiation.” As also stated by Yawanarajah (2016), this theory looks for the psychological conditions that drive the parties to initiate negotiation. Negotiations are unlikely to start unless both parties to the conflict have reached a certain level of

¹ Full Text of the Israel-Jordan Peace Agreement:
<https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/il20jo941026peacetreatyisraeljordan.pdf>

readiness and, thus, ripeness. Consequently, a negotiation is more likely to happen when there is a rise in the readiness and ripeness. Motivation and Optimism are two core concepts on which the theory lies. In fact, Motivation and Optimism alternate the MHS and Way Out of the ripeness theory respectively. As can be seen in figure 1, according to the founding father of the theory, Pruitt, the perception that conflict is no longer functional or pressure from third party motivate the parties to negotiate. Optimism means to believe in reaching an acceptable agreement.

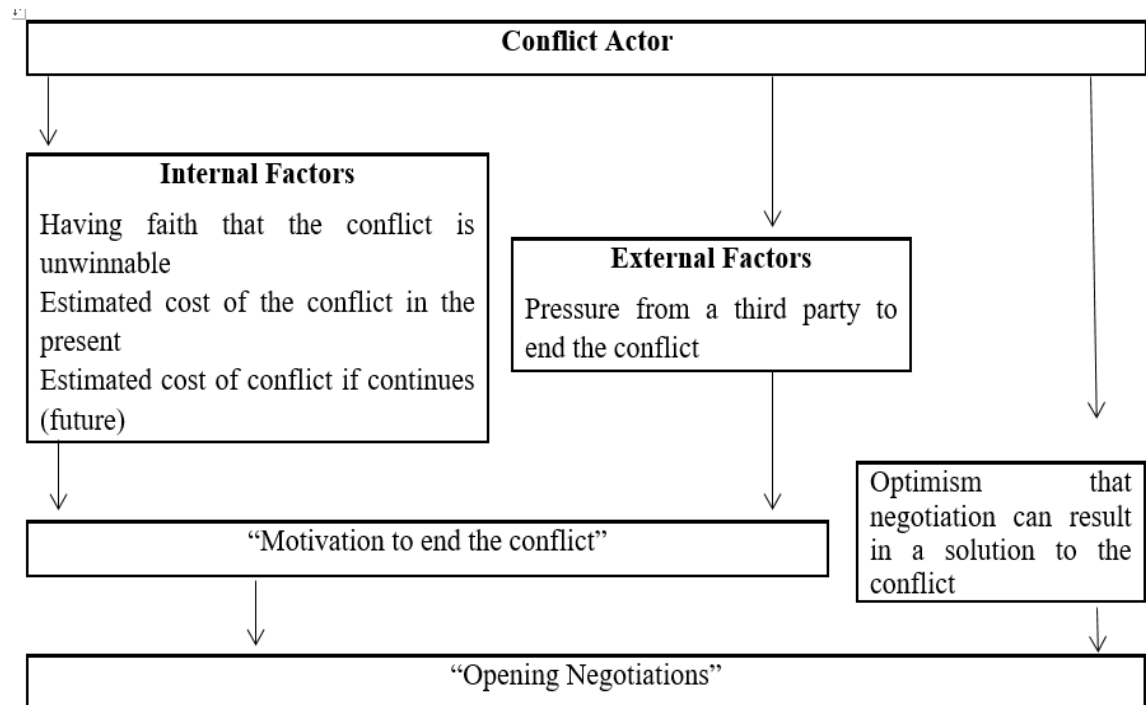


Figure 1. Readiness Theory: Condition for Commencement of Negotiations (Schwartz & Gilboa, 2021: 1333).

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in January 2005 between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), as well as the agreement between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement in August 2005 are referred to as the cases where the readiness theory was successfully applied (Schiff, 2021).

Nonetheless, this theory has faced criticism for a number of reasons, including its emphasis on successful cases only and the early phases of negotiation. It has been considered insufficient to explain conflicts in which at least one party initiates talk with no intention of coming to a settlement. The theory has additionally been criticized for implicitly advocating that the conflict be allowed to drag on until a stalemate occurs and then the time is right for negotiations. Peacemakers should, in other words, wait until the right moment. In certain cases, like the Djibouti-Eritrea dispute, the theory is difficult to explain the conflict appropriately. Therefore,

in order to properly evaluate the readiness theory's explanatory capacity, additional case studies are clearly required (Arévalo, 2024; Yawanarajah, 2016; Cantekin, 2016).

2.1.7 False Readiness Theory

As has already been quickly discussed, false readiness theoretical layer aims to analyze the failure of an ongoing negotiation. This is in contrast to ripeness and readiness theories, which, according to the founding fathers of the false readiness, Schwartz & Gilboa (2021), primarily focus on the initial phase of a successful negotiations process. The false readiness theory delves into the conditions where the conflicting parties apparently demonstrate their commitments to a negotiated settlement of a conflict in the beginning and, thus, enter the negotiation but having no sincere intention to reach a solution. Simply put, based on the false readiness theory, which “integrates, combined and sharpened” elements from readiness theory and negotiations theory, at least one party from the beginning uses negotiations deliberately as a strategy to achieve their goal rather to reach peace. On the contrary, the existing established conflict resolution theories, namely ripeness theory and readiness theory, assume that the conflicting parties wish to resolve the dispute peacefully if they have “crossed the Rubicon”. A point that, if reached, the parties will not alter their decision is referred to as the “crossing the Rubicon” (Collins Dictionary, n.d). This point is translated into MHS in the ripeness theory. Yet, according to the false readiness theory, this is not always true in protracted conflicts, where disputing sides start negotiations for purposes other than achieving peace. Here is the exact blind spot which the false readiness theory claims to be able to appropriately address.

Similar to the readiness theory, two essential components of the false readiness theory are the “*Motivation*” and “*Optimism*.” When compared to the readiness theory, these notions have different explanations, though. In the false readiness perspective, according to Schwartz & Gilboa, “the motivation is to gain a better strategic position for a more effective battle against the adversary.” This is in contrast to the readiness theory, which defines “motivation” to enter negotiations as a sense that a conflict is no longer functional or as a result of pressure from a third party. In respect to the readiness theory, “optimism” refers to the conviction that a mutually agreeable solution may be achieved. Conversely, a false actor is optimistic being able to utilize negotiation deceptively for strategic advantage.

The issue of how to identify a false actor in negotiation has also been brought up. A false actor can be identified by the following symptoms: Refusing to compromise, using hard bargaining techniques to block a settlement, consistently rejecting other parties' peace proposals or those of a mediator, declining to include a mediator in the negotiations, buying

time to expand military and political activities, prolonging status quo, using negotiation to gain political legitimacy, and lastly making a concerted effort to not being exposed (Glozman, Barak-Corren & Yaniv 2015; Schwartz & Gilboa, 2021). The false negotiators attempt to use negotiations purposefully to avoid an agreement. This situation is termed as “avoidance bargaining” by Wallihan (1998). Here, it is also important to consider when and under what conditions a false actor enters into peace talks. As stated before, the false negotiators are often pressured to negotiate, including but not limited to, by an external player. A false actor conceives that if he or she refuses proposals for negotiation, the external player will make a deal with their competitor. In relation to Afghanistan, the US assumed role of an outsider with influence over both sides. One of the clauses in the US-Taliban agreement, for instance, asked the Taliban to commence negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (see the text of the agreement referenced earlier in Footnote No.1) Additionally, in order to push Taliban to enter in direct negotiation with the Islamic Republic, the US Special Envoy (or SRAR) for the peace process in Afghanistan had tweeted while he was leading the US negotiation efforts with the Taliban: “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” (TOLONews, 2019). Using Pruitt’s readiness theory and making the appropriate modifications on the figure 1, Figure 2 theorizes the trajectory that lead to false negotiations.

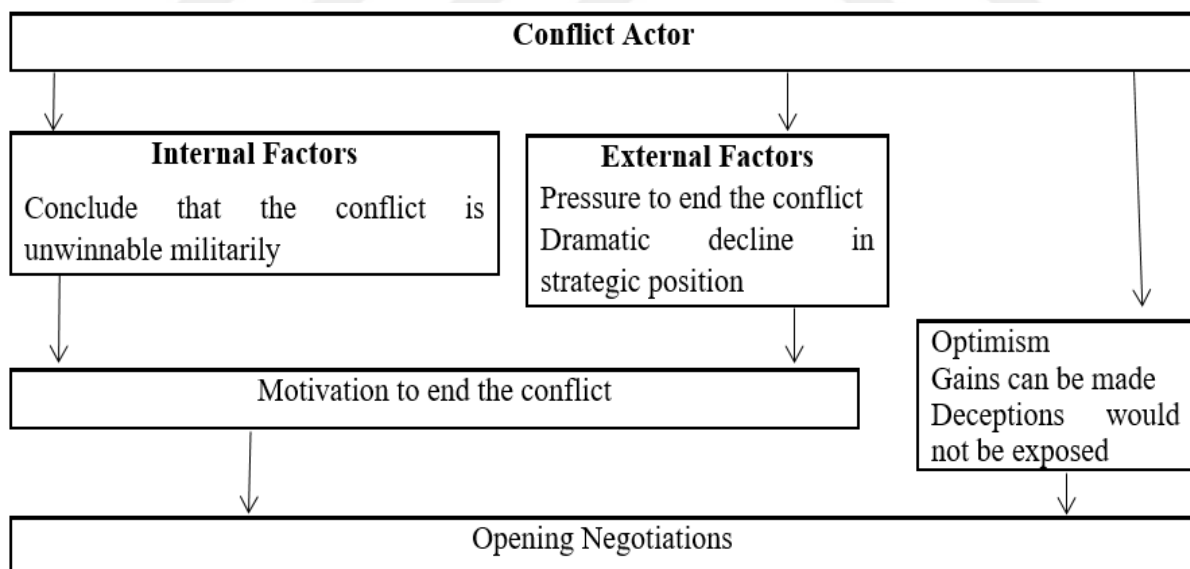


Figure 2. False Readiness: Opening Negotiations (Schwartz & Gilboa, 2021: 1340)

Like in the readiness theory, the internal actor in the false readiness theory is a sense that the disputant party sees no way to win the conflict violently. However, the aforementioned sense leads the party to believe that there is a chance in negotiations in order to achieve their goal, which cannot be gained through war. In the readiness theory, on the contrary, this sense leads

the disputant to believe that there is a chance to settle conflict peacefully by negotiations. Pressure from a third party on sides involved in the conflict to (i) settle the conflict and (ii) decline in the actor's strategic position is referred to as the external factor in figure 2. The two factors strengthen the motivation for improving the strategic position without staying away from the end goal. A false actor is also optimistic that achievements can be made without his or her deceptive intention is exposed to other conflicting party or mediator.

In addition to this thesis, the author had already interviewed a few members of negotiation team for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as part of a research for a course assignment. Most of the characteristics of false readiness theory, such as expressing the parties' first commitment to peace, buying time during negotiations, and not agreeing on a third party mediator, can be applied to the case under investigation, as the finding in that course paper and the results in this study implied. Moreover, reference is made to the preceding pages where a Taliban leader, Haqqani, and President of Afghanistan, expressed their will for peace at the initial stage of the talks but the outcome was totally the opposite. As a result, the false readiness theory is definitely aligned with the purpose of this dissertation.

2.1.8 Section Two of the Theoretical Framework: Negative Hybrid Peace

2.1.8.1 Peacebuilding Theories: Liberal, Local and Hybrid

The importance of peacebuilding cannot be oversight in our contemporary world where significant number of countries either directly or indirectly are involved in conflicts (Autesserre, 2017). This prevailing instability, including in Afghanistan, further outlines the need for peacebuilding measures. Peacebuilding refers to a wide range of actions aimed to create durable peace in conflicting regions. Nonetheless, the definition of this concept lacks consensus among scholars. The term peacebuilding includes multifaceted components and activities, such as demilitarization, humanitarian aid, education on human rights, good governance, state-building and democratization processes, peace-making, negotiations and so forth. Peacebuilding is defined based on specific contexts (Goetze, 2016: 1-2). According to Barnett et (2007), UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as follows:

“actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict.”

According to the KROC Institute for International Peace Studies (n.d.), peacebuilding refers to the process of enhancing constructive interactions among individuals, groups, and political entities across a range of boundaries. The prevention, management, resolution, transformation, and reconciliation of conflicts are all fallen within the scope of peacebuilding. However, in this

study, peacebuilding is usually used interchangeably with peacemaking and conflict resolution. The diplomatic measures taken during a war to help the parties to a negotiated settlement are referred to as “peace-making.” (SCANLON & MURITHI, 2007; United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d). According to Galtung (1996), cited by Sempiga (2017), peace-making involves moving towards the resolution of an armed conflict, wherein the conflicting parties are encouraged to voluntarily reach a mutual agreement. The following pages will explore the models of liberal, local, and hybrid peacebuilding, deploying them in the context of Afghanistan.

2.1.8.2 Liberal Peace

Under this title, the author will explore the concept of liberal peace, its historical context, elements of liberal peace, and viewpoints of this model’s proponents and opponents.

The end of the Cold War created opportunities for a transformation in the field of conflict resolution. This reformation shifted the emphasis from a bipolar world order, characterized by superpower negotiation strategies, to a broader peacebuilding agenda. Additionally, there was a notable increase in the involvement of non-state actors, who emerged as both parties in conflict and as mediators (Babbitt, 2009; Pandey & Roy, 2018). The conclusion of this era brought forth new security challenges for the international community, particularly concerning the internal violence and state failure. In response to this issue, the UN’s Agenda for Peace was established, which sought to advance peace based on the principles of liberal democracy and market economies. The liberal peace, which relies on top-down approach, and also often referred to as “liberal democratic peace” or “Western peace”, is widely recognized as the dominant approach of peace-making and peacebuilding sponsored internationally (Mac Ginty & Firchow, 2016). The concept of liberal peace is perceived as a narrative employed by Westerners to foster and maintain political stability in post-conflict societies. In pursuit of this objective, certain liberal principles, such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, are regarded as the predominant framework for stability. Among the Western states, the United States is particularly influential in advancing the liberal peace agenda, especially in light of the post-Cold War global order, which has been characterized on the victory of capitalism and the democratic institutions (Pereira, 2019).

Mac Ginty (2008), a notable scholar in the field of peacebuilding, characterizes liberal peace as a framework encompassing the concepts, conditions, and practices through which leading states, like the United States and the United Kingdom alongside other allied nations,

international organizations such as the United Nations, and global financial institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), advocate for their version of peace-making interventions and the preserving of the international status quo. The purpose of liberal peace intervention is to create democracies that are aligned with market principles in order to make sure the protection of international stability (Mac Ginty & Firchow, 2016). Interventions of this kind may be materialised through various means, such as involvement in peace negotiations among the disputing parties, implementing Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives, enacting security reforms, enhancing capacity building, and fostering market and economic development, among other strategies. Mac argues that liberal peace is not only as a framework, but also it functions as a mechanism for transmitting “Western-specific ideas and practices” to the recipient societies. These recipients, as a result, should become both facilitators and enforcers of the liberal peace paradigm through adapting its values and ideas. Advocators of liberal peace believe that it is superior than other forms of peacebuilding (Rawls, 1999; Mandelbaum, 2000 – Cited by Ginty, 2008). They see the locals as obstacles for transformation of the societies into the rule of law, democracy, good governance, accountability and individual rights. The fundamental elements of liberal peace are promoting of democracy, establishment of the rule of law, human rights protection, and the free market (Richard Oliver, 2006; Pereira, 2019).

Liberal peace has faced criticism for its tendency to generate and enforce a Western or Global North paradigm in peacebuilding (Chandler, 2010), which may encounter resistance by the locals due to not being aligned with their cultures. The liberal peace, additionally, has been criticized for using rhetoric to legitimize its specific version of peace interventions, which often come with certain ideas upon which the life is assumed to rest (Mac Ginty, 2010). Critiques of liberal peace further argue that its primary method of advancing liberal values is rooted in a conservative and realist perspective that favors existing power structures, including national, regional, and private-sector stakeholders. This understanding possibly stems from the assertion of liberal peace on preserving of the international status quo. Therefore, this approach, they contend, contributes minimally to genuine emancipation (Jacoby, 2007: 536-537; Mayall, 2006: 96 - Cited by Mac Ginty, 2010). The incompetency of liberal peace to address the social and psychological aspects of conflict in addition to its focusing on short-term peace building (Richard Oliver, 2021) represent other critiques to this approach. The emphasis on short-term peacebuilding within the liberal peace framework could led to neglecting the socio-economic and political factors that necessitate due attention to achieve durable peace.

In summary, inspired by Mac Ginty acknowledgment, the author recognizes the complexity and variability of the liberal peace concept. However, for the purpose of this study, it is primarily understood as peace initiatives in which international actors, both institutionally and individually, play leading role in the peace process.

2.1.8.3 Local Dimensions of Peace

local peace-building model concentrates on a bottom-up approach that effectively involves local actors, such as government entities, civil society, and various stakeholders in the decision-making process. This involvement guarantees that peace processes are contextual-based and culturally appropriate. Leonardsson and Rudd (2015) cited Rupesinghe and Fetherston's assertion that "local actors are the primary architects, owners, and long-term stakeholders of peace". Leonardsson and Rudd have criticized liberal peacebuilding agendas for their ornamental use of local actors in policy documents only. Such criticisms, which will be explored in the coming lines, led scholars to highlight the need for attention to the local dimensions (interchangeably used as local peace in this thesis) of peacebuilding.

The shortcomings observed in Somalia (UNOSOM I 1992-93 and UNOSOM II 1993-95), Rwanda, and Bosnia demonstrated that the United Nations' approach to peace interventions was inadequate to address intra-state conflicts. In April 1994, the leaders of Burundi and Rwanda were killed in a plane crash while they were returning from a peace negotiation that had been taken place in Tanzania. This crash led to political and ethnic violence. The UNAMIR attempted to mediate a ceasefire but it failed. Instead, assaults on its personnel by the conflicting parties were escalated. Consequently, the number of UNAMIR forces reduced from 2,548 to 270 as per the Resolution 912 adopted by UN Security Council on April 21, 1994 (UN Peacekeeping, n.d). Furthermore, the international community's resolve to defend the territories designated as "safe areas" placed under the UN protection in 1993 was severely undermined by the conquest of Srebrenica by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. The Bosnian Serb troops were able to quickly seize control and commit mass killings, rapes, and other violent crimes because of the non-intervention from UN peacekeeping forces (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

In light of the above-mentioned developments, a growing emphasis was emerged in 1990s on the importance role of local actors, civil society, and a bottom-up approach in the field of peacebuilding (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). Scholars such as Lederach (n.d.) have contended that the most significant resource for achieving long-term peace is fundamentally grounded in the local population and their cultural context. Lederach emphasized the involvement of

grassroots, local organizations, local communities, NGOs, international entities, and various other stakeholders in fostering a sustainable peace process (Pandey & Roy, 2018).

Mac Ginty (2018), Professor at the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, is recognized as pioneering in the field of local and indigenous peace discourse. He asserts that the concept of 'local' has emerged as a crucial element in understanding of peacebuilding and peace-making processes. Mac Ginty argues that the term 'local' was absent from the UN's 1992 document, 'An Agenda for Peace'; however, it is everywhere now in contemporary peacebuilding discussions, as evidenced by references in the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report and the UNDP's 2011 Governance for Peace. "Local partnership and ownership are seen as the key to sustaining peace and achieving legitimacy among populations in societies emerging from violent conflict" according to Mac Ginty. On the other hand, Ginty (2008) warns to romanticize local and indigenous methods of peacebuilding. He identifies certain limitations in local peace approach. According to him, local actors may adopt an instrumentalist approach to oppose the principles of liberal peace. For example, local actors may argue that proponents of liberal peace or Western peacebuilders may try to impose "threatening" norms on local groups, like allowing women or people from different castes to be included. In this way, they will oppose to anything that might be different from their understanding.

2.1.8.4 Hybrid Peace

The concept of Hybridity has increasingly been discussed among scholars of peace and conflict studies (Anam, 2018; Wallis et al 2018:180; MAC GINTY, 2010; Dinnen & Kent; 2015; Richmond, 2021; Mac Ginty, 2018; Björkdahl & Höglund 2013). What does hybridity mean? What factors contributed to the emergence of hybrid peacebuilding? What are its defining characteristics, advantages and limitations? This section will delve into these questions, mainly focusing on the works of Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richard, two leading scholars in the field of hybrid peacebuilding studies.

The term of hybridity refers to the product resulting from the combination of variant elements (Merriam-Webster, n.d; Dinnen & Kent, 2015). Before it met considerable attention in peace and conflict studies, the notion of hybridity *per se* had been reflected in sociology, anthropology, institutional, organizational and post-colonial studies with an emphasize on the culture's importance in the discourses of identity and power. For instance, in the realm of post-colonial studies, the concept of hybridity has possessed a critical position in the discourses and debates about identity and culture formation (Anam, 2018). In his novel titled "A Grain of

Wheat'', Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012) scrutinised the complex dynamics of identity and culture in the post-colonial Kenya. He illustrates how a new hybrid identity has been created resulting from the influence of the colonizers over the indigenous culture and colonized individuals. The novel also highlights the struggle between preserving the local cultural heritage and adjusting to new realities, which reflects the local populace's resistance. Anam, referencing Bhabha (1994, in Tom 2013, 242), argues that in the colonial circumstances, indigenous communities found themselves ensnared between their own cultures and those of the colonizers. The interplay of resistance and negotiation between the cultures of colonized people and colonizers' led to the unfolding of a new culture identity known as "hybrid culture." In this perspective, hybridity plays a positive role. It avoids dominance of a singular ideology, thereby offering opportunities for the indigenous identities to express themselves through their own means and agencies.

Looking to hybridity from the lens of peacebuilding, this concept serves as a sign of both decrease and increase in criticism of liberal peace. Although the hybrid peace theory grabs some elements of liberal peace based on need, its main aim is to disrupt dominance or the idea of "the only game in the town" attributed to the liberal peace. Hybrid peace seeks "deeper justice and sustainability" concerning the inclusion of local actor in peace process (Richmond, 2021), emphasizing the need for a more inclusive and context-based strategy. This perspective combines both local and international peace efforts (Mac Ginty, 2010). According to Björkdahl and Höglund (2013), hybrid peace model basically acts as a crossroads between the liberal and local peacebuilding approaches, establishing a complex interplay "between local and global [actors], formal and informal, liberal and illiberal." Mac Ginty and Richard (2016) argued that hybrid peace transcends the binary categorized framework in comprehension of peacebuilding. Instead, it shows complex nature of this field. According to Mac Ginty (2010), hybrid peace is the outcome of the interplay of the following:

"(1) the compliance powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures, (2) the incentivizing powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures, (3) the ability of local actors to resist, ignore or adapt liberal peace interventions and (4) the ability of local actors, networks and structures to present and maintain alternative forms of peace."

Compliance Power

Roger Mac Ginty has articulated this term. It refers to the several methods, rules, and tactics used by proponents and agents of liberal peace to guarantee that the locals adapt norms, values, and policies associated with liberal peace. This phrase refers to the various ways that external factors, such as international organizations and donors, influence local actors in order to

accomplish their desired result. These tactics of influence include, for instance, coercive measures and offering development assistance and aid to the locals under specific conditions, with the expectation that they will abide by the liberal peace values of democracy, human rights, and market economy in exchange.

Incentivizing Power

Mac Ginty deployed this notion to explain how liberal peace networks and agents are able to motivate local actors to support liberal peace initiatives by offering diverse incentives. These incentives encompass, but are not limited to, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), rhetoric on advocating human rights, promotion of democracy, providing humanitarian assistance, and economic reforms. As a result, the local actors are encouraged to adapt with the objective of liberal peace proponents.

The Ability of Local Actors to Resist Liberal Peace Intervention

The extent to which peace efforts can be hybridized is dependent upon the ability of local actors, networks and structures to either resist, disrupt, subvert, ignore or adapt liberal peace interventions. This aspect contends that the local actors can assume a substantial role beyond being solely passive recipients or victims of liberal peace. An essential element in this interplay will be utilizing preservation of the traditional or indigenous structures and norms, which are inherently hybrid in nature (Mac Ginty, 2008, 2010).

The Ability of Local Actors, Structure and Networks to Present and Maintain Alternative Forms of Peace and Peace-making

The last factor that contributes to the hybridization of peace efforts is the availability of local traditional and indigenous mechanisms, norms and practice of conflict resolution as a potential alternative for liberal peace (Mac Ginty, 2008: 139-163). For example, sharing power based on kinship and clan affiliation, which also may embody a certain democratic framework, can serve a customary practice of conflict resolution. Iroquois Confederacy has been regarded (AS, 2024) as an example for this kind governance system. The Iroquois Confederacy comprises a coalition of six Native American nations: The Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. Their system of governance integrates elements of kinship relationships with democratic norms. The leadership within the Confederacy is inherited through clans. This makes sure that the leadership remains within the traditional structure. Additionally, the Confederacy operates through a council to which each nation has representatives. Decisions are made with consensus, ensuring all voices are heard.

Like many other ideas, hybrid peace is not without its criticisms. For instance, Richard (2015), a distinguished academic known for his research on hybrid peace, has expressed concerns about

the theory's propensity to inadvertently recreate colonial power dynamics. He asserts that hybrid peace initiatives hold potential to be overshadowed by the liberal peace principle. Furthermore, Millar (2014) contends that the concept of hybridity has not been sufficiently defined. He claims that while some academics have utilised hybridity descriptively to illustrate the interaction between local and international actors, practices, and norms, a number of academicians defined it in prescriptive way “‘implying that international actors can plan and administer hybridity to foster predictable social experiences in complex post-conflict states.’” (A border discussion of critiques concerning hybrid peace theory is being deferred to the last section (numbered 3.4) of this chapter due to its relevance with that particular segment).

2.1.8.5 Negative Hybrid Peace: The Common Ground of the Hybridity's Critiques

The advocates of the hybrid peace, such as Mac Ginty (2010), argue that this peace-building model is well-suited for societies emerging from conflict. According to them, hybrid peace combines both the local and international efforts and it leads to establishment of a relevant, just, and contextual appropriate durable peace. The resistance against the liberal peace values and negotiation combined between the local and the international factors foster a hybrid form of peace that commensurate with the international norms while respecting local context. This model of peacebuilding seeks for a “‘deeper justice and sustainability”” (Richmond, 2021) and attempts to ensure that the local agency and contexts are adequately addressed. Key elements such as inclusivity, ownership and partnership are supposed to be observed in this form of peacebuilding, which is termed as positive hybrid peace. All these goals cannot be achieved but through a genuine cooperation between the local and the international stakeholders. An example of positive hybrid peace can be seen in the case of Iroquois Confederacy, which previously discussed under the *Hybrid Peace*. A positive hybrid peacebuilding suggests that vital legitimacy and agency arise from the local context, as Richmond (2015) noted.

Hybrid peace has also been faced notable criticisms. Millar (2014) in his article ‘Disaggregating Hybridity: Why Hybrid Institutions Do Not Produce Predictable Experiences of Peace’ challenges the perception that “‘*international actors can plan and administer hybridity to foster predictable social experiences in complex post-conflict states.*”” He argues that hybrid peace is unpredictable due to its inherently complex nature. Emphasizing on the uniqueness dynamic of each conflict, Miller asserts that the assumption which the international actors can manage and control the hybrid peace to achieve a consistent outcome is not only realistic but also overly simplistic. Coşkun (2023) contends that the presence of multiple actors in hybrid peace initiatives can result in a peace process characterised by “‘complex dynamics,

power struggles, and potential challenges in coordination and cooperation’’ among local and international actors. Nadarajah & Rampton (2015) highlights that hybrid peace holds the potential to promote liberal peace principle, which can marginalize local voices. He further argues that hybrid peace is overly optimistic about a genuine cooperation between the international and local actors. In reality, according to them, power imbalance and conflicting interests hinder the cooperation, leading to an imposed peace. All these criticisms have a point in common, which is the concept of negative hybrid peace, a notion coined by Oliver Richmond (2015).

Oliver Richmond has raised concerns over the potential of hybrid peace theory to recapitulate colonial power dynamics unintentionally. He highlights the possibility of the liberal peace principle to overshadow hybrid peace efforts. This is what he has termed as negative hybrid peace. A negative peace refers to a situation where peace efforts fail to balance and resolve discrepancies between the local and international norms and practices. Oliver posits that hybrid peace may maintain structural violence, and resembles a form of ‘outsourced colonial rule’ should it fails to address these discrepancies genuinely. The term ‘‘outsourced colonial rule’’ refers to a circumstances where the international actors impose and dictate their own form of peace framework without adequately considering locals and emancipatory approach to peace. Consequently, Richmond believes that a durable peace cannot be reached without authentic collaboration and cooperation between the local and international stakeholders. An additional critical approach to hybrid peace is the exploitation of the local agency by the international actors just to get acceptance. According to Richmond & Mitchell (2011), the international actors co-opt local agency to serve their own interest, which may result in a peace that fails to address the root causes of the conflict and the existing power imbalance.

The above-mentioned argument by Richmond and Mitchell aligns well with the context of the Doha peace process in Afghanistan. As to be discussed in Chapter Three, the process was hybrid in nature, with the US-Taliban agreement significantly influencing the conflicting parties’ willingness to pursue peace. This dynamic ultimately contributed to the failure to reach an agreement between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic during the intra-Afghan negotiations. Therefore, integrating False Readiness Theory and the concept of Negative Hybrid Peace as the theoretical framework in this study will secure a comprehensive assessment of the peace process in line with then objectives of the thesis indicated in Chapter One. The discussions presented in Chapter Three shall provide further rationales for deployment of negative hybrid peace as part of the theoretical framework.

2.2 literature Review

Background of the Conflict, Peace Efforts, and Doha Peace Process (Intra-Afghan Negotiations)

In one of his report on Doha peace process, Barnett Rubin (2020), a former senior advisor to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan during the Bonn Conference, which was organized to establish a new political system following the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, unveiled that in an event related to peace efforts initiated by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia in 2008 to which both the government and the Taliban's affiliated officials were invited in Mecca, the Algerian Abdullah Anas, who had served Ahmad Shah Massoud, the National Hero of Afghanistan, for ten years during the anti-Soviet resistance and had attempted for peace initiatives, reminded participants that:

“Mujahedeen, who resisted the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, were called “forces of corruption” by the Taliban when the group seized over Kabul in 1996. The Taliban insisted on Mujahedeen to surrender, avoiding any efforts for dialogue. That approach ultimately led to the first Taliban regime's collapse in 2001. The same scenario happened with the Taliban during the Bonn Conference by excluding them from the process. The Taliban are currently at Kabul's doors. Will you have the same experience again or consider dialogue and power-sharing?”

Taking into account the failure of the Doha peace process on August 15, 2021, the same experience stated by Abdullah Anas triumphed once more over a peaceful resolution of the conflict. What have the literatures revealed so far about such a conflict and peace efforts that keep repeating? What have been the gaps in these literatures? A thoughtful exploration of these questions will further strengthen the significance of this chapter.

This section critically examines the relevant literature with a focus on the Doha peace process or the intra-Afghan negotiations. Deploying a thematic approach, it organizes the discussions into three broad categories:

- I) Historical Background of the Conflict: how did the Afghanistan's conflict initially emerged and how do it phases intersect one another? How does the conflict suits into the theoretical framework of this study and what is its conceptual nature?
- II) Peace efforts in Afghanistan from Mujahedeen-Soviet-backed governments to the Islamic Republic-Taliban era. Under this category, the aim is to examine peace-making both conceptually and case-by-case with an emphasis on how they link to the study's subject and theoretical framework.
- III) Crafting a conclusion.

2.2.1 Historical Content of the Conflict in Afghanistan

2.2.1.0 Afghanistan: An Overview

Located in the hearth of south-central Asia, Afghanistan is a landlocked multi-ethnic country. The imperials and great powers have long attempted to control Afghanistan because of its strategic location bridging southern and eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East. Afghanistan's modern borders are the result of a rivalry termed as the "Great Game" between Tsarist Russia and British Empire. The Great Game on Afghanistan started in 1830 as confrontation between the British Empire and tsarist Russia over each of their areas of influence evolved in Central Asia. A joint "Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission" was established to demarcate the borders between the Russian Empire's territories and British protectorate Afghanistan along the Amu River during the reign of Abdul Rahman Khan, the Emir of Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901 (Ali & Weinbaum, 2024; Congress Library, n.d). At present, the borders between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan are marked by the Amu River (in Persian *Amu Darya*).



Figure 3. Afghanistan Map. Source: UN Geospatial (2011): <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/afghanistan>

This chapter will argue that the roots of the current conflict trace back to prior President Daoud reign. However, based on the established perception, the conflict is originated in 1973, when Mohammed Daoud with the support of pro-Soviet military officers overthrew his cousin Zahir Shah, the former monarch of Afghanistan, in a white coup d'état. Consequently, he declared himself as the country's first president and transformed the political system from monarchy to republic. Nonetheless, due to Daoud's rejection of power-sharing, pro-Soviet officers killed him during another coup in 1978, and handed over the power to the Marxist-Leninist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) (Rubin, 1989). Following this coup, sentiments against the communist regime grew, leading to the Soviet Union's invasion of the country in

1979. The Mujahedeen resisted over the Soviet occupation and its backed-governments (1979-92). After toppling the last Soviet-backed regime of Afghanistan in 1992 and seizing power, Mujahedeen were unable to avoid their internal power struggle. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban took control of almost 90% of Afghanistan after rebelling against the Mujahedeen's government. However, the Taliban were overthrown by the US and its allies following the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York because they refused to turn over Osama bin Laden to America. The Taliban regained power in Afghanistan after the United States withdrew from the country in 2021 based on the Doha agreement. As stated in the CIA World Fact Book (2024), a Pashtun-dominated rule has now been established by the Taliban in Afghanistan. As of the date of this thesis, no country has officially recognized the Taliban's rule as Afghanistan legitimate government.

There are numerous ethnic groups in Afghanistan, including but not limited to Tajik, Pashtun, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen, Baluch, Aymaq, Arab, Nuristani, Qirghiz, Qizillbash, Gujur, and Brahui. These ethnic groups are mentioned in the National Anthem of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, however, there are others too. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004) cited Pashto and Dari (Persian) as the official languages for the country. Persian, as the lingua franca, is spoken by Tajiks, Hazaras, and relatively Qizillbash as their native language, whereas Pashtuns speak Pashtu and Persian. This language is spoken by the absolute majority of the population.

Pashtuns assert that they constitute the majority in Afghanistan but no reliable national census has been conducted yet to verify either ethnic or national population. In "The Decline of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan," Ahady (1995) attempts to argue that Pashtuns make up over 50% of the population and thus have the right to dominate the political and cultural identity of Afghanistan. Whereas, according to Jawad (1992), Afghanistan is a country of minorities, with no ethnic group making up more than 50% of the population. The Soviet-backed Afghanistan government attempted to conduct the first official scientific census in 1997, but it was only able to record around 56% of the country's population (Khan & Shah 2014; Ali & Weinbaum, 2024; U.S. Library of Congress, 2001). Organizations including the Wak Foundation, Asia Foundation, and CIA World Fact Book conducted surveys with results varied, stated by Khan & Shah. As an example, these authors cited the World Fact Book's estimate from 2015, which indicated that Pashtuns make up 42% of Afghanistan's ethnic groupings, Tajiks 27%, Hazaras 9%, Uzbeks 9%, Aimaq 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baluch 2%, and others 4%. Some, like Mather (2003), stated that the ethnic composition of Afghanistan consists of Hazaras, who are mainly

Twelver Shiite (10–15%), Pashtuns (40–50%), Tajiks (Sunni Hanafi with a minority of Ismaili Shiites) (30%), and Turkic speaking ethnic groups, such as Uzbeks (10%). He claims that the country is home to 55 different ethnic groups.

2.2.1.1 Constitutional Decade (1964-73): A Latent Stage of the Conflict?

A relationship between parties or individuals who believe their goals are incompatible is referred to as a conflict (Fisher, 2000). Conflict goes through different stages which include latent, emergence, escalation, stalemate, de-escalation, settlement, and peace-building and reconciliation, as reflected in the page to come (Figure 4).

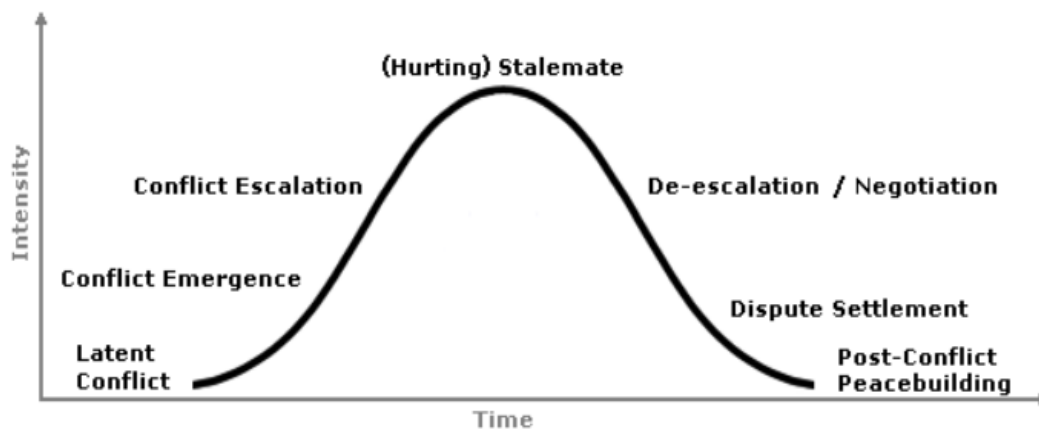


Figure 4. Stages of Conflict (Brahm, 2003: https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/conflict_stages/)

Latent conflict refers to a situation where there are potentials for violence but the conflict is not yet actively manifested. Before conflict escalates into a confrontation, it is essential to address its root causes which have already been established below the surface. The second stage (the emergence of the conflict) could be sparked by such potentials if not addressed timely. The objectives of the parties are different and their responsibilities are ambiguous in a latent conflict (ADR Times 2024; Brahm, 2023; Fisher, 2000).

The aim here is to determine whether the conflict in Afghanistan was set up latently in the last decade of the monarchy, often referred to as the Constitutional Decade. As stated in the pages preceded, the dominant literature identifies the 1973 coup led by Mohammad Daoud against the monarchy as the inception of the conflict in Afghanistan. The role of the Constitutional Decade has largely been overlooked in this regard. The present thesis challenges the prevailing perception about the inception of the conflict through a comprehensive examination.

Mohammad Zāhir (1914-2007) served as king of Afghanistan for forty years (1933-73). Zahir Shah ascended the throne at his nineteen following the assassination of his father Mohammad Nader Shah in 1933. King Zahir stayed in the shadows while his relatives, such as Mohammad

Daoud, who deposed the monarchy in 1973 and served as prime minister from 1953 to 1963, run the government (Arjomand, 2004). The monarch asserted his power through establishing the 1964 Constitution. The Article 24 of this constitution prohibited members of the royal family, including Muhammad Daoud, from holding public office. The period spanning 1963–73 has been referred to as the Golden Age (Constitutional Decade or the Democracy Experiment) in contemporary political history of Afghanistan. The 1964 Constitution granted citizens freedom of thoughts and expression as well as the right to form political parties, thereby Afghanistan's absolute political system was being replaced by a constitutional monarchy which incorporated some aspects of parliamentary. This constitutional change allowed political factions, primarily Islamists (conservatives) and leftists (Marxist-Leninist) to promote and spread their political views and ideologies across society. These two main factions later participated in arm conflict against one another from 1979 to 1992 during the Jihad (resistance against the Soviet occupation and its backed-governments).

In response to the Marxist “Hizb-e-Democratic-e-Khalq-e-Afghanistan” (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan or PDPA), founded in 1965, Jawanan-e-Mosalman (Muslim Youth) was established in 1968. These were the two political ideology-oriented parties with the largest numbers of supporters in the society. They increasingly involved in intellectual clashes at schools, universities and parliament and so forth. These soft clashes served as a springboard for the violent confrontation between them later. The political groupings began to utilize constitutional openness to organize public gatherings and meetings, mobilize workers and students, and publish newspapers. As an example, Sultan Ali Keshtmand, a leftist prime minister of Afghanistan from 1980 to 1988 and 1989 to 1990, has been cited by Andishmand (Persian: اندیشمند) (2009) as stating that only his associated leftist political faction (Parcham, a faction of PDPA) organized over 2,000 protests and gatherings for women, workers, and students between 1965 and 1969.

Despite dissidents' practical political activities, the monarch never signed Political Parties' Bill, which had already been passed by the parliament. The 1965 parliamentary election should have been held on the basis of the bill which was supposed to be endorsed during 1964-65 (Ruttig, 2018; Baryalay 2013; Bezhan, 2013). For what reason did the monarch not sign the political parties' bill? According to Farid Mazdak, one of the prominent members of the PDPA, in an interview with Amu TV (2024), the monarch felt the fear over losing his power should he signed the bill. Further reasons for the monarch declined to sign the bill, as stated by Bezhan (2013) included his concerns over the strong emergence of extremist parties in the country, the

strengthening of anti-monarchists, the formation of ethnically based parties, the absence of a competent and united moderate political party so it can challenge well-organized Marxist and Islamic political movements.

Since the monarch did not approve the parties' law, there was no incentive for the political movements (leftist and conservatives) to function within established boundaries or to moderate their approaches. This led the parties becoming more radicalized (Bezhan, 2013). Therefore, they consider infiltrating the governmental armed forces as a way to deploy violence for gaining power (Ruttig, 2018). As will be illustrated, military officers in the army affiliated with leftist political factions supported Mohammad Daoud in his overthrow of the monarchy. This bloodless coup and proclamation of a Republic occurred when the king was in Italy.

Hypothetically speaking, the occurrence of violence could have been avoided had the monarch demonstrated a genuine willingness to approve the political parties' bill. Such approval would have provided the parties incentives and motivation to pursue peaceful means, like parliament, to gain political power. This is a subject that lacks sufficient literature.

It has become evident from the above-mentioned illustrations that Afghanistan's conflict modestly began to originate latently throughout the Constitutional Decade. This decade offered chances for political opening but also threatened political stability as the monarch underestimated the consequences of his decision not to endorse the political parties' law. The king's decision raises the question of why he signed the 1964 Constitution in October 1 of the same year, which permitted citizens to form political parties, yet he opted not to enact it by declining to endorse the related bill on political parties. The monarch stance on operation of political parties is controversial; while the king recognized formation of political parties by signing the 1964 Constitution (article 32), he did not activate this provision when it came to approving the political parties bill. Existing literatures, as discussed prior, have shed light on the reasons for the first aspect of this controversy, specifically the refusal of the parties' law. Yet, they have not addressed the question of why the king granted citizens the right to form political parties if he subsequently chose not to fully implement it.

The author of the present study concludes that the monarch's contradictory position toward citizens exercising their political rights played a role in the early dynamics (latent stage) of the conflict in two ways. Firstly, the constitutional change enabled the political parties to emerge with certain constituencies and to get well-organized. Secondly, the king impeded political parties from acquiring power via peaceful means by rejecting the bill, which called for the

implementation of a parliamentary system. In doing so, the parties' role in the political system remained ambiguous. A political party with a majority of seats in parliament could have formed the government provided that the monarch had approved the bill. Moreover, the absence of a legitimate avenue for political competition prompted the Islamists and leftists to ramp up their dispute through multiple methods to keep each other out of power and popularity. As a result, the latent stage of the conflict erupted in 1973 when military officers affiliated with PDPA allied with Mohammad Daoud to terminate the 40-year reign of his cousin, King Zahir Shah. Conflict emerged initially, in part, due to Zahir Shah's lack of insufficient commitment to genuine political reform.

2.2.1.2 Coup d'état 1973: Emergence of the Conflict

Fifty-one years ago, in July 1973, Mohammad Daoud Khan, King Zahir's brother-in-law and cousin, deposed Afghanistan's monarchy in a bloodless coup d'état, thereby establishing a Republic and proclaimed himself the country's first president. He had served as prime minister from 1953-63. The answers vary to the question of why did he decide to overthrow the monarchy. The United States and the Soviet Union are viewed as foreign factors for the coup, whereas the relationship between Daoud and Zahir Shah, their differences over policies and constitutional reforms are considered as internal elements. In the Cold War era, the monarch wanted Afghanistan to remain impartial. On the opposite, Daoud steered the country towards the Soviet Union during his premiership by vigorously promoting irredentism approach. He sought to unified Pashtun people by establishing a greater Pashtunistan encompassing Pashtun regions in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan, where Pashtuns reside on both sides, is the subject of the Pashtunistan. In 1883, British Indian created the Durand line with the consent of Afghanistan's Emir Abdul Rahaman Khan. The international community has recognized Durand Line since the inception of Pakistan in 1974 as official border between Afghanistan and this country. However, the rulers of Afghanistan have denied constantly recognition of as official border.

In order to avoid upsetting Pakistan, as its Cold War ally, the United States consistently denied Daoud's request for weaponry. Daoud turned to the Soviet as a result of Washington's willingness to offer military assistance to Pakistan rather than Afghanistan. Pakistan's deployment of US-made weapons in a 1955 clash against Afghanistan further sparked Daoud's grievance. Consequently, Prime Minister Daoud invited Soviet's Prime Minister Nikolai

Bulganin and the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to visit Kabul in response to Washington's sluggishness (Winger, 2017; Ralston, 2016).

Zahir Shah disagreed over Daoud's harsh stance on the Pashtunistan issue, which was deteriorating relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He also contrasted Daoud's policies that altered Afghanistan's impartiality in the Cold War. (Kākar, 1978). According to Kakar, in a series of letters to the monarch, Daoud stated that the current administration was no longer viable "since the intelligentsia (*tabaqa-i-munawwar*) desired change and various kinds of ideologies were secretly active". Prime Minister Daoud proposed holding a referendum so that the public may choose the future political system. The King rejected this plan because he viewed it impractical. The Prime Minister subsequently suggested the alternative reform which is to adopt a new constitution that is founded on parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy, and the legalization of single or two-political party system with a symbolic role to the monarch. The political parties bill noted earlier, which was developed after Daoud's tenure but was not signed by the monarch, appears to be supported by this suggestion from Prime Minister Daoud. As he felt Daoud had already become too autocratic and that the proposed constitution would uphold his de facto rule, the King rejected the second proposal too. Daoud was compelled to step down as prime minister in 1963 due to royal opposition. According to former Afghanistan's minister of culture, Sayed Makhdom Rahin, lasting disagreements between the King and Daoud might have had a role in Daoud's intention to carry out the coup against the monarch (Synovitz, 2003).

Following Daoud's resignation, the King immediately began implementing political reforms that strengthened his own constitutional position (Winger, 2017; Kaker, 1978). Zahir Shah sought to oust Daoud, who had established himself as the King's fiercest opponent. This was ultimately demonstrated by overthrowing the King in the 1973 coup d'état (Astri, 2008).

Upon Daoud's dismissal, a well-known liberal and anti-communist moderate Muslim, Mohammad Shafiq was appointed as prime minister. He announced plans that would promote modernization of Afghanistan's traditional society, which encouraged pro-Western strategies. These strategies included strengthening relationships with pro-American administrations in Iran and Pakistan, according to Sayyed Abdullah Kazim, who served as chancellor of Kabul University during Daoud's government (Synovitz, 2003). Prime Minister Shafiq signed an agreement with Iran about Iranian water rights from the Helmand River of Afghanistan and also he improved ties with Pakistan. Iran and Pakistan were allies of the

United States, and this made the Soviet Union feel threatened. Consequently, the Soviet might encourage Daoud to stage the coup.

Prior to becoming president, Daoud supported the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, he shifted later to Iran and Pakistan, particularly following his visit to Moscow and his meeting with Brzhnev, the Soviet leader, in April 1977. During the meeting, Brzhnev warned Daoud of the presence of certain US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)'s agents in northern Afghanistan. Furthermore, he asked President Daoud to maintain PDPA members in the government. These demands enraged Daoud that he immediately left the meeting (BBC Persian, n.d.). Ultimately, on April 28, 1978, the communist People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) launched a coup in which President Daoud and his family members were murdered. His rule was terminated by the same party that its members had backed Daoud in his attempt to bring down the monarchy. In the pages that follow, the causes for this coup d'état will be explored.

2.2.1.3 Seventh Saur Coup d'état: How Did It Trigger a Protracted Conflict?

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), whose members were army officers, assisted President Mohammad Daoud to overthrow the monarchy. After five years in power, Daoud was ousted by the same party in a deadly coup on April 28, 1978 (also known as 7 Saur 1357 in Persian calendar). They assassinated President Daoud along with his family members inside the presidential palace.

As demonstrated by a special interview of senior former PDPA member Sulaiman Laieq with TOLONews (n.d), proponents of this historical event call it the Sour Revolution (*Inqelab-e-Haft-e-Saur*). Opponents of the event, on the other hand, refer to it as the 7 Saur Coup (*Kodetta-e-Haft-e-Saur* in Persian). Saur event was a military coup by which Afghanistan got fully involved in the Cold War and went into a long-term full-fledged armed conflict followed by the Soviet invasion, Mujahedeen resistance (Wafayezada et al, 2017: 23; Rasanayagam, 2005: 67), and ultimately rise of the Taliban. What was the PDPA, why did it overthrow President Daoud, and how did the coup or Saur revolution lead to a protracted conflict in the country? These are the subjects that are being discussed under this section.

On January 1, 1965, the People Democratic Party of Afghanistan was founded in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, with Marxism-Leninism ideology. Nur Mohammed Taraki, a founding member, was elected as the party's leader by its inaugural congress, and Babrak Karmal was chosen as his deputy. Later, either ruled over the country as president. Internal factionalism quickly caused the party to split into Khalq (people) and Parcham (banner or flag). While the

majority of Khalq's members were Pashtun, Parcham faction was made of non-Pashtuns predominately. Furthermore, although both factions adhere to the same philosophy and ideology in general, Khalq, led by Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, placed more emphasis on insurrection, while Parcham, led by Babrak Karmal, took a reformist stance. In one case, Babrak Karmal had informed King Zahir of Daoud's plan to stage a coup (Amu, 2024). Further faction, called "Settem-e-Melli," or Against National Oppression was formed, led by Taher Badakhshi, a founding member of the PDPA. The primary argument of [Against] National Oppression, or "*The Revolutionary Organization of the Toilers of Afghanistan*" was that non-Pashtuns are structurally excluded from political and economic decision-making processes (Badakhshani, 2021). As a means to ensure political equality and fair distribution of resources among ethnic groups, federalism was proposed by Taher Badakhshi as "the only way out of the intensifying ethnic conflict and structural inequality."

Concerning the condition which contributed to the emergence of the PDPA, according to Kakar (1995) and CYNKIN (1982) and the Constitutional Decade not only enabled but actively encouraged formation of political organizations. After the monarchy was overthrown by Mohammad Doud, his government's relationship with the Soviet Union was friendly for the initial two years with an increase in the financial and military aid of the Soviet to Afghanistan. However, he later started to establish ties with the Islamic countries, US, Iran, and also détente his relation with Pakistan over Pashtunistan. As a case in point, then Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan three-day visit to Kabul in 1976 marked the start of a number of direct communication between these two leaders. Despite unresolved concerns, President Daoud and Bhutto became close and ultimately came to an agreement regarding Pashtunistan. Reaching an agreement over Pashtunistan could potentially lead to degradation in relations between Daoud and Moscow. In July 1974, his brother and chief advisor Naim, and Abdullah, Doud's deputy foreign minister, paid visits to Iraq, Iran, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. (Winger, 2017; Ralston, 2016; Mather, 2003; Jillani, 1993; Lumen, n.d). These countries commenced to invest billions of dollars in Afghanistan. Daoud additionally founded his own National Revolution Party in the state and outlawed the activities of political parties in the Afghanistan. Likewise, he proceeded to reduce the number of Soviet military advisors from 1,000 to 200.

The Soviet viewed these developments as signs of threat. To cope with Daoud switching side, the Soviet pushed to reunite Khalq and Parcham PDPA's factions. In an interview with Amu TV (2024), Farid Mazdak, a former senior member of the PDPA, stated that in addition to the

Soviet Union, communist parties in Iran, India, and Iraq cooperated to re-unite Khalq and Parchm against Daoud as he started firing members of the PDPA from the government around 1975. President Daoud was overly harsh on Islamic political organizations and the PDPA. By changing his stance against the erstwhile alliance, PDPA, and expanding his relations with the Islamic countries, Daoud distanced himself from the Soviet Union. He increasingly annoyed with the Soviet's efforts to reunite Parcham and Khalq factions of the pro-Moscow PDPA.

Ultimately, on April 17, 1978, a senior PDA member, Mir Akbar Khayber, was killed. At Khayber's funeral, the PDPA leaders spoke out against the government and declared it responsible for Khayber's death. With the exception of Hafizullah Amin, the military liaison officer for the PDPA's Khalq faction, a number of the party's leaders including Taraki and Babrak Karmal were arrested on the nights of April 25-26, 1978. Due to a day-long delay in his detention, Amin had the opportunity to set up the government's overthrow (Rasanayagam 2005: 67). A military officers affiliated with PDPA executed order of hafizullah Amin to stage the coup on April 28, 1978. President Daoud, eighteen members of his family, and a number of his ministers were all murdered as they refused to surrender (Kakar, 1995). Taraki became president after the coup, while Hafizullah Amin was appointed deputy prime minister.

Although two well recognized PDPA members, Suleiman Layeq (TOLONews, n.d.) and Farid Mazdak (Amu, 2024), agree that Khayber's death served as a catalyst for the coup, they differ as to whether the coup was directly authorized by the party or Amin's own initiative. Layeq disputes Mazdak's assertion that the coup was planned, premature though, by the party as the Soviet wanted PDPA to be an alternative for Daoud. Layeq claims that Amine's carried out the coup with no formal approval from the party. They also agree that accusing Daoud government for the murder of Khayber was a conspiracy which has never been proved. Citing Khayber's proposal to dissolve the PDPA and merge it with the National Revolution Party of President Daoud, Mazdak argued that there was a positive relationship between Khayber and the President. Armed resistance resulted from the PDPA's government using violence against its opponents and certain ethnic minorities. Many people were forced to leave their country due to torture and arrest, which resulted in the establishment of refugee camps in Pakistan (EASO, 2012). Taraki, leader of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, began to crack down on the Parchm faction shortly after the coup, killing and detaining hundreds of members. On the other hand, Hafizullah Amin, Taraki's deputy, assassinated him in September 1979, taking over as president. Following four months in power, Amine was also murdered in December 1979, and

Babrak Karmal, the leader of the Parcham faction, became president (EASO, 2021) simultaneously with entering the Soviet's soldiers to Afghanistan.

The Saur or 28 April coup is seen as the actual emergence of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. It produced political intolerance, violence, radicalization, and the Soviet invasion. The PDPA launched a ten-year education plan that would replace English at the primary and secondary school with Russian as the second language in the country. Marxist indoctrination was one of the main goals of the suggested system. These revisions were met with strong public opposition. During a rebellion against the PDPA government in Herat province on March 15, 1979, the government's aircraft struck the city to reclaim it, killing up to 25,000 people. The government at the time sent insurgent killing squads to conduct house-to-house search (EASO, 2021). The coup had several clear repercussions, including laying the foundation for the widespread rebellion (jihad or Holy War) in 1978–79, the Islamic resistance organizations' subsequent ascent to power, and ultimately the Taliban rise (Amu, 2024; Kaker, 1995; CYNKIN, 1982).

2.2.1.4 Soviet Union Invasion of Afghanistan, Jihad, Civil War and Emergence of the Taliban Islamic Movement

In December 1978, President Taraki and the Soviet Union signed a treaty. Under this agreement, the Soviet Union would provide military support, including deployment of troops to Afghanistan if needed. An uprising in the west of the country, in the province of Herat, occurred on March 15, 1979. This revolt caused some army stations to collapse, but the PDPA government ultimately put an end to the uprising at a cost of 25,000 lives. Mujahedeen, or resistance against the communist regime, continued to stage large-scale attacks in the eastern province of Jalalabad, Gardez, and Paktia in April 1979 (Rasanayagam, 2005:79-80).

Non-violent and violent resentments grew as a result of the communist regime's harsh and oppressive policies. These events ultimately led to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, which was justified by the above-mentioned pact. The Soviet installed Babrak Karmal in power. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the United States, and other countries did everything in their power to support Mujahedeen. Over a million people were ultimately killed in the increasingly brutal Soviet counterinsurgency campaign, which also forced over one-third of Afghanistan's population to flee, primarily to Pakistan and Iran, where Mujahedeen were given sanctuaries. Tactically acknowledging its failure to defeat Mujahedeen, the Soviet Union accepted to withdraw its forces by February 1989 based on the Geneva Accords, a deal signed in Geneva on April 14, 1988, between the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet

Union, and the United States of America (Rubin, 1989). Nevertheless, the Soviet withdrawal did not bring an end to the war in Afghanistan since the United States and other supporters of the Mujahedeen had no plans for what would happen thereafter. Instead, they simply aimed to defeat the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Wafayezada et al, 2017:25).

Mohammed Najibullah (known as Dr. Najib), the last president of the communist regime, presented the National Reconciliation Programme (NRP) concurrently with the Soviet withdrawal preparations. This programme called for creation of a coalition government in which the People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which Najib had now changed its name to Watan (Homeland) Party of Afghanistan, would be willing to share power. This programme was rejected by Mujahedeen (Rizvi, 1987). Najib was eventually compelled to officially quit power on April 25, 1992, after Mujahedeen seized the capital, Kabul, on April 6, 1992 (Maas, 2006). Following his stepping down, Najibullah took refuge in the UN premises in Kabul until the Taliban publicly hanged him in 1996.

On April 24, the Peshawar Accord was signed between different Mujahedeen factions (Tanzeemat) in Peshawar, Pakistan, one day before Najib resigned as president. This agreement called for the establishment of a council comprising 51 members, headed by the National Liberation Front leader Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, to enter the country and take over the power from the incumbent administration. Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of Hezb-e-Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society) Afghanistan, would take office as president for four months subsequent to Mojadeddi's two-month transitional term (Peshawar Accord, 1992). All Mujahedeen factions supported the agreement except Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hezb-e-Islami (Islamic Party) Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Massoud, the prominent Mujahedeen commander and then member of Jamiat-i-Islami, who had been appointed as defense minister under the Peshawar Accord, communicated via radio with Hekmatyar, requesting him not to march militarily on Kabul, as the communist regime is ready to cede power peacefully to the new Mujahedeen administration. However, Hekmatyar persisted in his position to launch a military assault, asserting that the ruminants of communist regime are still in office. In response, Massoud unequivocally sated that in such scenario he would have no choice but to defend the citizens of Kabul (Kechken, n.d.). In this way, the civil war among the Mujahedeen erupted.

As the disputes escalated, a year later on March 7, 1993, efforts by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan culminated a new agreement among Mujahedeen factions. This agreement endorsed Burhanuddin Rabbani to continue as president of Afghanistan for an 18-month term and

appointed Hekmatyar as prime minister. In pursuit of a perpetuate resolution to the power struggle, President Rabbani proposed in 1994 the convention of the Loye Jirga (Grand Assembly) to decide on a new leader for the country. This proposal was rejected by Hekmatyar, who insisted that President Rabbani should step down during the process of electing new leader and pass over power to an interim administration.

The Pashtun ethnic Hekmatyar, the Shia (Hazara ethnic) leader Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of *Hezb-e-Wadat-e-Milli*, or National United Party, and the Uzbek ethnic leader of *Hezb-e-Jenbesh-e-Milli*, or National Islamic Movement, Abdul Rashid Dostum, who had previously been ally with Rabbani-Massoud during 1992-1993, formed a coalition to fight the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik by ethnicity (Fatah, 2020). Ethnic based approach to power plus external factors were the primary driving force for the Mujahedeen inter-factional war. The conflict claimed between 25,000 and 45,000 lives from 1992 to 1994 (EASO, 2021; Fatah, 2020; EASO, 2012; Dixit, 1995;). However, in an interview with Sami Mahdi (2008), President Rabbani emphasized Hekmatyar's sense of supremacy for power and external conspiracies as the main factors for the failure of Mujahedeen's government.

The Taliban (means religious students in Persian and Pashto) led by Mullah Mohammad Omer emerged in Kandahar in 1994 amidst the civil war amongst Mujahedeen. In addition to implementing Sharia, the Taliban promised to bring peace and stability back to the country (BBC, 2022). Kabul was taken by the group in 1996. In a speech, President Rabbani states that when the Taliban Movement had just begun, a delegate from the movement approached him in the presidential palace and demanded that, as a precondition to talk with his administration, schools had to be closed for girls and women are dismissed from government jobs. President Rabbani categorically refused this request, citing women's rights in Islam to work and to educate. In response, he was warned by the Taliban delegate that his government would be overthrown by the group. President Rabbani responded the delegate by saying "do as you want! I would never compromise on women rights granted by Islam!" (جمعیۃ اسلامی افغانستان \ Jamiat-e- Islami Afghanistan, 2024). This event and conversation make clear how ideological viewpoints and different worldviews play an important role in the conflict.

The Islamic State of Mujahedeen retreated to the north of Afghanistan after the Taliban advanced on Kabul. Hekmatyar, Abdul Rashid Dostum, Mohammed Mohaqqueq, Mohammad Karim Khalili (successors of Abdul Ali Mazari whom the Taliban had murdered during their initial days in Kabul) joined the government in resisting the Taliban under the umbrella of the

United Islamic National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (also known as the Northern Alliance). This front was led by President Rabbani and Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. The Front whose members were predominantly from Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen, including Pashtuns ethnicities aimed to establish an elected political system and defend the fundamental human rights and Islamic rights of all citizens including women rights to educate and work. Massoud, the greatest opponent of the Taliban, was killed by two disguised Arab journalists on September 9, 2001, two days before the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York's Trade Centre. He was believed assassinated by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban jointly (Dora, 2021).

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States asked the Taliban to hand over Al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden. Refused this demand, the first regime of the Taliban was, therefore, ousted in 2001 by the US and its allies in cooperation with the United Islamic National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan. Following that, a conference, excluding the Taliban and Hekmatyar, was initiated by the United Nations in Bonn of Germany to establish a new representative political set-up for the country. As a result, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, backed by the United States, was established. Shortly after the Islamic Republic formation, the Taliban re-mobilized and began waging a nearly two-decade war against the Afghanistan's government, as well as Americans and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces. Hekmatyar was likewise engaged in war with the government until 2017, when a peace agreement was reached. The war between the Taliban, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States cost 176,000 fatalities, including 52,893 opposition fighters, 46,319 civilians, and 69,095 Afghanistan's military and police personnel. The United States also spent \$2.13 trillion in the conflict (Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 2021).

2.2.2. Nature of the Conflict: Protracted and Aligned with the Theoretical Framework?

The False Readiness Theory and Hybrid Negative Peace concept are commonly used to examine complex and protracted conflicts (Schwartz, & Gilboa, 2021). A succinct conceptual explanation is provided in order to ascertain whether Afghanistan's conflict could be described as protracted (intractable). Though there is not a consensual definition, protracted conflict has been described by certain characteristics (Australian Red Cross, n.d). These kinds of conflicts are distinguished by their longevity, intractable nature, and mutability, with severe humanitarian consequences (ICRC, 2016). Over time, a protracted conflict may take on different forms and become more countrywide and internationalized.

Protracted conflict, according to Coleman (2003), is defined as intense, deadlock, and very challenging to settle with deeply ingrained, interconnected, and mutually influential variables that are complex, dynamic, nonlinear, and incorporate ethno-politics. He goes on to describe it as involving instability, power shifts, injustice, ambiguity, and terrible atrocities. This type of conflict has its roots in beliefs and ideologies. Other aspects of such conflict include high economic costs, displacement, infrastructure destruction, and intergenerational perpetuation. Hence, if you are in a conflict that is always going on and get worse, that is a protracted conflict (Coleman, Bui-Wrzosinska, Vallacher & Nowak, 2006). According to Brecher (2016: 4-5), scholars have considered ten years of duration for a conflict to be defined as protracted. Brecher cited Azer (1985), founding father of the term, who defines protracted conflicts as “hostile interaction which extends over long period of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in frequency and intensity.”

It has been found in the literature that the conflict in Afghanistan holds the majority of the characteristics of protracted conflict as shown in *table 1*. The ideological basis of the left-right was present from the beginning with external players, and it then involved ethnicity and struggle for power. As per Wafayezada et al (2017), ethnicity and identity contributed significantly to the longevity of the conflict in Afghanistan. The conflict has been continuing for around fifty years now. Concerning the humanitarian cost, 5.9 million people including internal, have been displaced since the war in 2001 (Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 2023). In 2021, there were 3.5 million internal displacements (UNHCR, 2021). During the Jihad from 1979-1989, one million died, three million were wounded, five million fled the country, out of which three million never returned (Dora, 2021).

In addition, the literatures have determined that the conflict in Afghanistan has a casual and inter-related development; the 1973 coup was provoked by the Constitutional Decade, which denied Daoud the chance to hold public office and the opportunity for political parties, especially the left and right wings, to operate within a legal framework. These subsequently had a role towards the coup. Disputes over power between Daoud and the Soviet-backed PDPA following the 1973's coup led to President Daoud's elimination in 1978. The communist governments of the PDPA's policies after Daoud removal exacerbated popular resentment and sparked the Soviet invasion followed by Jihad. Following the Mujahedeen's prevail in 1992, civil war broke out, the Taliban eventually rose to power (1996-2001), which resulted in the US invasion of the country.

Protracted Conflict In Theory	Conflict in Afghanistan (According to findings in the literature review)
Longevity: 10 Years at least	51 Years (if began with deposing monarchy)
Severe Humanitarian Consequences	- 1 million deceased, 3 million injured (during the Soviet invasion 1979-1989) - 25,000 to 45,000 fatalities (1992-1994) - 176,000 fatalities (2001-2021)
Displacement	- million left, which 3 million never returned to the county (1978-1989) - 5.9 million (2001-2021)
High Economic Cost	- 2.13 billion USD (2001-2021)
Involving Ethno-Politics and Ideology	- Pashtun-Tajik, Uzbek, Hzaras as the main conflicting parties - Marxism vs Islamism, Islamism vs Westernization
Power shift and Instability	- No political stability since 1973 - Continued violent regime change (Monarchy, Republic by Daoud, Communist regimes, Mujahedeen, Taliban 1st, Mujahedeen, Islamic Republic, Taliban 2nd)
Complex, Multi Players, internationalized	- Power Struggle, Ethnicity, Religion, Ideology, domestic and regional players (Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, India), and international players (USA and the Soviet- Russia)
Difficult to resolve	- As well be discussed all peace efforts have been failed
Intergeneration perpetuation	- The conflict has been lasting for 3 generations

Table 1. Conceptualization of the conflict in Afghanistan (the Table is compiled by the author)

2.2.3 Peace Making in Afghanistan

2.2.3.1 Peace-making: Concept and Ownership

Concept

With his 1992 proposal, *An Agenda for Peace*, former UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali made a notable contribution to the field of Peace and Conflict Studies. In this document he laid out how the UN and the global community address contemporary conflicts. The four main areas of “preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peace enforcement, and post-conflict peacebuilding” were comprehended in ‘*An Agenda for Peace*’. Based on this proposal, different mechanisms and functions are required at varying times and in various contexts in order to resolve a conflict and bring about peace (Lederach, 1997: 21-22; Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

The term preventive diplomacy describes diplomatic actions taken to prevent a conflict from turning violent. In fact, these course of actions function at the conflict’s latent stage, prior it has evolved into a confrontation. “Early warning, gathering information” and precise analysis of the conflict’s motivating factors are all part of preventive diplomacy. The diplomatic

measures taken during a conflict to assist disputing parties come to a negotiated agreement are referred to as peacemaking (SCANLON & MURITHI, 2007; United Nation Peacekeeping, n.d). Peacemaking is “moving towards settlement of an armed conflict, where conflicting parties are induced to reach an agreement voluntarily,” according to Galtung (1996), as cited by Sempiga (2017). Third-party mediators, such as state or non-state entities, organizations, prominent individuals and so forth may play role as peacemakers. In another point, Boutros in his proposal attaches a great deal of importance to the presence of genuine political will on the conflicting parties to make peace. This relatively resonates with the study’s theoretical foundation, the false readiness theory. Focusing on the parties’ intention—which in this context can also be interpreted as political will—the false readiness theory posits that entering the conflicting parties to peace talks does not guarantee that they are sincere in their desire to reach an agreement. Rather, it is likely that at least one of the parties intends to use negotiation as a means to achieve their strategic goal.

The term “peace enforcement” refers to a stage after peacemaking involving with coercive means, such as the use of force with the UN Security Council approval, to address a threat to international peace or a peace pact, according to Boutros-Ghali. Lastly, peacebuilding is a broad concept applied to post-conflict or post-peace accords. Through a long-term process of establishing capacities at all national levels, including the state’s ability to carry out its role effectively, economic development, human resources, and education, it seeks to establish the foundations for a lasting peace and prevent conflict from recurring (United Nation Peacekeeping, n.d). Lederach (1997) concurs with Boutros-Ghali’s overall perspective in “an Agenda for Peace”. However, he disagrees with Boutros about peacebuilding being exclusive for the post-conflict stage, as well as the employment of peace enforcement. Lederach argues that peacebuilding is more than just “post-peace accords” because it encompasses a variety of actions that both precede and follow formal peace agreements. Lederach goes on to argue that using military deployment against a warring party as a peacemaking instrument for the protracted conflicts is risky and is most likely going to backfire. For instance, nineteen forces for the United Nation Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) were killed in October 1993 in Mogadishu during an attempt to arrest some senior members of Somalian National Alliance (SNA), a rebellion group formed in 1992 (Allen, 1997).

Ownership

The term “owned” is frequently used in the context of peace processes to indicate that nations’ right for the leadership and ownership of their peace processes is categorically recognized and,

thus, is necessary to ensure successful peacebuilding. For instance, the term “Afghan-led, Afghan-owned” has been used extensively with regards to the peace process in Afghanistan, as shown by Zongyi (2021) and in the “U.S.-Europe Communiqué on the Afghan Peace Process” (2021). According to (CMIFinland, n.d):

“local ownership means that local stakeholders are not only parties to the conflict or power holders but also other groups like women, youth and traditional leaders are at the center of peace process. They decide on the objective of the peace process, and are strongly committed to engaging in its design and implementation. Thereby, local ownership leads to a widely acceptance of the peace process and sustainable results.”

On the other hand, according to Sending (2010), local ownership lays the foundation for local actors to internalize the principles and objectives of liberal peacebuilding. This model of peacebuilding refers to a top-down approach which is founded on democratization and marketization of the state. For the advocates of local peacebuilding model, local ownership has been characterized as a crucial component of effective peacebuilding and peacemaking so as to guarantee the legitimacy of the peace processes and to promote trust amongst the national actors involved (Von Billerbeck, 2017; Interpeace, 2016; United Nation, 2008; Nathan, 2006). For disputing parties to be genuinely motivated to strive toward a peaceful resolution of their conflict, trust is crucial. They will no longer see one another as a vicious rival once they have built trust. Rather, they view one another as partners in settling the conflict. A key component of this study’s theoretical framework is the role of parties’ motivations in peace making process. As stated by Sending, the concept of ownership is different for local and external actors: The locals perceive ownership as an “unconditional right - a question of domestic sovereignty and thus autonomy and control”. External actors, on the other hand, “typically refer to lack of local responsibility, capacity or political will. External actors often assume that ownership is theirs to grant to local authorities or local stakeholders.” In this respect, the definitional issue, practical challenges, lack of capacity and resources are some of the reasons Wong (2013) critically characterized local ownership as “a premature rhetoric.” According to him, there are no explicit explanations on who the locals are in the definition. Indigenous people, civil society, or the state? Even if the locals have the desire to take control of the process, he contends, they are unable to successfully implement it on the ground due to lack of capacity in conflicting societies.

Wong and Sending do not specify how to make sure that the locals’ concerns are taken into consideration by externals. The literature that places an overly emphasis on local ownership also failed to answer if a dispute is hybrid, to what extent the ownership right of the

international parties in dispute should be over the peace process. Or are outsiders in a conflict basically entitled to assert ownership of peace process? How should the ownership question be addressed in a scenario such as Afghanistan conflict, where both domestic (Taliban and the Islamic Republic) and external actors (US) involved. These questions require further investigation as a gap in the literature.

To conclude, investigating the concept of ownership has been carried out as it is pertinent to the theoretical framework of the present research. The parties' motivation to establish a negotiated accord can be influenced by the ownership of the peace process. It is possible for domestic parties to conflict to demonstrate less inclination towards reaching an agreement if they believe that an outsider controls and leads the peace process. Consequently, they will all seek a deal with that external player to achieve an upper hand over rivalry. Therefore, while reviewing the peace efforts in Afghanistan, the ownership notion, as a term that is pertinent to the theoretical and subject of the current study, will be taken into mind, particularly in the context of US-Taliban agreement and its relation with the intra-Afghan negotiations.

2.2.3.2 Peace Efforts during the Communist Regimes and Mujahedeen

The Geneva Accord

On November 20, 1980, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution authorizing the Secretary General to embark on a journey to find a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. Four key points were outlined in the resolution as part of the projected solution: preserving Afghanistan's political independence, territorial integrity, and nonaligned character, the right of the people to determine their own political system and form of government, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and the establishment of the necessary conditions for the repatriation of refugees from Pakistan (Bokhari, 1991). Afghanistan, Pakistan, Soviet Union and the United States signed an agreement at the UN headquarters in Geneva on April 14, 1988, in part due to the UN's efforts (Berridge, 1991). The Geneva Accord² contains four main provisions, which are somewhat similar to those stated in the previously mentioned resolution: (1) the Soviet Union withdrawal; (2) Pakistan and Afghanistan are not going to interfere in their domestic affairs; (3) the refugees would voluntarily return to Afghanistan from Pakistan; and (4) the Soviet Union and the United States would guarantee the Accord's implementation. The UN was supposed to monitor the implementation process as well (Anwar & Irfan, 2024; Ahmadi & Azizi, 2021).

² Text of Geneva Accords is available in the link: <https://www.dipublico.org/100569/geneva-agreements-on-afghanistan/>

Out of the four key provisions of the Geneva Accord, only Soviet withdrawal was fulfilled in 1989. This accord failed to bring about peace in Afghanistan for a number of reasons. Firstly, Mujahedeen as a main party to the conflict were not included in the peace talks. Therefore, they did not see themselves responsible to honor the term of the agreement, and thus continued to fight against the communist regime. Secondly, there is not a single word in the text of the Geneva agreement concerning the future of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). This lack of attention to the post-agreement era is also well-evident in a phone conversation between the United States Secretary of State James Baker and the Soviet's Gorbachev in February 1990. While discussing over phone then ongoing war in Afghanistan Gorbachev said, "Let them boil in their own juices over there." In response, Baker expressed his agreement with Gorbachev and retorted: "when you said, 'Let them boil,' I thought we have the same feeling," (Hashemi, 2023).

As Noorani (1988) pointed out, the agreement appeared to be more of a non-interference pact than a peace treaty because its ultimate objective was to expel the Soviet Union from Afghanistan rather than provide a comprehensive resolution to the conflict (Wafayezada et al, 2017: 25-26). Even so, the parties to the accord failed to remain committed to "non-interference" in practice, especially with respect to Pakistan and the United States. Thirdly, the parties to the agreements were not sincere on its implementation in line with the Article II of the Geneva Accord between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This article highlights the High Contracting Parties should be committed to not interfere in each other's affairs.

However, as previously stated, the Mujahedeen government was established in April 1992 in Pakistan as part of the Peshawar Accord, which goes contrary to the aforementioned provision. This suggests that following the Geneva agreement, Pakistan kept giving the Mujahedeen harbour and other support to wage the war against the regime in Kabul. Pakistan sought for a friendly government in Afghanistan. Therefore, it attempted for the collapse of the communist regime following the Soviet withdrawal. Ahmadi & Azizi (2021) argue that Pakistan and the US maintained their efforts to overthrow the communist government in defiance of the agreement's "non-interference" principle, and thus continued to provide aid to Mujahedeen after the accord (Rubin, 1996). According to Hashemi (2023), one of the main reasons for the US's engagement in Afghanistan conflict at the time was removal of the communist government.

Given the explanations provided, it could be suggested that the United States and Pakistan purposefully used the Geneva Accords to forward their strategic goals of the Soviet Union's

withdrawal and the demise of its puppet government in Afghanistan. In order to expedite the Soviet withdrawal, they, especially Pakistan, agreed to engage in negotiations with the communist government in Kabul, as nominal owner of the peace talks, and made an accord, which remained unfulfilled after the Soviet retreat. As a result, the Geneva Accord can be studied from the lens of the false readiness theory. This accord holds some similarities with the US-Taliban agreement and the intra-Afghan negotiations. There is room to compare the 2021 US withdrawal with the one for the Soviet in 1989, both of which came about through talks but resulted in the fall of the Afghanistan's administrations.

National Reconciliation Program (NRP)

In the mid-1980s, President Najibullah introduced the National Reconciliation Program (NRP) as the negotiations for Geneva Accord were underway and that the Soviet Union was expected to reduce its involvement in Afghanistan. This programme aimed to end the conflict with Mujahedeen through a negotiated comprehensive settlement. Politically, the NRP included the following: (I) the establishment of a leadership council; (II) a coalition broad-based government; and (III) the announcement of a six-month truce. Heela Najibullah (2018: 30-34), President Najibullah's daughter, argues that the NRP was based on local "non-aggression pacts" approach, wherein the parties to the conflict agree not to attack one another. It was intended that discussions would take place at the tribe, village, and district levels. The elders then would facilitate implementation of the agreements. A total of 3,370 reconciliation commissions were established, including 31 provincial commissions, 45 city commissions, 142 district commissions, and 3,151 commissions in rural and village areas. It is reported that these commissions employed 30,000 volunteers, including opposition members who joined the government. These were in addition to efforts made for direct negotiations with the Mujahedeen political leadership in Peshawar (Wafayezada et al ,2017: 26). Despite all, the NRP was failed. Views are varied on the reasons behind the failure of the NRP. Heela Najibullah identifies several elements that contributed to the failure, including mistrust by Mujahedeen over President Najibullah's intentions, the Soviet Union's withdrawal with no political plans for the aftermath, and the neighbouring countries which questioned the legitimacy of the government and its potential to survive after the Soviet withdrawal. However, Farid Mazdak, Najibullah's deputy at the Watan party (formerly PDPA), claims that Najib's peace proposal was not genuine and that he was only trying to remain in power because his administration was on the verge of collapsing. Others, such as Rubin (1996), highlighted the non-cooperative stance of the US and the Soviet Union as the superpowers. The NRP's failure

was also influenced by Pakistan's opposition to any kind of reconciliation or coalition government with Dr. Njaibullah, lack of consensus on the NRP within the party (احساس، 2013), the Mujahedeen's sense of shame at making concessions to the communist government they fought against, and their belief that they had won the war. This situation seems align with the Taliban's perception after the Doha agreement. They also cheered victory following their agreement with the United States. Wahidullah Sabawoon, a senior member of Hezb-e-Islami, stated in an interview with Wafayezada et al (2017) that "Because Dr. Najibullah was notorious in the eyes of people of Afghanistan, so no one came forward. Everyone was avoiding becoming notorious." After the NRP failed, Mujahedeen gained power, which ultimately led to the civil war and the emergence of the Taliban.

Despite having a modestly local ownership base, the NRP was unable to succeed because of a lack of international support, stemmed from the Geneva Accord's stance of indifference regarding Afghanistan's political future following the Soviet withdrawal. This suggests rooms for further discussions on whether local ownership in peace initiatives can foster trust between conflicting sides in a civil war and encourage them to sincere talks without a constructive link to the external players.

2.2.3.3 Peace Efforts between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban

Who are the Taliban and What is Their Political Theory?

The word 'Taliban' means students of religious colleges or madrasas. The civil war that the Mujahedeen referred to as an imposed war from outside the country, intensified following they overthrew Najubullah's Soviet-backed regime in 1992. The Mujahedeen's intra-factions war seems to have been the reason of the Taliban's initial emergence in 1994. The Taliban announced that they would restore peace, disarm the population, strictly enforce Shari'a and defend the Islamic character of Afghanistan (Kotokey & Borthakur, 2021; Rubin, 2002).

Rubin argues that the Taliban arose in the Pakistani Madrasas and were the most recent manifestation of Pakistan's intention to back Islamist rather than nationalist administration in Afghanistan. The nationalist Pashtuns, like President Doaud, have a territorial dispute with Pakistan over the Durand line, as was mentioned in the pages preceding this. Mujahedeen accused Pakistan of supporting the Taliban after they captured Spin Baldak in the Sothern Kandahar province, where the Taliban originally appeared (Kotokey & Borthakur, 2021).

Kotokey & Borthakur argue that, as a predominantly Pashtun group, the Taliban's political and governance ideology is based on Pashtunwali and their interpretation of Sharia. For the Pashtun

ethnic group in Afghanistan, Pushtunwali is the socio-cultural code of life that a Pashtun must adhere to. The Pashtunwali generally believe in the following:

“*ghayrat/nang*, which means bravery; *badal*, which means revenge; *melmastia*, which means hospitality; *pardah*, which means gender differences; *namus*, which means face or honor; and *shura*, which means council” Hawkins (2009).

The book *Al-Imarah Al-Islamiah wa Nithamaha* or *The Islamic Emirate and Its System*, written by Abdul Hakim Haqqani, head of the Taliban’s administration Supreme Court, can also give a lot of knowledge about the political philosophy and governance of the Taliban. The preface of this 312-pages book has been authored by Mullah Hibatullah, supreme leader of the Taliban. Since the Taliban supreme leader supports the book, it undoubtedly reflects the Taliban’s worldview, even though it is not an official policy prescription (Abbas, 2023:101-105).

The book’s first chapter described the Islamic Emirate’s mission of establishing an Islamic state based on Hanafi jurisprudence. Abbas interpreted this statement as an implicit assert by Haqqani that “the Taliban are primarily chosen by God to implement his law on Earth and, further, that their understanding of Islamic law is the only correct one.” He further claimed that the author of *Al-Imarah Al-Islamiah wa Nithamaha* is too intolerant towards other religious followers, even including those who do not belong to the Hanafi sect. Women are not allowed in politics or government in this book with exclusive role in home (Haqqani, 2022: 239; Bunzel, 2024; Abbas, 2023). The subjects that have been referred to by Hassan Abbas and Bunzel are examined by the author of this thesis in order to assess the validity of their claims about the book *Al Imarah*. Haqqani (Pp. 17–18) states explicitly that it is the duty of the Taliban or Islamic Emirates to establish Allah’s rule. Additionally, he insists on having Hanafi as the only official sect or *Mazhab* in Afghanistan. He claims that Afghanistan’s people would be ashamed to have another sect other than Hanafi (P.37). Nevertheless, the fact that Sunni and Shia, among other sects, have lived in harmony for centuries in Afghanistan refutes the Haqqani’s claim.

The head of state should be called Ameer-ul-Momineen, which means ‘leader of the faithful.’ Everyone is obliged to obey the Ameer, and those who do not, face the death penalty. According to the book, election is not allowed in Islam, arguing that the general populace is incapable of making informed decisions about their leaders and that their choices may harm Sharia (P.240). Alternatively, Ameer-ul-Mumineen should be chosen in the same way as the four rightly guided caliphs of Islam. Haqqani claims that “Allegiance, domination (*Taghalub*), and the formation of a council of the influential and prominent people” are all elements of the selection method of Ameer (Pp. 58-70).

Finally, the Taliban are mainly adopting their own fusion of fundamentalist ideologies, combining the tribalism and Pashtunwali elements with the militant Deobandism and the rigidity of Salafism (Abbas, 2023:106). The idea that sovereignty could be attained through religious education and development, where the clergy/*ulema* are the leaders of the country, gave rise to Deobandism, which started out as a religious revivalist movement. It eventually transcended its modest origins to become a transnational movement with stronger regional ties and more ambitious political goals. Professor Barbara Metcalf, a prominent figure in the Deobandi school of thought, has been quoted by Abbas on page 151 of his book, describing Deoband-type movements ‘pragmatic’.

Professor Barbara’s definition of Deobandism creates a new avenue for analysing the theoretical framework of the study in light of the Taliban’s Deobandi character and its link to their negotiating strategy. According to the theory employed in this study, a party’s entry into a negotiation does not necessarily indicate that they sincerely want peace. Rather, negotiation is possible to be utilized to reach strategic goals.

Critically speaking, the Taliban are described as both fundamentalist and Deobandi at the same time. If Deobandism is politically considered “‘pragmatism’” according to Barbara’s definition, then the question of how these two components can be combined into a single entity may come up. Fundamentalists are dogmatic, whereas pragmatics are flexible. This conceptual quandary is not addressed by Abbas.

Ultimately, on the other side, freedom of speech, human rights, elections, and democracy were among the principles upon which the Islamic Republic was built. These are essentially in opposition to the principles and ideology that the Taliban espouse. One of the highly contested issues during the Doha peace negotiations was the profound deference in the worldviews. This factor can significantly contribute to the complexity of a peace negotiation. The factor is aligned with theoretical framework of the present study since it views negotiation as complex in general.

Bonn Conference – 2001

A conference was convened in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001 following the Taliban’s defeat. This conference, which has also been referred to Bonn Process, brought together international officials and Afghanistan’s leaders to create a new post-Taliban democratic political system, the Islamic Republic. An interim government was established, a new

constitution was drafted, and subsequently presidential and parliamentary elections were held as part of objectives of the Bonn process.

The strategic objective of the United States in 2001 included establishing a broad-based and stable government in Afghanistan that could support the country's short-term efforts to dismantle al Qaeda and, in the long run, be sufficiently stable to prevent terrorist groups and organizations from finding safe havens. The supporting objectives were also to defeat the Taliban militarily, persuade the Northern Alliance or the Islamic United National Front for Salvation of Afghanistan sharing power in a new political system, and secure agreement from Afghanistan and Pakistan on a new Pashtun leader for the country. (Fields & Ahmed, 2011). The Northern Alliance, a non-Pashtun dominant political and military resistance movement against the Taliban, was the leading party to the Bonn conference. The Alliance supported the United States to overthrow the Taliban, and then it seized power in the country.

Brooking (2022) contends that the goal of the Bonn process was to defeat the Taliban and create a new political order that would eventually be able to handle peace on its own, rather than to try to bring the disputing parties, Taliban and their opponents including the Northern Alliance, to a peace agreement. Consequently, the Bonn process did not include the Taliban. This has been viewed as an error that occurred during the Bonn process. Regarding this matter, Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special representative and as a main facilitator of the process, acknowledged that the Taliban's exclusion from the Bonn conference was a grave mistake, calling it "the original sin":

"All the Taliban should have been in Bonn. I call it the original sin. The absence of the Taliban was a big, big hole in the process. But it was not possible to have, because of September 11, because of the behaviour of the faction" (BRAHIMI et al, 2004; Brahimi, 2003).

The Taliban were offering the go-ahead to embrace the new political order since they were suffering from their worst military and political defeat and had nowhere and none to back them up due to the War on Terror's motto of "you are with us or against us." They had lost the support of even Pakistan as their traditional ally. For instance, senior Taliban members kept contacting Hamid Karzai to seek a role in his administration even after he was chosen interim leader of the new administration in 2001. Steve Brooking (2022: 5–6), a British diplomat and expert on Afghanistan, claims that Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, the Taliban's then foreign minister, approached Karzai in 2002 but was apprehended by the Americans. In addition, senior Taliban official Tayeb Agha is cited by Steve that the Taliban offered to hand over the entire southern part of the country from which they had risen, as long as their leaders had access to

security and vehicles and accepted their three nominees to be governors of the southern provinces of Zabul, Kandahar, and Helmand. The United States, which believed that Mullah Omer harboured terrorists and that he has to be held accountable, also denied this. The failure of the Taliban to include in the Bonn process is termed as “unseen opportunity” by Brooking.

A balance between external and local ownership and leadership was absent in the Bonn process. It also attempted to restore the Pashtuns to the position of power leadership by setting-up the political structure through an ethnic perspective. Other non-Pashtun ethnic groups were gradually excluded from the decision-making process as a result of identity politics’ disastrous effects on governance. Karzai was also not entirely in favor of a vigorous campaign against the Taliban. He referred to them as “upset brothers” and that killing them would be implicitly regarded as killing Pashtuns. As a result, the Taliban were not clearly defined by the government as either brothers or enemies. The Taliban, on the other hand, characterized the Islamic Republic illegitimate and as a puppet for the US which Jihad is an obligation against.

2.2.3.3.1 Peace Efforts During President Karzai’s Tenure

At the outset, it is worth mentioning that the information used under this item are largely obtained from an easy tilted in Persian از کجا تا اینجا؟ or *Narrative of Peace; from where to here?* written by Mohammad Omer Daoudzai (2020). He, as President Karzai’s Chief of Staff from 2003 to 2005 and 2007 to around 2010 and ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran, was his most trusted person. Therefore, the information holds a high degree of credibility because it comes from the first-hand source. They were also cross-referenced by other sources cited in this study. What Daoudzai has described is based on his direct observation.

In an interview with the Financial Times in 2003, Mohamad Omer Daoudzai (in Persian: محمد عمر داوودزی) refrained to call the Taliban entirely as a terrorist group. Rather, he asserted that there are moderates and more moderates within the Taliban members. The moderate Taliban, he says, were those who were hoping for an invitation from the Islamic Republic to return home. Those members who had already been living in Kabul are referred as the more moderates. A few days later, he notes, an American team met President Karzai and requested him not to open the topic of peace negotiation with the Taliban. The team voiced their objection on categorizing the Taliban into moderate and more moderate, pointing out to the interview of Daoudzai. Karzai therefore strongly advised his chief of staff to exercise caution when making remarks about the Taliban.

Daoudzai goes on to say that in 2004, a year after his interview with the Financial Times, he received a call informing him that some Taliban members, including Jalaluddin Haqqani, the founder of the Haqqani Network within the Taliban, wanted to engage in talks with the government. According to him, when this matter was brought to President Karzai's attention, he stated that it was beyond his discretion and that Zalmay Khalilzad, the US ambassador to Afghanistan at the time, should be consulted. The US consented, and the President instructed chair of the Commission of Strengthening Peace (Tahkim-e-Solh) to negotiate with those member of the Taliban, but they refused to talk to anyone other than Hamid Karzai. These efforts eventually failed. While there was an institution in charge of peace efforts, Daoudzai fails to explain why the Taliban's delegates insisted on talking with the president directly.

U.S Change of Policy towards the War in Afghanistan: Increase and Decrease of Troops

The United States policy toward the war in Afghanistan started to shift in 2009 with the inauguration of Barack Obama as new president. In a meeting with President Karzai, General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2010, spoke about the need for an increase in the American troops to combat the "insurgents." Attending the meeting, Daoudzai queried McChrystal whether the United States' policy is reflected in describing the Taliban as "insurgents," rather than "terrorists and enemies" as it once was. The US policy has now changed, McChrystal confirmed. Daoudzai claims that, in that meeting, President Karzai expressed his disapproval of the increase of the troops and suggested that the United States strengthens Afghanistan's national security forces instead. The United States sought to militarily weaken the Taliban in order to bring them to the negotiating table. Negotiation, not defeating the Taliban, was now the ultimate goal. The Chief of Staff for President Karzai, Daoudzai, described the US new approach he observed during the meeting as "a fundamental change" in America's narrative and policy regarding the war in Afghanistan.

President Obama announced in late 2009 that the number of American troops in Afghanistan would be increased by 30,000. With this increase, the international forces under General McChrystal's command began a rigorous military campaign that weakened the Taliban in the country. Nonetheless, the outcome was conflicting: security situation in rural areas continued to deteriorate while the security improved in urban areas (Brooking, 2022; Gajić & Rajić, 2021; ZAKI, 2019). By the end of 2010, Obama administration came to the perception that the war in Afghanistan lacks military victory. President Obama announced on June 22, 2011, that 10,000 troops would withdraw by the end of 2011 and that another 23,000 would be withdrawn

by the mid- 2012. He stated that until the United States turned over security to Afghanistan authorities in 2014, the drawdown would proceed (Gajić & Rajić, 2021). As envisaged by the Obama administration, the transfer of security leadership from NATO to Afghanistan's National Security Forces (ANSF) began in 2011 and completed in 2014 (NATO, 2013).

Establishment of High Peace Council (HPC)

Numerous segments of society began to discuss peace discourse after the United States adopted a new approach that seemed to view the war unwinnable and thus sought a negotiated settlement. The civic society, more than others, was concerned that peace with the Taliban would jeopardize Afghanistan's achievements in various spheres. In order to lay out a roadmap for talks with the Taliban, President Karzai embarked on a consultative journey with the political leaders and other stakeholders, as a result of which, he called for convening a Consultative Loya Jirga in 2010. The term Loya Jirga is originated in Pashto language (Wardak, 2003) which stands for Grand Assembly (Shah, 2000). The word Jirga has also been attributed to Persian and Turkish languages, holding a similar meaning to gathering of people (Faiz-zad 1989: 5; Ghyathul-Lughat, 1871:119-cited by Wardak). According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004: Chapter 6), the Jira is "the highest manifestation of the will of the people."

Over the course of three days in Kabul, 1,600 delegates from across the country attended the Consultative Loya Jirga. The Jirga, under chairmanship of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, former president of the country, called on the government in its final resolution (2010) to create a high peace council to follow up on the peace process. As a gesture of will, it also called upon the Republic to release some Taliban prisoners and remove names of their leaders from the sanction-list if the group cuts ties with terrorist organizations and follow their political goals in line with the Afghanistan's Constitution. The calls of Jirga were welcomed by the government but the Taliban refused these offers by intensifying their anti-government campaign (ZAKI, 2019). They fired a few missiles on the Jirga's venue even while the issue of negotiating with them was being discussed inside (Najafizada/نجفی زاده, 2010). One way to interpret that attack would be as the Taliban's clear response to the Jirga's call for peace in its very beginning.

Professor Rabbani, who led the resistance against the first regime of the Taliban until 2001, went on to become Chair of the High Peace Council. Rabbani visited the neighboring states, particularly Pakistan, in an attempt to win their support for peace. He confirmed that direct negotiations with some Taliban members had started, and Pakistan had pledged to back peace

initiatives in an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (2011). However, he stated that the Taliban are not a unified group and that the HPC leadership attempts to connect with those who make decisions. Daoudzai (2020), who served as ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan in 2011, says that in a joint visit by President Karzai and Burhanuddin Rabbani to Pakistan, they could convince Pakistan that its concerns regarding India-Afghanistan will be addressed. Therefore, Pakistan promised to genuinely support peace process. India has long been accused by Pakistan of using Afghanistan territory against it through strengthening influence and close ties to the government.

Under such circumstances, Rabbani was assassinated at his residence by a suicide bomber who was supposed to convey ‘a very important message’ from the Taliban leader to Chairman Rabbani about peace. While greeting Rabbani, the suicide bomber denoted the explosive which has been concealed in his turban. According to Daoudzai, in a hurried visit to President Hamid Karzai in the plane at the Kabul airport, Masoum Stanikzy, the High Peace Council’ head of secretariat at the time and later Chief of the Islamic Republic’s Negotiating Team with the Taliban in Doha, informed the president that a representative of the Taliban wanted to meet Chairman Rabbani and had a recorded message from the Taliban leader to him. Karzai, he adds, heard the message which was stating that the Taliban replaced their previous representative, who had met Rabbani a month earlier, with the new one. The message seemed promising to Karzai. He called Rabbani from a trip to United Arab Emirates to visit the new purported Taliban representative. Although the Taliban did not claim responsibility for Professor Rabbani’s murder, the government of Afghanistan accused the Quetta Shura (Quetta Council), the Taliban’s decision-making body premised in Quetta - Pakistan, of carrying out the assassination (CNN, 2011). This incident led to the failure of peace attempts with the Taliban (Helali, 2024) in addition to undermining trust building process between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Institute for the Study of War (n.d) interpreted the assassination of HPC’s chief as the Taliban desire for war. The way in which Professor Rabbani was assassinated reveals the possibility of using negotiations for purposes other than peace, as the false readiness theory posits.

Critiques regarding the HPC’s efficacy are also raised. Wafayezada et al (2017: 78–81) cited some interviewees who expressed disapproval of the High Peace Council’s goal and structure. Abdul Salam Zaef, the Taliban’s ambassador to Pakistan during their first rule, claimed that the HPC’s goal was to monopolize the peace efforts rather than bringing about it. The creation of HPC was just a political tactic. Others, like political analyst Ahmad Saeedi, described the

council as a body where the president appeased some of his opponents. The leader of the HPC should have been someone who is not affiliated with the Taliban and the government, according to Farooq Azam, who is currently a member of the Taliban's administration. He pointed out that Rabbani was involved in the civil war and fought against the Taliban. Similarly, Taliban affiliate Nazar Mohammed Motmean criticized the HPC for being run by individuals who overthrew the Taliban's first government and were either current or former enemies. The Taliban never participate in negotiations or trust peace initiatives when these people are in charge of the council, he said.

While their work significantly contributed overall to the study of peace and conflict in Afghanistan, Wafayezada et al failed to reflect the views of the government and HPC's proponents. Every individual interviewed about the HPC was critic towards the government. This could raise doubts about the study's reliability in this particular topic.

Opening Office for the Taliban in Doha

According to Daoudzai, in a meeting in 2011, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Marc Grossman, informed President Hamid Karzai that Qataris and Germans had built ties with the Taliban. Although the Taliban would like to meet with Americans to discuss peace, the US will not do so unless the Afghanistan's government gives its consent. Karzai agreed that the United States could also meet with Taliban, but only if they would talk to his government next. A few months later, the German special envoy paid a visit to Karzai and told him that the Taliban, Germans, and Americans would meet in Germany. In order to learn the details, Karzai assigned a delegate to be at the venue of the meeting. Marc Grossman returned to Kabul some months later, disappointed by the meeting in Germany. The Taliban, he informed the president, are not ready to meet with the government's representatives. The topic turned chill after this conversation. However, despite their apparent chilly relations, the United States and the Taliban continued their behind-the-scenes dialogue. The US had already been in contact with the Taliban, but they rarely informed the government about it.

Daoudzai continues to say, the US-Taliban talks resulted in the creation of a Taliban political office in Qatar. Karzai enthusiastically embraced this issue when the US Special Representative presented it to him. Karzai has consistently advocated for the Taliban to establish an office in Qatar in order to terminate Pakistan's influence over the group. Pakistan had arrested Mullah Baradar in 2010 who was in peace communication with Karzai without informing Pakistan (Yusuf & Smith, 2015). In spite of this, the Taliban persisted in refusing to communicate with the government because they saw it as a US puppet (Helali, 2024). The Taliban declared in

early 2012 halt of negotiations with the United States since it had placed additional conditions, such as direct talks with the government of Afghanistan (Brooking, 2022:8-12; Dobbins & Malkasian, 2015).

The Taliban office in Qatar finally opened in 2013. Their nameplate of ‘‘Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan’’ and flag were displayed over the office building. This was considered as an implicit recognition of the Taliban’s shadow government (Zaki, 2019). Consequently, within 24 hours of the office’s opening, President Karzai vehemently objected and requested that the United States and Qatar shut the office down. The office was locked, but in practice, the United States kept up its negotiations with the Taliban without informing the government. (Helali, 2024; Daouzai, 2020). This was yet another chance for peace that had been lost during Karzai.

The Taliban never wavered from this stance: the US, not its puppet government, is the source of our problem. Thus, we must resolve our problem with the United States. They also did so towards President Ashraf Ghani. Some factors that motivated the Taliban to become interested in talking with the US are as follow: 1) Their leader, Mullah Omer, was getting more and more ill. In his blessing, they were attempting to negotiate with the US out of concern for any potential split following his death. 2) It was the surge of the NATO military campaign against them. 3) Karzai believed that his government was being neglected in negotiations, which caused his relationship with the US to deteriorate (Brooking, 2022: 8-12). This indicates that the Taliban were optimistic that through negotiations, they would be able to forge a more powerful stance against the Afghanistan’s government. President Karzai, on the other hand, began to obstruct the US’s peace talks with the Taliban after his government was overlooked in the negotiations.

2.2.3.3.2 Peace Efforts During President Ashraf Ghani’s Tenure

When Mohammed Ashraf Ghani was elected as president of Afghanistan in 2014, the peace efforts entered their next stage accepting the Doha office of the Taliban as a channel for peace talks (Zaki, 2019). He started his attempts to resolve the conflict by taking a different tack with Pakistan in an effort to gain its cooperation in getting the Taliban to enter in negotiations with the government. Since Pakistan had long been offering the Taliban sanctuaries, both Presidents Ghani and Karzai believed that they should talk to this country first. Karzai referred to Pakistan as a place where suicide bombers are sent to Afghanistan in an interview with the Guardian (2015), citing the strong support Pakistan gives the Taliban. He therefore paid 21 visit to Pakistan during his tenure from 2001 to 2014. ‘‘The people of Afghanistan say ‘president, you

have called for peace but peace with who? I don't have another answer for them, except to say that it is Pakistan we have to approach'' said Karzai in a statement (CNN, 2011). The Pakistani approach towards Afghanistan was also described by President Ashraf Ghani as ''undeclared war'' which needs to end (EuroAsian Times Desk, 2018; DAWN, 2017).

Both leaders sought convincing Pakistan but with deferent approaches. According to Yusuf & Smith, 2015, Ghani aimed to include Pakistan in the solution by attempting to persuade it to address its concerns regarding Afghanistan in a way that would best serve the interests of both countries, whereas Karzai attempted to 'shame' and 'coerce' Pakistan into cooperation. President Ghani put in place a number of measures to build confidence short after he ascended to office. These measures included sending Afghanistan's troops to Pakistan for training, fighting the TTP or Tahrik-i-Taliban Pakistan in the country's eastern province of Kunar, turning over TTP's prisoners to Pakistan (Guardian, 2015), and suspending his predecessor's arms deal with India (TOLONews, 2015). In swap, Ghani requested Pakistan to engage the Taliban in meaningful and direct talks with his government using whatever means it deems appropriate. Went unanswered this request, Ghani hinted to become ''war president'' if Pakistan does not reciprocate his confidence building measures, noted Yusuf & Smith. In his 2019 seven-point Peace Plan, President Ghani regarded Pakistan as ''the root of the problem and harbour for terrorism,'' which indicated a tougher tone (TOLONews, 2019). The alleged support and presence of the TTP, an armed group that fights the Pakistani government, in Afghanistan was a source of concern for Pakistan in addition to its rivalry India's growing ties with Afghanistan's government.

As a gap in the literature reviewed, conducting a comprehensive study is required to investigate the question of whether President Ghani's motivation for the negotiations with the Taliban was undermined by his perception of ''the root of the problem.'' An analytical perspective, however, might reveal a connection between the desire for peace negotiations with the Taliban in the absence of genuine cooperation from Pakistan as 'the root of the problem'. This is comparable to the negotiation strategy of the Taliban, who insisted that the US was the root of the problem and that they see no need to have direct talks with the Islamic Republic. In a nutshell, both sides of the conflict regarded one another as puppets of a third player. This impression may lead the disputing parties to look for a deal with the player who is perceived as the root of the problem rather than each other. Because they presume that once they reach an agreement with the root of the problem, they can simply achieve their goal.

Moscow Peace Format

Moscow Format was a regional platform which was initiated in 2017 on the basis of the special representatives of six parties including Russia, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and India (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). The format was gradually expanded to eleven with the membership of the Central-Asian Republics (Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). The purpose of the Format was to coordinate initiate, progress and development of an intra-Afghan dialogue that would be inclusive in nature so it could restore peace at the earliest possible in Afghanistan, according to Russian Sergey Lavrov's statement delivered in the 2nd round of the Moscow Format in 2018. A delegate composed of five members from the High Peace Council of Afghanistan (HPC) and a delegate headed by Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzay of the Taliban attended the conference. This was the first time appearance of the Taliban in such an international event. The Taliban delegation rejected any talks taking place with the delegation of HPC, though it was not representing the government officially. Stanikzay, head of Taliban delegate and Mujahid, spokesperson, told that the Taliban does not see the Kabul government legitimate and that they would not talks. The conference is not about negotiation with any side, said Mujahid (BBC, 2018; Gul, 2018; Teslova, 2018). The head of the HPC delegation, Din Mohammad Azizullah, affirmed that he had "brief talks" with Taliban members during a working lunch, describing the interactions as "friendly." He announced that the government of Afghanistan was ready for direct talks without condition.

Afghanistan's Politicians-Taliban Joint Conference in Moscow

In 2019, a delegation composed of forty political leaders of Afghanistan, including former president Karzai, and the Taliban representatives headed by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the group's chief negotiator in Doha, attended a conference held in Moscow. The government of Afghanistan was not included. It appeared that Afghanistan's diaspora in Russia organized the conference. However, this initiative was part of the Moscow peace talks format. Taliban's representative Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzay's speech at the conference, recorded by TOLONews (n.d.), contains important insights about the group's position on peace negotiations at the time. This also applies to President Ghani's position, as demonstrated by his response to the conference in an exclusive interview (TOLONews, n.d; Amiri, 2019). The paragraphs that follow investigate their positions respectively.

Taliban Stance in Moscow Conference

Abbas clarified in his opening remarks that his statement reflects the "Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan" official position. He stated the Taliban willingness for peace straightaway, citing

the opening of their political office in Doha for this purpose. He answered to those who believe the Taliban do not have an address where they can be reached. According to Stanikzay, the government used the peace topic as a “tactic” for their political agenda. Recalling the theoretical tenet of the current study, the statement of Stanikzay suggests that there were concerns about using negotiations for strategic purposes rather than reaching a peace agreement on both sides of the conflict. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Islamic Republic has also made similar accusations against the Taliban.

Stanikzay emphasised that the removal of the names of the Taliban’s leaders from the sanction list, the release of prisoners, and the cessation of anti-Taliban propaganda are essential steps for confidence-building that need to be initiated. Whilst, President Karzai’s government had made available these proposals to the Taliban in 2010 upon the Consultative Loya Jirga’s request. In 2018, President Ghani also announced that the Taliban’s leader’s names would be withdrawn from the sanction list if they enter in direct talks with his government (Tanzeem, 2018). The Taliban, however, refuted either offers. In light of the aforementioned facts, Stanikzay’s remarks regarding his proposals for confidence-building seem dubious.

The Taliban representative also stated that the end of the ‘occupation,’ as the Taliban referred to the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan, the establishment of an ‘Islamic system’ that is acceptable to all people of Afghanistan, and drafting a new constitution were necessary conditions for a lasting peace deal. He declared the constitution of the Islamic Republic to be illegitimate, asserting that it was imposed by foreigners after they overthrew the legitimate government (the first Taliban regime) in 2001. Meanwhile, Stanikzay emphatically argued for the necessity of a new constitution that is grounded in the Islamic and Afghanistan’s cultural values and would guarantee citizens’ human rights, dignity, justice, and development.

Describing women as a society’s architectural foundation, Stanikzay speech concluded by promising that the ‘Islamic Emirates’ will grant the women right to work and education and so forth. He also reiterated the Taliban’s commitment to create an inclusive ‘Islamic system’ in consultation with the people that is acceptable to everyone, rather than pursuing a monopoly of political power.

The position of the Taliban concerning peace and future of Afghanistan seemed promising in their statement at the conference. However, there are some enlightening points to understand their genuine intention. They used the term Islamic System, which is ambiguous. It is not clear what kind of Islamic System they spoke about from those of Islamic Republic, Islamic

Emirates, Islamic Caliphate or else. At the same time, they said that ‘the Islamic Emirates will grant the right of women’. This statement can relatively expose the intention behind the Islamic System, which can be Islamic Emirates. Additionally, the wording and tone of the statement indicates that the Taliban expect the negotiations to take them up to victory as government, not to peace in terms of mutual agreement. They presume their return to power through negotiations, and that delivered the statement accordingly. Below is an example:

“The Islamic Emirates will bring narcotic to zero, and will not allow the soil of Afghanistan to be used against other countries...we will create an inclusive ‘Islamic system’ in consultation with the people that is acceptable to everyone, rather than pursuing a monopoly of political power.” TOLONews (n.d.)

What the Taliban promised in Moscow is at odds with the current situation in Afghanistan under their rule. This can strengthen doubts about the Taliban’s stance being pretended during peace efforts just to win public and international support.

Response of the Government to Moscow Conference

President Ashraf Ghani described the conference as “talks with no weight” and call it of no importance. He questioned the Moscow talks’ mechanism, stating that the participants lacked the executive and legitimate power to negotiate peace in the absence of his government. The President stated to TOLONews (n.d) (also reported by Amiri, 2019) that the parties attended to the conference lack the authority to implement any decision they want to make. He said even if hundreds of meetings are convened, the outcomes will remain mere paperwork unless ratified by the Afghan government. When asked why do the Taliban talk with politicians instead of his government, President Ghani replied that the goal of the political leaders who attended the Moscow conference is also to undermine the government. Even though they had not made it public, key participants to Moscow talks, like former governor Atta Mohammad Noor, saw an interim government part of the solution. (Ariana News, 2021).

Until his last moments in office, President Ghani resisted the interim government plan. He asserted in the aforementioned interview that the Constitution does not grant him the authority or mandate to dissolve the government and the Republic system. In response to a US-proposed peace plan that envisaged an interim government and was supposed to be presented at the April 2021 Istanbul Conference (cancelled later), Ghani announced a three-phase peace plan. This plan included political settlement and ceasefire, election of a government of peace, and creation of a constitution framework, reintegration of refugees

and developments programmes implementation (Aljazeera, 2021). In the 56th second of his interview with TOLONews, he disapproved a peace at the expense of removal of the system (Republic). This approach is aligned with cost-benefit perspective comparatively, providing an avenue for connection between the theoretical framework of this study and the position of President Ghani.

Given that the situation was deteriorating and the Taliban were increasingly advancing militarily and diplomatically, the stance of the President on rejection of an interim set up did not appear realistic nor it could have protected his government and the Republic. A critical examination of his three-phase peace plan reveals that he inclined to lead an interim administration that includes the Taliban. Stated differently, he would be in favour of a transitional phase that might ultimately result in alteration of existing Republic system. Ghani proposed a political agreement, followed a peace government election, and finally a long-term constitutional framework. However, the President did not state whether he would not run in the peace government election. The way President Ghani presented his peace plan suggested that institutional and constitutional status would subject to change, but under his own leadership.

Trump's South Asia Strategy and The US-Taliban Agreement

The South Asia Strategy was announced in 2017 by Donald J. Trump following his inauguration as the 45th president of the United States. This strategy covered South Asia as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Central Asian countries. The strategy emphasized on deployment of every aspect of American power, including economic, military, intelligence, and diplomatic to safeguard America and its allies' interests and safety (Garamon, 2017). In his remark about the South Asia Strategy, Trump referred to it as "a path to victory" in Afghanistan and ending the US longest war in a way that the American sacrifices deserve, abandoning a nation-building policy. "It is up to the people of Afghanistan to own their future. We are not nation-building again. We are killing terrorists," said Trump (Whitehouse Archive, 2017). According to him, the use of military force does not bring about peace in Afghanistan on its own; rather, the military campaign is strategically applied to establish the conditions for a sustainable peace by bringing the Taliban into negotiation.

"Someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but nobody knows if or when that will ever happen. America will continue its support for the Afghan government and the Afghan military as they confront the Taliban in the field" noted President Trump.

Donald Trump described his South Asia Strategy as a shift from a time-based approach to one that is condition-based about Afghanistan in terms of troop numbers, their activities,

and withdrawal. One of the components of the South Asia Strategy's condition-based policy was to avoid a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan since this would enable terrorists to return and conduct operation against the United States. Moreover, the US president stated that Pakistan's support for the Taliban is no longer tolerated and that it would lose billions of dollars if does not cooperate with the United States in its fight against terrorist and the Taliban. Some, such as Owais (2019), argued that the strategy presented the Taliban with the idea of "reconcile or die."

In light of the South Asia Strategy, the United States appointed Khalilzad as Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (SRAR) in 2018 to engage in direct negotiations with the Taliban. This decision was supported by the view of the United States administration that the presence of American troops in Afghanistan would no longer serve the interest of America. Therefore, the US should have focused on competing challenging elsewhere (Semple, Raphel & Rasikh, 2021). The nine round negotiations eventually concluded with signing of the *"Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America"* (or Doha Agreement) on February 29, 2020. This agreement was reached during Trump presidency, but implemented by President Joe Biden. Consequently, the US withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021 in accordance with the Doha accord.

The agreement included four items: 1) preventing the use of Afghanistan's soil against the United States and its allies, 2) establishing a timeline for the United States to withdraw from Afghanistan, namely during 14 months following the agreement, 3) initiating intra-Afghan negotiations, and 4) ensuring that a permanent ceasefire would be on the agenda of the intra-Afghan negotiations. This agreement paved the way for the Islamic Republic and the Taliban to set face to face in September 2020 for the first time in their twenty year of war.

Unlike the South Asia Strategy, the agreement caused the US to a 'hasty withdrawal' in August – September 2021. The Doha accord disregarded the situation on the ground. The Taliban had taken over Kabul militarily and 13 American soldiers were killed along with 170 innocent people in a suicide attack at Kabul airport while evacuation of the US forces (US Department of State, 2024). Trump, who had highlighted a withdrawal that deserves Americans sacrifices in his South Asia Strategy, referred to the withdrawal process as "humiliation in Afghanistan". He asserted that this withdrawal "set off the collapse of American credibility and respect all around the world." (PBS News, 2024).

The Doha agreement resembled the Geneva Accord in terms of exclusion of main parties to the conflict from part of the peace process. Doha agreement included the Taliban, but not the government, whereas the Geneva Accord excluded the Mujahedeen, as the main disputant.

Diplomacy of Disaster: The Afghanistan “Peace Process” and the Taliban Occupation of Kabul written by Maley and Jamal (2022). As the title speaks, the authors of this article argue that the US-Taliban Agreement significantly contributed to the Taliban takeover. According to them, the Agreement, including its “negotiations, content and implementation created destructive incentives” for both the domestic and the international players except for the Taliban whom was given a “cherished place” and diplomatic legitimacy. Accordingly, they accused the Taliban of not making peace but rather being, at heart, interested in regaining power.

Taking the present study’s subject into account, the ‘Diplomacy of Disaster’ is more about analysing the Doha Agreement and how it bolstered the non-willingness of the Taliban exclusively. As a gap, an examination of the Republic side in relation with the Doha agreement is absent, which this study will explore it.

In an attempt to address the question of what the US and the Taliban were hoping to achieve with the peace negotiations while the insurgency was in act, Ullah, Sultana, and Kokab (2020) argued that the US wanted merely to withdraw its troops through an agreement to save face. The Taliban were also solely interested in increasing their chance of gaining power rather than bringing peace to Afghanistan. This is why the Taliban escalated violence both during and after the peace talks as a result of the United States failure to disarm or exert pressure on them to stop insurgency before the negotiations.

Although they concluded that the Taliban strategically utilized the negotiations, Ullah, Sultana, and Kokab analysed the Doha agreement via a distinct theoretical framework and research topic compared to the present dissertation. They deployed Zartman’s theoretical perspective, which posits that insurgency is a strategy to increase bargaining power in negotiation.

Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN)

Direct talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban launched on September 12, 2020, in Doha for the first time as a result of the US-Taliban agreement. The agreement anticipated the initiation of the IAN for March 10; however, dispute over the release of the prisoners for the Taliban and Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) led to a postponement in the IAN. The US-Taliban agreement outlined the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners along with 1,000 prisoners from the government. The government, nonetheless, did

not give its consent on this matter. Ultimately, the Islamic Republic agreed to implement the prisoners exchange deal due to pressure from the United States and with the Loya Jirga's approval (Kugiel, 2020). The leverage exerted on both sides by the US brought the parties to the negotiations. Special Representative Zulmay Khalilzad's warning regarding an imminent US withdrawal prompted the government to accept the Taliban conditions. On the other hand, by threatening to remain in the country and carry out a limited counterterrorism operation, the US pushed the Taliban to engage in negotiations with the Islamic Republic (Singh, Smith, Worden, Ahmadi and Walsh, 2020).

Steve Brooking (2022), who served as the British representative to the Bonn conference in 2001 and was first diplomat from the United Kingdom to Afghanistan following the September 11 attacks, argued that the Republic leadership showed no required flexibilities due to its distrust the US envoy, overestimating of the Republic's own strength, and underestimating of the US intention to withdraw. Additionally, in connection to the Islamic Republic, in his book 'the Return of the Taliban: Afghanistan after the American left, Abbas (2023: 57), expressed that president of Afghanistan believed the US would never withdraw from Afghanistan completely in the foreseeable future. He described this perception as a misstep. However, Abbas does not reveal whether or not such understanding had undermined the commitment of the Islamic Republic for peace. He seems to read this matter in relation to miscalculation, which weakened the leverage of the Islamic Republic in intra-Afghan negotiations.

In a special report titled *Constitutional Issues in the Afghan Peace Negotiations: Process and Substance*, published by United States Institute of Peace, Rubin (2020) see the constitution as the main topic to be discussed in the peace negotiations as it could be the major potential contested issue. For instance, according to the Islamic Republic's Article 4 of the Constitution, the "national sovereignty [hakimiyyat-i milli] in Afghanistan shall belong to the nation, manifested directly and through its elected representatives." The Taliban, on the other hand, believe that sovereignty belongs to God. It is important to evaluate how different worldviews also impact on the commitment and optimism of the conflicting parties to a negotiated settlement.

Another viewpoint on the intra-Afghan negotiations is provided by Qaane (2020), who criticized the government's dominant approach to the negotiations. President Ghani, according to him, used the Pact of Forgetting model, which disregards the role of war victims. The pact of forgetting is a Spanish model according to which there would be no accountability for

thousands of people who died during the Civil War 1936–39 for the sake of peace (Encarnación, 2014).

Lastly, using the false negotiation theory, Ibrahim (2022), examines the intra-Afghan negotiations. He described the Taliban as “a false negotiator who reluctantly attended the negotiations to buy time for a better situation”. Though Ibrahim investigates the readiness issue in the peace process, his focus is exclusively on the Taliban’s approach in connection to both the US and the IAN. He disregards to appropriately delve into the Islamic Republic in his investigation. He has also deployed different methodology, including merely secondary data, compared to this thesis.

The entire literatures stated above concerning the IAN share a common point: They all insisted on contribution of the US-Taliban agreement and the Taliban’s approach to failure of the intra-Afghan negotiations. None of these sources have addressed the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The present study seeks to examine commitments of both sides, the Taliban and the Islamic Republic, to a negotiated resolution of the conflict in an effort to fill the aforementioned gap. The study also explores the Taliban-US Agreement in the context of the Republic’s approach to the intra-Afghan negotiations. Importantly, this dissertation is distinguished from the existing literature through its conceptualization of the peace process in Afghanistan, especially the Doha peace process or the IAN, and its attempt to explore the relationship between negative hybrid peace and false readiness theory in the context of the Doha peace process (this topic will be comprehensively discussed in Chapter Three).

2.2.4 Conclusion

The current chapter’s literature review was carried out using a thematic approach rather than a chronological one. The latter describes each work according to its publication date, beginning with the earliest information available, while the former explores literatures based on their thematic relevance to the topic at hand. Throughout the process, efforts were made to determine the gaps for each work, and how the reviewed literatures, including about concepts and cases, are relevant to the subject and the theoretical framework of this study. The review covered both the theoretical framework of the present thesis and the conflict and peace (historically and conceptually) in Afghanistan. A comprehensive discussion was conducted regarding the relevant concepts along with the context and rationale for the deployment of the theoretical framework.

The review of the conflict in Afghanistan revealed that its development, beginning with the Constitutional Decade (1964) in the monarchy tenure and continuing currently with the

Taliban, has been interconnected, as each phase of the conflict being influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the one before it. Conceptually, the conflict has been identified protracted in nature due to its longevity, severe humanitarian consequences, displacement, high economic cost, involving ethno-politics and ideology, power shift and instability, complexity, multi players, internationalized, difficult to resolve, and perpetuation. Consequently, the deployment of the false readiness and negative hybrid peace theoretical framework is definitely aligned with the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan. Last but not least, contrary to the dominant narrative, which attributed the conflict's initial emergence to President Daoud's coup in 1973, the review in the current chapter diagnosed that the conflict traced back to the Constitutional Decade-1960s.

Concerning the peace efforts, while the ownership and leadership of the peace processes in Afghanistan have been extensively influenced by external actors, the review process discovered that some initiatives, like President Najibullah's National Reconciliation Programme, possessed relatively local ownership and leadership in terms of being designed by the government. Neither, though, had succeeded. Theoretically speaking, this raises questions about whether local ownership and leadership of peace initiatives can promote trust and genuine negotiations between conflicting factions in a civil war without providing a useful link to external player. A comprehensive study on this issue with regard to Afghanistan has been absent in the literature.

In the context of the Doha peace process, a common idea emerged across the reviewed literatures: The Taliban utilized the negotiations as a strategy to gain power. The literature has not addressed the role of the Islamic Republic or the extent to which the US-Taliban agreement influenced the Republic's desire for a negotiated settlement. The findings presented in this chapter will be utilized by the Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE PEACE EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN NEGATIVE HYBRID PEACE AND FALSE READINESS THEORY IN THE DOHA PEACE PROCESS OF AFGHANISTAN

3.0 Introduction

The literature review, carried out in Chapter Two, revealed that peace efforts in Afghanistan has encompassed both local and international players. The engagement of these players allows this study to identify these efforts as conceptually hybrid. Building on this understanding, the current chapter will explore how false readiness of the conflicting parties coupled with the hybrid nature of the Doha peace process influenced the outcome of the intra-Afghan negotiations. The results will be analyzed comprehensively utilizing the process tracing method. This analysis will include the findings in the literature review, the research participants' perspectives, key moments throughout the peace process, and other pertinent credible sources. The chapter will further discuss, as one of its central aims, the interplay between false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace in the context of the Doha peace process of Afghanistan, namely the intra-Afghan negotiations.

3.1 Conceptualization of Peace Efforts in Afghanistan

This section argues that hybrid peace model is the most suitable framework to define the peace efforts in Afghanistan. These efforts, including the intra-Afghan negotiations, can be conceptually characterized as hybrid in nature. To summarize the insights discussed thus far regarding hybridity in this study, the fundamental components that constitute hybrid peace are outlined in the upcoming table 2. Each of these components are examined in the context of Afghanistan's peace process. The peace initiatives can be traced back to the Mujahedeen-communist remiges conflict in Afghanistan. Those efforts reflect a simplistic understanding of hybridity, particularly in terms of actors involved in the peace endeavors. The Geneva Accords, for example, involved international participants such as the United Nations, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Pakistan, while the internal actors comprised the Afghan government and the Mujahedeen. Nevertheless, considering the historical context and development of hybrid peace concept, those initiatives fall beyond this modern model, as they occurred during

the surge of Cold War era. Therefore, this study excluded Mujahedeen-communist regimes peace efforts from detailed conceptualization.

Components of Hybrid Peace	Application in Afghanistan Peace Processes	
<i>Multiple actors (Internationally and locally)</i>	<i>Bonn Peace Process (2001)</i> <i>The international actors:</i> United Nations and the United States of America played the leading role in designing and outcomes of the process. <i>Local actors:</i> Government led by Northern Alliance, the Monarch (Zahir Shah), and other political factions.	<i>Doha Peace Process (2018-2021)</i> <i>Phases:</i> US-Taliban Agreement endorsed by the UN resolution 2513 (2020) (UN Press, 2020), and Islamic Republic and the Taliban. <i>External Actors:</i> US, UN, Qatar, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and Türkiye. <i>Local Actors:</i> Government, Taliban, political parties, civil society, and women.
<i>Integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches</i>	<i>Top-down:</i> international diplomatic efforts together with a coercive peacebuilding approach (military intervention of NATO-led by the US) <i>Bottom-up:</i> convening the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002. The Jirga was participated by representatives of levels below of the society from provinces and districts nationwide...	<i>Top-down:</i> leading role played by the US. It exerted pressure on both sides to enter negotiations (The IAN started based on the US-Taliban agreement) <i>Bottom-up:</i> The Doha agreement highlighted the that “determination” of Afghanistan’s people will shape their own future. The negotiation was also attended by representatives from various political parties, social spheres, and civil society.
<i>Integration of diverse perspectives (mainly Western-centric and traditional)</i>	Combination of liberal peace values and locals’ in the text of Bonn agreement: “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.”	The most contested topics in the negotiations can serve as an example for the presence of diverse perspectives in the peace process, which the parties attempted to integrate them. These most contested topics included the constitution, elections, Sharia, principles of Islamic governance, human rights, and women's rights.
<i>Compliance Power (liberal peace)</i>	The international supported peace framework deployed the coercive (military intervention) and development programmes in promoting liberal peace.	Mullah Bradar of the Taliban was threatened by Trump with a picture of his residence (The Washington Examiner, n.d). Also, \$1bn was cut by the US pressuring the government (The Guardian, 2020).
<i>Incentivizing Power (liberal peace)</i>	DDR of members of the Northern Alliance, increasingly assertion on protecting human rights, civil	The US promised to consider removing name of the members of

	society, pouring billions of dollars into the country, free elections and etc.	the Taliban from the UN sanction list with the IAN commencement. The United States committed to “support for the Afghan security forces to deter and respond to internal and external threats.”
<i>The Ability of Local Actors to Maintain Alternative Forms of Peace and Peace-making</i>	The Loya Jirga and High Peace Council can be considered as some local alternatives for peace-making, as also identified by Mac Ginty (2008).	In response to the peace proposal put forth by the US Special Envoy, the President of Afghanistan announced a three-phase peace plan (Aljazeera, 2021). This is in addition to the involvement of Loya Jirga during the process.
<i>The Ability of Local Actors to Resist Liberal Peace Intervention</i>	Taliban resisted the post-Bonn peacebuilding effort. President Karzai resisted opening the Taliban office in Qatar in 2013. At the same year, He refuted signing the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US (BBC, 2013; the White House, 2013).	The Taliban resisted inclusion of the Islamic Republic in their negotiations with the United States. Likewise, the Republic rejected a proposal from the US that suggested establishment of interim government (Raphel & Rasikh, 2021: 24)
<i>Power dynamics (criticism): Asymmetry of influence. International actors usually can overshadow the local perspectives.</i>	The United States influenced the Bonn process. As a result, the Taliban were excluded from the peace process. This exclusion can be attributed to the power imbalance between the local actors, such as then government during the Bonn negotiations and Karzai’s thereafter.	The exclusion of the Islamic Republic from the US-Taliban negotiations highlighted the leading influence of the external actors in the peace process, which latter impacted the Islamic Republic’ leverage in the negotiations with the Taliban.
<i>Complexity (criticism): managing engagement of diverse actors in the peace efforts potentially led to unpredictable results.</i>	Numerous players and stakeholders, such as the Taliban, the government, and domestic political factions, neighboring and regional states like Pakistan and Iran, Russia, Qatar and international actors including the US, UK, Germany, and the UN involved.	The Taliban, the government, civil society, and domestic political factions, neighboring and regional states like Pakistan and Iran, Russia, Qatar and international actors including the US, UK, Germany, and the UN involved in the peace process. Additionally, existing of different worldviews and ideologies.

Table 2. conceptualization of peace efforts in Afghanistan, including the Doha peace process (the Table is compiled by the author)

The intra-Afghan negotiations that was conducted through collective and hybrid efforts ultimately concluded in a catastrophe. The primary inquiry the proceeding section aims to address is why an agreement was not achieved between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic despite synergizing both local and international efforts. This question shall be answered with a

focus on the conflicting parties' commitments to a negotiated settlement along with analyzing the negative hybrid peace concept.

3.2 The Reasons Behind the Failure of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations

The factors contributing to the failure of the intra-Afghan peace negotiations have been the subject of various studies and researches. However, this study is distinguished for its methodology, distinctive theoretical framework, scope, and deep conceptual exploration of the topic, including critical delving into the hybrid peace model with a particular concentration on negative hybrid peace connection with the false readiness theory in the context of Afghanistan's Doha peace process.

The current section seeks to answer the research questions posed in this study. It integrates analyzing the findings in the literature review, key events in the peace process, opinions of the research participants, and pertinent secondary data. The research questions comprise: (a) To what extent were the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban committed to achieving a negotiated settlement for the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations? and (b) In what ways did the US-Taliban Agreement influence the parties in terms of achieving peace?

3.2.1 Commitments of the Islamic Republic and the Taliban in the Peace Process

Reaching an agreement in intractable conflicts like the one in Afghanistan necessitates genuine commitments from disputing parties. This in turn can enhance the likelihood of achieving peace accord even in the absence of ripeness. The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and Aceh peace deal in Indonesia serve as noteworthy examples in this context. On April 10, 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed in Belfast, bringing an end to a 30-year conflict between the Nationalists, who struggled for independence from Britain and asked for a united Ireland, and Unionists, who wanted unity with Britain. There was a strong political will among both the international and internal actors to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. Prudent political leadership played a vital role in this achievement. Similarly, the agreement between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement in August 2005 exemplifies a case where the conflicting parties demonstrated genuine interest to resolve the conflict peacefully despite the absent of an ideal ripe circumstances (Schiff, 2021; Policinski & Kuzmanovic, 2019; Wandt & Large, 2008).

The intra-Afghan negotiations, in contrast, represents a situation where the readiness or genuine will of the conflicting parties, namely the Islamic Taliban Movement and the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for a negotiated settlement of the conflict is subject to criticism. There have been occasions where not only of the Taliban, but also the

Islamic Republic's actions, policies, and decisions have not been adequately focused on attainment of a peace agreement.

It is important to clarify that in the present section, the term Islamic Republic refers specifically to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during the years 2014 to 2021 under leadership of Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the president. Therefore, the terms president, the government, the Islamic Republic, and the Republic shall all be used interchangeably throughout this chapter (or thesis). Additionally, the peace process referenced in the title denote the peace efforts that initiated during the presidency of Ashraf Ghani, with a particular focus on the period 2018 to 2021 as the time interval for this thesis. Lastly, it should be noted that some peace initiatives that were undertaken sporadically from 2001 to 2014 fall beyond the scope of tracing for the analysis. Consequently, in order to reach a comprehensive outcome, the current section will trace the Islamic Republic and the Taliban's approach from the onset of the peace efforts to the collapse of the intra-Afghan negotiations. This subject is being traced and analyzed across three phases: prior to and during the US-Taliban negotiations, throughout the intra-Afghan negotiations, and lastly, in the conclusion phase of these talks. While the first phase is relied on the analysis of the secondary data, the subsequent two phases will be examined based on the first-hand information obtained from the interviewees, along with other trustworthy relevant sources.

3.2.2 The Islamic Republic and the Taliban Positions Before the US-Taliban Talks

Prior to the initiation of the US-Taliban negotiations in October 2018, the Islamic Republic undertook some measures. These attempts, which are examined hereunder, aimed getting the Taliban into direct negotiations with the government.

From Seeking Peace Through Pakistan to Direct Proposal to the Taliban

During early months of his administration, the President paid a great deal of heed to trust-building with Pakistan. He expected Pakistani government to use their influence to facilitate meaningful direct negotiations between the Taliban and the Republic. For this purpose, as highlighted in the literature review, the government dispatched Afghanistan's troops to Pakistan for training, engaged in combat against Tahrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the eastern province Kunar of Afghanistan, transferred TTP's prisoners to Pakistan (Guardian, 2015), and suspended the arms deal with India that had been made by President Hamid Karzai (TOLOnews, 2015). These confidence-building measures remained unreciprocated. This caused the Afghan head of state to warn Pakistan about turning to a war president. There would

be two scenarios for Pakistan's lack of a positive response to President Ghani's demand noted above. Initially, the President wanted a peace process through which the Taliban would be incorporated into his government. This was something that holds less likelihood to be welcomed by Pakistan. Because Pakistan has historically offered support for the Taliban in their efforts to undermine the government. This suggests that in a most optimistic scenario, Pakistan might prefer a Taliban-led administration as a result of any peace negotiations at that time. This prospect appeared unacceptable for President Ghani. Finally, Pakistan might lack the necessary influence to persuade the Taliban to engage in a meaningful direct negotiation with the Islamic Republic, which they did not recognize it as legitimate.

As per the author perception, the way Pakistan responded to the request for cooperation led the government of Afghanistan to extend a peace proposal directly to the Taliban during the first and second round of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation in 2017 and 2018 respectively. The process was launched by the government of Afghanistan to gain support from both the regional countries and international community for promoting peace and security in the country.

The announcement of the direct peace negotiations by the President, represented a strategic effort to bypass Pakistan and potentially undermines its influence over the Taliban if the proposal was welcomed by some factions of the Taliban. This perception is reinforced by the fact that Mullah Baradar, the current deputy prime minister of the Taliban, had engaged in negotiations with President Karzai without information of Pakistani authorities. This was the reason he was detained by Pakistani security authorities in 2010 (Yusuf & Smith, 2015). Such event could serve as a venue for the government of Afghanistan to see possibility of establishing its own influence inside the Taliban via direct call on them.

In his peace proposal to the Taliban during the Kabul Process in 2017 and 2018, the President presented a political framework that included a ceasefire, the recognition of the Taliban as a legitimate political party, and the convening of free and fair elections. The legal basis for these negotiations would be the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. Additionally, the government would permit the Taliban to open office in Kabul. The Constitution could be amended in accordance with its own provisions. In exchange, the Taliban would be expected to participate in direct talks, recognize the Afghanistan's government, and cease violence. The president further stated that the opportunity for peace would not remain open-ended if the Taliban failed to respond positively. He emphasized that the offer represented the final opportunity, and the

Taliban would encounter repercussions should they choose to reject it. (Ruttig & Bjelica, 2018; Citizen Journalism Project, n.d; GMIC Afghanistan, n.d).

This proposal possessed some potential to offer an opportunity for peace negotiations; however, its essence suggested that the President aimed to make the Taliban part of his administration. He projected peace negotiations based on some foundations that were considered by the Taliban as the root causes for the conflict. These foundations included acceptance of the Republic's Constitution by the Taliban, recognition of the government, and elections. From the outset, the Taliban had been rejecting any direct negotiations with the government. They viewed the Islamic Republic as a US puppet. They also considered the Constitution as the US made document. For instance, during President Karzai, the Taliban declared in early 2012 halt of their unofficial negotiations with the United States since it had placed additional conditions, such as direct talks with the government of Afghanistan and acceptance of the Constitution (Brooking, 2022:8-12; Dobbins & Malkasian, 2015). Similarly, the Taliban rejected the President Ghani's peace proposal. Their spokesperson told that Afghanistan is occupied by the US and the Kabul process wanted the Taliban to surrender. He called the Islamic Republic an "American-style supposed Afghan government" which is not legitimate (ABC News, 2018). As will be elaborated later, the Taliban did not recognize the Republic's Constitution as a basis for the intra-Afghan negotiations too. They publically refused direct talks with the government. Therefore, one may doubt the President's sincerity concerning his peace proposal. Notably absent from the president proposal is any reference to his stance on an interim government—a point that, if included, could signal some genuine commitment to finding a practical solution.

The Ice-cream Ceasefire

On June 7, 2018, the Islamic Republic unilaterally announced a ceasefire month after the offer from the President to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate political party provided that the group engaged in direct peace talks with his government. This ceasefire was set to continue from 12 to 19 June, encompassing the final three days of Ramadan up until 5th day of Eid. Taliban also announced June 9 that they would observe a ceasefire covering three days only during Eid. The Taliban Movement resumed hostilities against the government right after the Eid concluded. The Movement denied to attribute their call for a three-days ceasefire as a response to the government's truce. Rather, they asserted that their intention was to allow the ordinary people to enjoy peaceful Eid festival "not in response to the ceasefire of the Kabul regime." (BBC, 2018).

This was identified as an unprecedented event throughout the conflict between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban since fall of the latter's first rule in 2001. It represented a beacon of hope for the people regarding potentials for a peace agreement. The Taliban and the National Security Forces of Afghanistan entered their areas of control, hugging one another. The Taliban made their ways into the cities, including the capital, Kabul, where they enjoyed ice-creams, leading this ceasefire to be called with this particular name (Semple, Raphael & Rasikh, 2021). Notably, the Interior Minister of the Republic visited a group of the Taliban's militants in Kabul, and they took selfies together.

The President aimed by the truce to demonstrate that he would be ready to honor his previously peace proposal presented in Kabul Process and also further motivate the Taliban to engage in direct peace negotiations with his administration. This initiative was undertaken amidst speculation regarding the initiation of talks between the Taliban and the United States. The government's measures, along with its earlier peace proposal to the Taliban, could be viewed as a pre-emptive strategy to not only take away the Taliban from Pakistan, as previously noted, but also to prevent the potential marginalization of the Islamic Republic in the expected US-Taliban talks. If the Taliban agreed to negotiate with the government, it would have reduced the likelihood of the US pursuing direct talks with the Taliban in the absence of the government of Afghanistan.

The Taliban chose not to label their ceasefire as a reaction to the government's ceasefire. In doing so, they deliberately indicated that the Taliban own an independent perspective on the ongoing peace process and conflict that is not influenced by the Islamic Republic. This decision was, in fact, a direct response to the President's peace proposal that had been made earlier. When the Taliban declared the commencement and conclusion of their ceasefire and resumed hostilities against the government, they demonstrated complete adherence to their orders and showcased a cohesive command structure. In light of these developments, the Taliban strategically utilized the ceasefire. The Taliban's ceasefire was a calculated manoeuvre. If had the Taliban not declared the ceasefire, the government would have labelled them as peace adversaries. The President attempted to garner public opinion, international trust in his peace efforts, and gain political leverage on the Taliban, while the Taliban purposefully used the ceasefire to prevent any branding as opposed to peace and demonstrated their strength of command structure. This analysis suggests that the ceasefire was a strategic move by the conflicting parties, aimed at fulfilling specific political objectives rather than serving as a real

confidence-building initiative for peace. This perception was substantiated when the talks started, as either parties failed to make substantial compromise to achieve a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

3.2.3 Stances of the Government and the Taliban During the US-Taliban Negotiations

As discussed in the second chapter, negotiations between the United States and the Taliban officially began in 2018, following Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-born American, was appointed as the US Special Representative (Envoy) for Afghanistan's Reconciliation (SRAR). In his hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the US House of Representatives (2023) regarding the US withdrawal, the Envoy stated that he was mandated by President Trump "to negotiate an agreement [with the Taliban] that allows a safe and orderly withdrawal, ensure that Afghanistan would not revert to a haven for terrorist organizations, and the necessity of intra-Afghan negotiations."

The government of Afghanistan was not included in negotiations between the United States and the Taliban. This exclusion led the government to express its discontentment with an increasingly skepticism about the peace process. Hamdullah Muhib, National Security Advisor to President Ashraf Ghani, stated in an interview with Face the Nation (n.d) that:

"The decision that was directly talk with the Taliban excluded the government was protested, including by myself. This exclusion and not being transparent led to the collapse. During the negotiation our hand were tied behind. We were not allowed to carry out offensive, but the Taliban were attacking the National Security Forces across the country. We were not receiving support anymore from the US."

During the direct talks between the Taliban and the US, the National Security Advisor had doubted the intention of the Envoy. The government was afraid of formation an interim administration as a result of these negotiations. Muhib added, cited by CNN (2019), that:

"The perception in Afghanistan and the people in the government think, perhaps, perhaps all this talk is to create a caretaker government of which he [Khalilzad] will then become the viceroy... the reason he's delegitimizing the Afghan government and weakening it and at the same time elevating the Taliban can only have one approach. It's definitely not for peace."

Muhib further accused the Envoy not being transparent with the government of Afghanistan during the US-Taliban negotiations, saying that: "We don't have the kind of transparency that we should have. There isn't proper access to information. The last people to find out are us."

The concern expressed by the National Security Advisor shared the President, as he was one of the two most trusted officials within the President's decision-making circle. The other most trusted official was the head of administrative office of the president. These two entourages accompanied the President during his flee from Kabul. The concern of the government related

to formation of a caretaker set-up was later reflected in the US-Taliban agreement. This agreement explicitly outlined establishment of a new government through the intra-Afghan negotiations, referring to it as a 'new Islamic Government'. Furthermore, Ambassador Khalilzad (the Envoy) in the same hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the US House of Representatives, acknowledged that he and then Secretary Blinken pursued "an Afghan Peace Government plan in early 2021 which would have given the Taliban essentially an equal share of power with the Islamic Republic. The plan was for a power sharing agreement where the new Afghan government would be comprised of both the Republic officials and Taliban and purportedly be led by someone who was acceptable to both sides."

In a separate interview with Amu (n.d), the Envoy revealed that the president of Afghanistan sought to complete his next five-year presidency term and to integrate the Taliban into his administration. According to him, the President expected the US to put forth this matter as a condition for any agreement with the Taliban. The President expected the SRAR to refrain meeting other political leaders during his visits to Kabul amid the US-Taliban negotiations. The SRAR was frequently paying visits to Kabul to update the government and consult with various political figures and parties. Khalilzad confirmed to Amu that:

"President Ghani was not happy that the continuation of his term was not a condition in the US-Taliban agreement for the US withdrawal. He expected the US to made the Taliban accepted this condition. Ghani believed that the Taliban join his government. He was thinking if Dr Abdullah, [chief of the HRNC and the President political opponent], can be part of his government, Mullah Baradar [the current deputy prime minister of the Taliban] can also be. This was not acceptable for the Taliban. He [the President] gave me some suggestions to submit to the Taliban on how and who and how many of them would be given positions in his government. Ghani expected me to meet him only, not with other politicians. This was a disagreement between us that something impractical."

The author posed to the participants of this study the question of why the Islamic Republic was excluded from the US-Taliban negotiations. The responses varied among them. Azimullah Worsaji, former Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Qatar told to the author on December 7, 2024 (date will not be cited in references to come) that the United States had concluded the government lacked a genuine commitment to peace, coupled with the refusal by the Taliban to talk directly with the Islamic Republic since they did not view it legitimate. According to Worsaji:

"The United States concluded that the Republic lacked a genuine commitment to peace. Additionally, the US shifted its priorities and its military casualties during the conflict with the Taliban was increased. The rising economic costs and a diminishing strategic significance of Afghanistan for the United States further facilitated the continuation of negotiations between the US and the Taliban in the absence of the

Afghanistan government. The Taliban's refusal to acknowledge the Islamic Republic also played a crucial role in the Republic exclusion from the talks''

Nader Nadery, a former member and spokesperson of the negotiation team of the Islamic Republic shared a viewpoint with the author on October 7, 2024 that is relatively aligned with the Chargé d'affaires'. Nadery asserted that the US was uncertain about the possibility of reaching an agreement between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban. That's why it refrained to insist on involvement of the government as condition for direct talks with the Taliban. The US prioritized its withdrawal from Afghanistan. This was a point that also indicated earlier by the SRAR, who defined the withdrawal as the primary mandate given by President Trump for the negotiations with the Taliban. Nadery said: "The US was pursuing a very narrow objective in talks with Taliban that did not include ensuring peaceful settlement of the conflict as a precondition for their withdrawal."

The statement noted above could be interpreted that the Taliban rejected any kind of involvement of the government in their talks with the US. Additionally, the US perceived a lack of genuine will for concession in either conflicting sides, leading it not to make the talks pre-conditional.

Mohammed Masoom Stanikzai, head of the negotiation team of the Islamic Republic with the Taliban, asserted during his interview with the author on December 29, 2024 that the exclusion of the Republic from the talks between the US and the Taliban was an outcome driven from the United States' policy of appeasement towards the Taliban. He also highlighted internal division within the Republic camp, excessive dependency of the government on the United States, role of Pakistan to deceive the US to enter in direct negotiations with the Taliban as additional factors that led the US to disregard inclusion of the government in the talks. According to Stanikzai:

"The US appeasement policy toward the Taliban was a reason to negotiate with the Taliban in the absence of the Afghan government. Despite the Afghan Government's opposition to this idea, this was the game of Pakistan deceiving the US, the US mistake and, in fact Pakistan deceived themselves as they see the consequences of supporting extremist and terrorist groups as a tool for their national security interests. In short, it was the US decision, weakness and division among the Afghan government and the influential political leaders, too much dependency of the Afghan government on the US support and regional and global geopolitical landscape that impacted the whole scenario."

The evidences presented above paint several important aspects. The Taliban refusal of the government participation in their talks with the US together with uncertainty on the part of the United State regarding both the Taliban and the Islamic Republic's willingness to reach a

potential peace agreement resulted in the United States not to insist on the inclusion of the Republic as a precondition for its negotiation with the Taliban. This situation provides an avenue to assess the commitments of the Islamic Republic and the Taliban towards a political settlement of the conflict following the US withdrawal. It demonstrates that the United States perceived that neither parties were ready to make substantial concessions necessary for achieving a peace agreement. Therefore, the US prioritized its main goal of a safe withdrawal from Afghanistan. On top of that, President's exclusion from the US-Taliban talks and his assertion to complete his term to incorporate the Taliban into his administration—a perspective seen unrealistic—led him to explicitly express his discontent concerning the US-Taliban negotiations. In essence, he opposed any outcome that would replace his administration. This had already been clear in his previously mentioned peace proposals to the Taliban in 2017 and 2018. He had always been referring to the acceptance of the Constitution, against which the Taliban waged a twenty-year of war. The stance of the President against an interim administration marked a notable disagreement between him and other political figures in Afghanistan. This has also been implicitly outlined in the opinion of chief negotiator Mohammed Massoom Stanikzia. As also discussed in Chapter Two, the President perceived the position of the political parties undermining his government in favor of an interim administration. Atta Mohammad Noor, one of the political leaders, viewed an interim government as part of a political solution for the conflict. “Now we need to recommend such a plan (interim government), or if such a plan exists, then we should not oppose it but further develop it for the sake of national unity, social justice and political justice,” cited Noor by Ariana News (2021). There was a flexibility among the political leaders to consider an interim government had it could have facilitated a peace agreement.

Concerning the position of the Taliban, as evidenced throughout this study the group was against any direct talks with the government, perceiving it as illegitimate and a puppet of the United States. Instead, the Taliban viewed the US as the primary source of the problem and believed they should resolve the problem directly with them (Brooking, 2022: 8-12). Based on this approach, the Taliban dismissed the notion of including the government in their talks with the United States. This viewpoint has also been supported by the perspectives of the interviewees mentioned earlier, some of whom referred to the term “appeasement” to explain why the United State excluded the government from the Taliban-US negotiations. This indicates that the Taliban would not have engaged in talks with the United States had the

government been part of it. This perception is further supported by the following statement excerpted from the US Envoy's debate at the Global Security Institute (n.d):

“We faced a difficult choice: whether to delay withdrawal and link it to an inter-Afghan agreement that there must be an agreement...the text of the Doha Agreement was therefore ambiguous purposefully in some way. Because if would admitted clearly in the agreement that the withdrawal would not take place if an intra-Afghan agreement is reached on a new government, the Taliban might have not accepted.”

Presidential Election in 2019

The first constitutional term of President Ghani concluded in May 2019. However, he remained in office due to an extension of his tenure endorsed by the Supreme Court, aiming to complete necessary preparations for the upcoming presidential elections. Ultimately, the election was scheduled for September 28, 2019, a date that coincided with the US-Taliban negotiations. Various political figures, including opponents to the president, as well as, the international community, particularly the United States preferred postponement of the elections. They called on the government to prioritize the peace process as they viewed the election would undermine peace talks with the Taliban. For example, in November 2018, the Wall Street Journal reported that the US Special Envoy Khalilzad requested a suspension in the presidential elections. This proposal was welcomed by the political parties in Afghanistan, who considered an interim administration to be more useful for peace than proceeding with the elections at that time (TOLONews, n.d).

Former president Hamid Karzai also advocated for a postponement of the elections. He emphasized that the best path forward was to focus on peace negotiations (Aljazeera, 2019). Nonetheless, the President denied the calls for the delay of the elections. Then presidential spokesperson, Haroon Chakhansuri, stated that “continuity in a democratic process is a must and any other proposal than the will of Afghans which is outlined in our constitution is simply not acceptable.” (Heart of Asia, 2018).

Eventually, the presidential elections held within the predetermined deadline on September 28, 2019. The outcome of this elections was announced six months later in February 2020, shortly before the agreement between the Taliban and the United States. The six-month delay in the announcing the final result was due to the alleged electoral fraud. Abdullah, the electoral rival of the President claimed that the election was manipulated against him. Ghani was re-elected for a second term of five-year with 50.64% of the total votes. Abdullah promptly rejected the announced outcome, claiming that he had obtained the majority of the “clean votes.” Subsequently, both President Ghani and Abdullah held parallel inauguration ceremonies in

March 2020, taking their oaths as president. Abdullah began to appoint governors in his constituencies. The dispute between him and President Ghani finally resolved through a power-sharing agreement facilitated by the United States, namely by Special Envoy Khalilzad, along with influential domestic political figures such as former president Hamid Karzai and Jihadi leader Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf. Then US Secretary of Sates, Mike Pompeo, declared \$1billion cut in assistance to Afghanistan, pressuring both Abdullah and Ghani to reach an agreement as the intra-Afghan negotiations were standoff. Following all these interventions, the two political rivals signed an agreement based on which Abdullah was appointed as head of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). The HCNR was supposed to lead the national strategy for peace process with the Taliban (Cookman, 2020).

The President's refusal of the national and international calls for the postponement of the elections raised significant questions regarding his compromise and commitment for peace. Why did the President resist those calls? Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady (2019), a former finance minister and politician in Afghanistan, argued in an op-ed for Aljazeera that the insistence of the President to proceed with the elections could derail peace talks with the Taliban. He asserts that the President main aim was to secure his position remain in power for the next five years, thereby obstructing any peace agreement that might lead to an interim administration. This insistence not only would create tensions between him and Afghanistan's major internal supporters and political leaders, it would also undermine the likelihood of reaching a peace accord. Ahady writes:

“the main obstacle for peace is the Taliban's insistence on the formation of an interim government and the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's strong objection to that. Ghani's motive is clear: He wants to run again and remain in power for another five years. A peace agreement leading to an interim government will mean his government must be replaced. Ghani's refusal to put the prospects of a much-needed peace above his desire to remain in power has caused tension between him and Afghanistan's major international supporters and is at odds with the position of most of the Afghan public and political leaders.”

Two years ago, in an exclusive interview with Afghanistan International (n.d), Abdul Matin Bek, who served as the Chief of Staff to the President and was a member of the Islamic Republic negotiations team, acknowledged that the decision to hold the presidential election in 2019 was one of the gravest strategic errors. He asserted that, this election prompted the collapse of the Islamic Republic by politicizing the National Security Forces, declining the public trust in the government, and deteriorating the pre-existing internal divisions between the government and politicians. As a result, he noted, there was a lack of unified response to what

was decided between the US and the Taliban in Doha. He indicated that, the President was worried about the potentials for the political leaders to reach a common understanding with the Taliban during the intra-Afghan negotiations, fearing that such a scenario would result in his marginalization. According to Matin Bek, the President believed that the National Security Forces were partially affiliated to some politicians. Therefore, he re-engineered the national security institutions in favor of his political aspiration.

The question referenced earlier about the elections was also posed to the participants of this study. Nader Nadery argued that the government sought for legitimacy as its current constitutional term was expired. In this context, the government believed it lacked a legitimate authority to engage in negotiations with Taliban without re-election. He stated that “the government was seeking further legitimacy ahead of negotiation. It felt at the time that it did not have a mandate to negotiate without a reelection.”

The head of the Islamic Republic’s negotiating team, Massoom Stanikzai, also highlighted the need for legitimacy as a reason for conducting the elections by the government. However, he defined the timing as ‘inappropriate and a grave mistake’. He asserted that there was a need for a strong unity among the political figures and the government at that time. The elections resulted in further division between the state leadership and the political parties. As a result of this division, the Taliban gained an upper hand, as well as the US was provided with an opportunity to disregard the government’s concerns in their talks with the Taliban. Stanikzai shared his view with the author as follow:

“The president's term was drawing to a close. Without elections, political leaders were questioning the legitimacy of the government to make decisions on crucial peace-related issues. Unsurprisingly, when the elections finally took place, they resulted in a more significant disaster, deepening divisions and mistrust among the elite. This situation ultimately diverted a considerable amount of time, energy, and resources away from essential aspects of the country's future. I personally believed and expressed to the leadership and international stakeholders that the timing of the election, coinciding with negotiations between the Taliban and the US, was inappropriate and a grave mistake. There was a strong need for unity among Afghan political and state leadership, which was lacking. This disunity allowed the Taliban to gain an upper hand and also provided the US negotiating team the opportunity to negotiate on behalf of the Afghan government, further fuelling divisions. The situation called for a focused approach to prepare for a post-US presence scenario, but division hindered any effective planning.”

Shoaib Rahim, Senior Advisor to the State Ministry for Peace of the Islamic Republic, who participated the intra-Afghan negotiations as a technical member, stated in an interview with the author on December 3, 2024, that the government sought for leverage in its negotiations

with the Taliban. This leverage could be achieved through gaining popular support in an election. He also expressed the view that the President considered the push by the US and the political leaders' desire for a power-sharing arrangements as efforts to oust him from power. Consequently, the President adopted a more aggressive stance and insisted to hold the elections. Rahim believes that:

“The Republic needed leverage while sitting across the table and a government without popular support would not have had that. The US position was to rush the government into talks, and all political figures wanted a share of power and were against Ashraf Ghani. The push to postpone elections was seen as an attempt to remove Ashraf Ghani from power so he became more aggressive and pushed to hold the elections. If the government was included in the US-Taliban talks, then there could have been a realistic possibility of postponing the 2019 presidential elections, if it meant getting close to a negotiated settlement.”

The viewpoint of Shoaib Rahim suggests that the President might utilize the election for his political purposes. This demonstrates a potential lack of will to compromise during the peace talks. The leverage that the President aimed to acquire, as is perceived from the above-mentioned statement, was intended to maintain his position rather than to obtain the legitimacy required for making decisions for peace. This understanding could be further reinforced by the head of the Republic team's sentence “without elections, political leaders were questioning the legitimacy of the government to make decisions on crucial peace-related issues.” Accordingly, the decision to conduct the elections was stemmed from political competitions between the government's leadership and the politicians over power. Therefore, as the author understands it, the head of the Islamic Republic's negotiating team described the timing of the election as a factor that fostered disunity among politicians and the government, creating an opportunity for both the Taliban and the United States to exploit it to their advantage. Additionally, it has been noted earlier that the government extended its first term for a couple of months through endorsement by the Supreme Court. If this extension was occurred due to exceptional circumstances, why was it not considered concerning the postponement of presidential elections in light of a much broader significant critical juncture of the country's history, namely the peace process, if there was a commitment for peace.

The perspective shared by Azimullah Worsaji, former Chargé d'affaires of Afghanistan in Qatar, with the author confirmed the perception that the President used the election for his own political interest. According to him, the president held the election to maintain his power for an additional five years, during which he aimed to integrate the Taliban into his administration. This move was seen as an attempt to prevent a possible interim government. He remarked:

“The United States believed that an election was unnecessary since negotiations were in progress. These negotiations were expected to lead to the formation of a new government. The decision to hold elections was primarily Ghani’s and his team’s decision, rather than a decision made on behalf of Afghanistan as a whole. He anticipated that he would maintain power for the next five years and that the Taliban would agree to a peace arrangement that would incorporate them into his administration.”

Ghulam Farooq Majrooh, another member of the Islamic Republic’s negotiation team, also confirmed to the author on October 15, 2024 that the President utilized the elections in favor of maintaining his power:

“Ghani resisted the U.S. demand for postponement of the election. He thought he would win the elections with an absolute majority of the votes. But later on when the result was contested, he appealed the U.S to recognize the result of election in exchange for the acceptance of the Doha Agreement.”

Although the United States refrained to officially endorse the elections results, envoy Zalmay Khalilzadi attended the inaugural ceremony of President Ghani (Cookman, 2020). Some individuals, such as the former Chargé d'affaires of Afghanistan in Qatar, argues that the US Envoy’s attendance was contingent upon the promise made by the President to release the Taliban’s 5000 prisoners, which had been stipulated in the US-Taliban agreement. Furthermore, Abdul Matin Bek, former President’s Chief of Staff and a member of the Islamic Republic negotiation team, in his previously noted interview with Afghanistan International, avoided to reject the possibility of a deal between the President and the US concerning Khalilzad’s presence in his inaugural ceremony. He also confirmed the US pressure on the government for the prisoners’ release. Finally, the prisoners were released, apparently with the approval of Loya Jirga, held in August 2019.

How Did the Taliban Respond to the Presidential Elections?

The Taliban carried out an extensive campaign to discourage the public participation in the elections. They sought to diminish legitimacy of the election via a low voter turnout, thereby casting doubt on the legitimacy formed as a result of this election. To achieve this goal, the Taliban issued a statement threatening citizens against voting. The United Nations expressed its concern over this decision, urging the Taliban to protect civilians and allowed them to exercise their constitutional right to vote (UNAMA, 2019). Despite this call, the violence remained high in the day of the election. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported verifying 100 election-related incidents throughout the country on September 28, 2019, the election day, resulting in 277 casualties, the majority of which attributed to the Taliban (UNAMA, 2019). Consequently, the total turnout was around 2.5 million (Osman & Smith, 2019), the lowest participation rate since 2004. This low electoral

turnout was not limited to the Taliban's campaign though, it contributed significantly to the situation. The output of such election coincided with the Taliban objective. To summarize, the evidences provided above suggest that both the government and the Taliban instrumentalized the presidential elections for their own political purposes linked to the peace negotiations.

3.2.4 Positions of the Government and the Taliban in the Intra-Afghan Negotiations

Prisoner Exchange

On March 29, 2020, the President announced the formation of the Islamic Republic Negotiations Team (RNT), which composed of 21 members, including 17 males and 4 females. The team was led by Mohamad Masoom Stanekzai, one of the participants in this thesis. As the ethnicity has been one of the factors contributed to the conflict in Afghanistan, ethnic diversity was largely observed in the composition of the team. Out of 21 members, the RNT included six Tajiks, six Pashtuns, 4 Hazaras, 2 Uzbeks, two Sadaats, a religious decent group (one Sunni, one Shia-Ismaili), and one Baluch. The Taliban 21-memebers Negotiation Team included 18 Pashtuns, one Tajik, one Uzbek, and one Turkmen, with no Hazara, women, and Shia among them (Rubin, 2020).

The intra-Afghan negotiations were supposed to commenced on March 10, 2020, as outlined in the US-Taliban agreement. However, the talks were postponed due to dispute over the exchange of prisoners between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban. The Agreement stipulated that one thousand prisoners from the Islamic Republic were to be released for five thousand from the Taliban. The government of the Islamic Republic refuted this deal, citing that the Republic was not part of the agreement between the United Sates and the Taliban, and thus, is not legally bound to obligations towards the agreement. On the other hand, the Taliban asserted that the commencement of the intra-Afghan negotiations is contingent upon the release of their 5,000 prisoners as committed by the United States in the Doha agreement. Ultimately, the President called a Loya Jirga to decide on the release of the prisoners. The Jirga approved the release of the Taliban's prisoners upon the condition that the intra-Afghan negotiations must begin, a permanent ceasefire is established, and the achievement made during the past 20 years along with the principle of democracy and republicanism should be preserved. The Jirga generated the certain objectives that the government had been looking for, according to Baryalai Helali (2024), former Chief of Staff of the Islamic Republic Negotiation Team's Directorate. The Jirga's final outcome indicated existence of an alignment with what the Chargé d'affaires Worsaji confirmed to the author that the Loya Jirga was selectively called by

the President to release the prisoners in exchange for the recognition of the disputed outcome of the presidential election by the United States. He stated:

“The president of Afghanistan, Mr. Ghani, promised three things to the United States the release of the Taliban’s prisoners [enshrined in the Doha Agreement] in exchange for the recognition of his disputed win of the presidential elections [in 2019] by the US. The President, with the approval of Loya Jirga, which was called by him and the representatives also participated selectively, released the Taliban prisoners.”

While the release of the prisoners appeared to occur with the approval of the Loya Jirga, the insights from the President’s Chief of Staff interview with Afghanistan International (n.d), a member of the NRT, and Chargé d'affaires Worsaji, presented above, suggest that pressure from the US along with a possible deal between the US and the President on the United States Envoy’s presence in the inaugural ceremony of Ashraf Ghani, significantly contributed to that event. These evidences demonstrate that the President would not put an end to the stalemate in the intra-Afghan negotiations that had been resulted from disagreement on the prisoner’s exchange, had there were not the pressure and incentives by the United States. A decision produced by a third party’s pressure could be interpreted insincere engagement to the peace process. The theoretical framework of this study also identified “pressure” as a factor that lead a false negotiator to enter negotiations.

The US Envoy for Afghanistan peace process in his interview with Face the Nation (n.d) implicitly confirmed the pressure from the US on the government. However, he indicated that such pressures were not enough. He further stated that President Ghani preferred the status quo. As explained under theoretical framework in Chapter Two, preserving the status quo has been identified as a characteristic for a false negotiator. The Envoy said:

“Taliban was ready to release all prisoners [one thousand prisoners from the government] but the government did not accept. President Ghani did not believe that the US would withdraw. So they prefer the status quo to a political settlement. They were not serious for a political settlement. Later they understood that they miscalculated. Both the State minister of US and I made efforts to convince Ghani to take serious the negotiations. Many Afghans were asking us to pressure Ghani but we did not do it enough. We were gentle towards Ghani. We had to told Ghani that there would have not been military support to his forces if he did not take serious the negotiations. that might work. Because he wanted to stay on [in power]”.

Return of the Taliban’s Prisoners to the Battlefield

The Taliban released the prisoners from the government. However, some of their prisoners who released by the government re-joined the battlefield. Dr Abdullah, then chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation of Afghanistan (HCNR), during his interview for the

Council on Foreign Relations with Gen. David Howell Petraeus (2020), who served as commander of the US forces and the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan, confirmed that a number of the Taliban's released prisoners re-joined the battlefield against the government, saying that:

“To be honest, I don't have a sort of, talking about percentagewise, something like that. But I do know that some have returned to the battlefield, which is a violation of the agreement that they had made. I do know that this has happened. I have examples in some areas, and these people have started insurgency in those—in those areas once they left.”

In September 2020, Lynne O'Donnel, a columnist for Foreign Policy, reported that “a new confidential report concludes that a majority of fighters are resuming their “jihad” to overthrow the US-backed Afghan government.” In her article, she referred to an unpublished paper prepared for the Afghan Peace Dialogue Project at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, authored by Michael Semple, an expert on the Taliban, and Felix. Citing this unreleased paper, Lynne O'Donnel asserted that the Taliban's prisoner who had been released returned to the battlefield to fight the government, noting that: “A number of ex-prisoners have been appointed to direct command positions since their release”

In August 3, 2021 Alan Cullison and Saeed Shah, working for the Wall Street Journal, referring to some Western Officials, revealed that the Taliban commander leading a military campaign on the part of Lashkargah, capital of the southern Helmand province, was among of the five-thousand prisoners that had been released by the government ‘under the pressure of the United States.’ Furthermore, the US State Secretary Antoni Blinken confirmed during his testifying session at the House Foreign Affairs hearing on Afghanistan withdrawal that “many of the 5000 Taliban released prisoners went back to the fight.” (CBS News, n, d)

As mentioned in the aforementioned interview of the chairperson of the HCNR, the Taliban had committed not to allow their prisoners to return to the fight. The evidences presented here contradict this commitment. It demonstrates that the Taliban benefited prisoners exchange in the peace talks as a strategy to foster their forces against the government.

Formal Opening of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN)

The formal negotiations between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban commenced on September 12, 2020, after the dispute over the exchange of prisoners was resolved. The representatives of the conflicting parties and the international dignitaries attended the opening session. Officials from China, Finland, Germany, Iran, India, Indonesia, Japan, Norway, NATO, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Pakistan, Qatar, Spain, Turkmenistan,

Türkiye, Uzbekistan, UN, UK, and US delivered opening remarks (TOLOnews, 2020). The delegation of the Islamic Republic was led by Dr. Abdullah, chief of the HCNR, while Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar headed the Taliban's delegation. In their statements both heads of delegates expressed their firm commitments and optimisms to a positive outcome of the talks. Abdullah said (cited by Ariana News, n.d):

“I can assure you that the history of our country will remember today as the end of suffering and conflict. we come here with good will and good intention to stop the war. Our people want a system based on the constitution. The current conflict has no winner but there will be no loser if there is a submission to the will of people. We are here to engage in sincere negotiations”

The Taliban's head of delegation, Mullah Bradar, also promised the people of Afghanistan and the international community that they would engage in peace talks genuinely. He acknowledged that challenge would arise during the negotiations. However, these potential challenges would be navigated with patience. Bradar (quoted by TOLOnews, 2020), promised:

“We also assure the world that we will use all their ability so that the intra-Afghan negotiations get positive results. The peace negotiation process will have some challenges, but we need to show courage if we face issues during the talks and move forward with patience.”

The opening session appeared promising. Nonetheless, the pledges made by the heads of the conflicting parties' delegations to reach a peace agreement were not honored over time.

Agreement on Having no Formal Mediator

The theoretical framework of this study outlined that a significant indicator for identifying a false negotiator is refusal of a mediator during peace negotiations. Mediator has the capacity to either facilitate resolution of potential deadlocks or expose the concealed intention of the deceptive parties. Taking this indicator into account, both the Islamic Republic and the Taliban failed to showcase sufficient genuine commitments to a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Baryalai Helali (2024) noted that the government in the initial steps proposed to have no formal third party in the talks. This suggestion immediately was welcomed by the Taliban. According to him, the Islamic Republic aimed to maintain over the ownership of the process, from which it had previously been excluded in the US-Taliban agreement.

In his interview to the author, Satanikzai, head of the Islamic Republic negotiating team confirmed that the absence of a mediator in the negotiations was a grave mistake. He explicitly holds both the government and the Taliban responsible for the absent of a formal mediator in the talks. Stanikzai believes that “the absence of a credible mediator was a huge mistake; in this respect, both the Government and the Taliban are equally responsible.”

In another note, Ghulam Farooq Majrooh, member of the Republic negotiation team, shared the same view as the head of the team on the destructive consequences of the lack of a mediator in the talks. He shared the following viewpoint:

“The absence of a formal mediator within the negotiation room represented a huge inadequacy throughout the talks. While the State of Qatar served as an informal facilitator outside the room and the Taliban advocated this role, the Islamic Republic did not trust Qatar, and the Taliban refused the involvement of any alternative parties being in the facilitation process. The Islamic Republic gradually felt the need for a mediator, but the Taliban did not accept at all”

Shoaib Rahim, a senior advisor to the State Ministry for Peace of the Republic, in his interview with the author, also joined his voice with the two officials noted above. He has considered both the Islamic Republic and the Taliban as equally rejecting the involvement of a mediator, stating that: “neither side wanted a mediator.” Additionally, Chargé d'affaires Worsji confirmed to the author that the government opposed the presence of a formal mediator, while the Taliban appeared to accept Qatar as a facilitator [in the beginning]:

“Qatar’s Amir had sent a letter to President Ghani seeking his consent to act as a facilitator; however, Ghani declined the offer. The Special Envoy of Qatar informed us that during a meeting, Ghani expressed his refusal to accept Qatar as a facilitator, let alone as a mediator. Nevertheless, it appeared that the Taliban might be more amenable to having Qatar serve in a facilitating role.”

Even though, some of the interviewees expressed the Taliban’s desire to have Qatar as facilitator, they all agree that neither the Taliban nor the government advocated inclusion of a mediator to the talks. This could indicate the potential absent of a genuine will for peace on either sides. A facilitator seeks to establish a collaborative an environment that encourages parties to discuss and exchange their viewpoints. Mediator, on the other hand, steps-in deeper to assist disputing parties in achieving a resolution. This assistance includes technical support, identifying common grounds, and presenting proposals to resolve conflict. The stances of the negotiation parties about having a formal mediator in the negotiation offers useful insights to evaluate their dedications towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Additionally, a protracted conflict, which is difficult to resolve due to its longevity and complexity, necessitates presence of a mediator. As figured out in the literature review of this study, the conflict in Afghanistan is protracted in nature. This could have been a significant logic for the parties to consider presence of a mediator in the process.

The Most Contested Topics in the Negotiations: First and Second Rounds of the Talks

Following the inception of the intra-Afghan negotiations, the first round of the talks focused on the guidelines and procedures. Two divergent guidelines proposals put forward by the

negotiating parties. The Islamic Republic proposed the Constitutions and the decision made by the Loya Jirga as the basis for the negotiations. As noted before, the Jirga had previously approved the release of the Taliban's prisoners upon the condition that the intra-Afghan negotiations must begin, a permanent ceasefire is established, and the achievement made during the past 20 year, along with the principle of democracy and republicanism should be preserved. Conversely, the Taliban insisted on their agreement with the United States to serve as foundation for the talks. Additionally, the Taliban asserted that Sunni (Hanafi) jurisprudence be the sole reference for addressing any religious disputes during the negotiations. The Islamic Republic viewed this proposal as a serious attempt to exclude the Shia's jurisprudence. Discussion concerning the rules and procedures lasted three months. After this extensive time, the two sides reached an agreement on December 15, 2020, and exchanged their proposed agendas for the upcoming rounds of the negotiations (Adili, 2021). According to Afghanistan Analysts Network (2021), the following points were agreed as the basis for the intra-Afghan negotiations:

- A. The US-Taliban Agreement;
- B. The call of Afghan's people for a sustainable peace;
- C. The negotiating parties' commitment to peace; and
- D. The frequent call of the UN for peace.

However, few weeks later the Islamic Republic team realized that none of the documents that it had insisted to be as the base for the negotiation was explicitly mentioned in those four points. Concerning the second topic, which centered on the Taliban's insistence on using Sunni Fiqh as the foundation for religious dispute resolution, the two parties agreed upon the following text: In the event of a dispute regarding the interpretation of Sharia texts (*nusus-e sharia*) during the negotiations, the matter shall be resolved by a joint committee composed of members from both negotiating teams. As well as, rule 18 of the guideline for the intra-Afghan negotiations emphasized on the importance of confidentiality by the parties. Nonetheless, according to Hilali (2024), former Chief of Staff for the Islamic Republic Negotiation Team's Directorate, certain members of the Islamic Republic negotiating team disclosed sensitive information to their affiliates. He argues that:

“Most RNT members were willing to work as one team to defend joint positions that may differ from their own politically oriented views. Nonetheless, despite this commitment and the internal rules and procedures, certain team members leaked sensitive information to media and their circles”.

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, a senior negotiating member of the Taliban, who currently serves as deputy foreign minister, also affirmed this information during an interview with TOLONews (n.d).

After their agreement on the rules and procedures, the negotiating parties proceeded to exchange the agenda lists. As shall be seen in Table 3, the proposed agendas indicate that while the Islamic Republic emphasized the ceasefire as the first point to be discussed, the Taliban prioritized ‘Islamic government’, leaving the ceasefire discussion to the final stage of the negotiations.

The proposed lists as the agenda of the negotiation is overly long. Discussing items mentioned in the following table would require ample of time that potentially take years to reach an outcome. The proposed issues also seen far conflicting. From point one to six, the Taliban seems to had targeted the existence of then incumbent government and political system. These points imply that the Taliban sought for a new system and drafting a new Constitution. On the other hand, the Islamic Republic prioritized issues that aimed to maintain itself. Considering the priorities of both sides, it is evident that there was a rigid stance that would affect reaching a political settlement. This indicates the lack of compromise for peace. Furthermore, the issue of power-sharing or an interim administration, which could serve as potential avenue for political settlement, have not been explicitly included in the proposed agendas by either sides. Terms such as ‘political roadmap for participation’ and ‘common political vision’ have been put in the list by the Islamic Republic, yet they subject to various interpretation, including incorporating the Taliban into the government.

“Agenda Proposed by the Government	Agenda Proposed by the Taliban
A. Security	Islamic government
Perpetual and nationwide truce	Type of future Islamic government
Creation of a mechanism for monitoring and implementing of the ceasefire	Leadership
Ensuring the safety of all routes, including highways and the prevention of any type of extortion	Defense and security sector
Blocking illegal routes with neighbouring countries	Islamic council
Strengthening the national defense and security forces	Constitution
Demilitarizing areas	Foreign policy
Eradicating poppy cultivation and the processing and smuggling of drugs	Developing policies based on international measures and considering Islamic principles and national values
Fighting against organized crime	Independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan
Ensuring the security of historical and Islamic sites	National unity in Afghanistan
Protecting natural resources and preventing their illegal use	Commitment to national interests

Ensuring the security of public installations including power networks, transportation and the property of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan	National values
Expelling foreign fighters and terrorist groups and partnering in military activity to prevent the killing of the Muslim people of Afghanistan	Education
Putting an end to arbitrary and extra-judicial punishment	Fundamental human rights
Preventing the stopping and targeting of individuals based on ethnicity and gender (on roadways)	Ensuring compensation for widows and orphans
Clarity on relations with other countries	Ensuring women's rights in light of Islamic principles and national traditions
B. Development	Ensuring the legitimate and principled rights of prisoners
Providing the foundation for quality and countrywide public services in healthcare, education, agriculture and others.	Special attention to the disabled
Ensuring the security of infrastructural projects and providing the conditions for employment	Transfer and treatment of wounded
Providing the conditions for the return of refugees and their accommodations	Prevention of drugs
Running joint programs to care for war victims and to look after the families of martyrs and the disabled.	Freedom of expression based on Islamic principles
Protection of Afghans' capital and making efforts to lead the country to self-reliance economically	Prevention of propaganda
C. Politics	Removing moral corruption and corruption in public offices
Establishment of a common vision for the country based on Islamic and democratic values	Permanent ceasefire.”
Roadmap for political participation	
International guarantees for the implementation of peace agreements	
The legitimate rights and freedoms of citizens and preserving the achievements of Afghans	
Strengthening national institutions	
Fighting against any type of corruption in society and providing the conditions for good governance	
Preserving the international commitments of Afghanistan and observing international charter	
D. Executive mechanism	
For the implementation of each section, a practical mechanism should be discussed, such as a mechanism for the monitoring of ceasefire	
E. Finalizing peace agreement”	

Table 3. Proposed Agendas by the Islamic Republic and the Taliban (the Table is re-designed by the author using the sample and data presented in the Afghanistan Analysts Network)

After the conclusion of the first round of talks, the two negotiation teams announced that the next round would begin on January 5, 2021. However, they did not specify venue for this round. Following this announcement, Hamdullah Muhib, National Security Advisor to the President, tweeted on December 12 of the same year, calling for the second round of the negotiations to be held inside Afghanistan. This call received strong support from the President, saying that “while the Taliban is claiming that they are on Afghan soil, why aren’t they holding talks on Afghan soil?” (TOLOnews, 2020). The call was perceived a provocative move that was not practical, according to a negotiating team member of the Islamic Republic, and was promptly rejected by the Taliban (Adili, 2021). The President later chose not to peruse the aforementioned call further. Consequently, the second round also took place in Qatar but it faced continued delays and lack of progress on disputed topics. The author posed the question of these contentious issues to the interviewees participated in this study. According to Azimullah Worsaji, the government insisted on the Constitution and completion of the president’s term in power among others, while the Taliban mainly focused on the US-Taliban agreement being as the basis for the negotiations. As can be seen in the following, he stated that the core intention of both sides was to gain and maintain their power rather than to achieve peace:

“The redlines of the Republic included the safeguarding of constitutions, respecting to Shia jurisprudence (*Ahwal Shakhsia*), and the completion of the president’s current term in accordance with constitutional provisions. The Taliban’s redlines emphasized that the US-Taliban agreement should serve as the basis for the negotiations. However, it was evident that both parties were primarily motivated by a desire for power, cloaked in the guise of their respective redlines.”

Sample, Raphel and Rasikh (2021) have also validated the assertion put forth by the Chargé d'affaires, Azimullah Worsaji, concerning the emphasize on the completion of the President’s term. They stated that “President Ghani’s public opposition to any agreement which shortened his tenure as president alerted the Taliban to the likelihood that the government side would scuttle any attempt to finalize the settlement.”

The Senior Advisor, Shoaib Rahim, during his interview with the author, identified three key issues, among others, as topics of contention. He appears to hold the Taliban primarily responsible for the deadlocks resulting from these issues:

“The deadlocks between the two delegations: (1) Taliban did not recognize the republic and said they are engaging with multiple afghan factions in Doha. This was a point of contention. (2) The Taliban wanted the direct negotiations to be based on the US-Taliban Doha deal The government contested this. (3) The Taliban wanted to remove the Shia-Jafari fiqh from the text in cases were disputes arise.”

The head of the Islamic Republic negotiating team, Masoom Stanikzai, asserted several contentious issues, including but not limited to power-sharing, formation of an inclusive government, ceasefire, women rights and human rights. The issues of Islamic governance, human rights and women rights, illustrate the divergent worldviews of the conflicting parties, as reflected in the literature review, that contributed to the complexity of reaching an agreement. He states:

“The most contested topics were power-sharing, the formation of an inclusive government, the constitution, a ceasefire, principles of Islamic governance, human rights, and women's rights. Most importantly, the terms and conditions of the Doha agreements were among the most debated topics of disagreement.”

Ghulam Farooq Majrooh, another member of the Islamic Republic negotiating team also certified this viewpoint to the author on October 15, 2024. All these contentious subjects were supposed to be addressed during the second round of the talks. However, the Taliban deployed delay tactic and the Islamic Republic failed to establish clear and timely communication with its negotiating team. The delay and lack of adequately communication indicate the absent of a genuine will for peace. Helali (2024) writes: “The RNT could rarely get a clear update on the leaderships position or its instructions on specific issues concerning negotiations with the Taliban...Thus, the RNT returned to Doha with a peace vision that was as clear as mud.”

Ceasefire

There would have been a chance to achieve a negotiated agreement provided that a ceasefire was implemented during the negotiations. The Taliban resisted to this request by the government, as said the senior advisor to the State Peace Ministry to the author: “the Taliban were not interested in this topic and kept saying let’s wait for the US forces to leave, then we will agree on this and many other topics.”

Nader Nadery, the spokesperson of the Republic negotiation team also shares the same opinion with the senior advisor, stating that: “Taliban never agreed on a ceasefire”.

Similarly, according the Chargé d'affaires, the Taliban rejected ceasefire to maintain their leverage in the negotiations:

“The Taliban maintained that a permanent ceasefire should be established only after the conclusion of negotiations, rather than during the negotiation process itself. Their military campaign served as the most significant leverage in peace talks with the Republic. Conversely, the government was advocating for an immediate ceasefire.”

The head of Islamic Republic team, in response to a question posed to him by the author, highlighted that the US-Taliban agreement played a significant role in the failure to achieve a ceasefire during the negotiations, noting that:

“This was the mistake of the Doha agreement to guarantee the ceasefire. For the Republic Negotiating team, a ceasefire was the most important and priority item on the agenda, but the condition of the Doha agreement pushed that item to the end of negotiations, which was another mistake. Despite all efforts at the national and international level, the Taliban refused to stop killing their fellow countrymen and women.”

The US-Taliban agreement mentioned the ceasefire in its last part. It states that a permanent ceasefire will be included in the agenda of the intra-Afghan negotiation. The date and modalities of the ceasefire would be determined by the participating parties of the intra-Afghan negotiations, according to the agreement. The Taliban included the ceasefire on their proposed agenda, but as the final item of the negotiations.

Istanbul Conference

This conference was scheduled for April 24, to May 4, 2021, but it failed to take place. The conference aimed to resolve the previously mentioned deadlocks raised from the abovementioned contested topics. The initiative for the conference was mainly put forth by the United States to facilitate an agreement between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban before the withdrawal of the US forces. Why was the Istanbul Conference cancelled?

According to the Senior Advisor of the State Ministry for Peace of the Islamic Republic, the Taliban refusal led the conference not to occur: “Doha talks were in a deadlock, Khalilzad proposed Istanbul as a path to break this deadlock but the Taliban refused to attend therefore the meeting was cancelled.”

The Chargé d'affaires, on the contrary, viewed both the President and the Taliban responsible for the cancellation of the conference, as neither sides were genuinely interested in its occurrence.

“the initial rejection came from President Ghani, subsequently by the Taliban. Ghani was concerned that the meeting would lead to the conclusion of peace negotiations, ultimately resulting in his removal from office and the elevation of other political figures, including those from the Taliban, to positions of power.”

However, the head of the Islamic Republic negotiations team accused the Taliban in this regard:

“At least there were witnesses present in the room during the preparation phase for the Istanbul Meeting. These included the special representatives from the United States, Qatar, Turkey, and the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan. The meeting aimed to break the deadlock and reach an agreement

before the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. This was another missed opportunity because of the Taliban's refusal to participate in the conference.”

It has been revealed that there are conflicting views among the interviewees concerning the cancellation of the Istanbul Conference. The majority hold the Taliban responsible, whereas one of the research participants has blamed not only the Taliban but also the government for the conference not to convene.

Further efforts were undertaken following the cancellation of the Istanbul Conference. Dr. Abdullah, chief of the HCNR, travelled to Qatar to discuss a political settlement and ceasefire. But the Taliban team, led by Mullah Baradar, expressed their demand to discuss a new Constitution (Here the author wants to draw attention of the audience to the peace offer made by President Ghani in 2018 in which he called upon the Taliban to accept the Constitution as a kind of condition for direct talks with them. This study has argued in the preceding pages that the offer was impractical, indicating a lack of genuine desire for peace). As violence was increasingly escalating, Qatar was proposed as mediator rather than facilitator with the involvement of the UN. On June 30, the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic formally requested his Qatari counterpart to play role of mediator but the Taliban rejected since they were advancing on the ground. On 10-12 August an event was organized by Qatar and the UN, attended by Dr. Abdullah and Mullah Baradar. According to Helali (2024), the event supposed to discuss a political settlement. In this event Dr. Abdullah, cited by Helali, concluded that:

“...we have concluded that the Taliban are using the negotiations to save time and do not want to enter into negotiations on the main issues.... The Taliban’s first goal was the withdrawal of international forces...and their second goal was to gain power through military means”

The evidences presented in the paragraph above unequivocally support strategic use of negotiations by the Taliban. However, comparing these evidences with the ones presented earlier under “Agreement on Having No Mediator” in this chapter, a contradictory stance can be seen coming from the Islamic Republic concerning presence of a mediator in the talks. The Islamic Republic government had previously proposed absent of any formal mediator in the initial stage of the negotiations, while it has later reversed that decision in a situation where the talks reached on the verge of an absolute collapse. The reversal of the Republic’s position in such circumstances can be interpreted as an attempt to rescue itself rather than a genuine move for peace.

Last Chance for a Political Settlement: 14-15 August 2021

The Taliban reached behind the doors of Kabul on August 14, 2021. They made an agreement with the US to enter Kabul through a political transition of power. Concurrently, the US reached an agreement with President Ghani to resign and make arrangement for a new political set-up. In a panel discussion at the Global and National Security Institute (n.d), the US Special Envoy Khalilzad implicitly confirmed that the President undermined the last chance for a political settlement. According to him, on August 14, the President agreed to step aside from power, but he fled the country without notifying anyone on August 15. He stated:

“The very big surprise for us was the performance of Afghan security forces and the political leadership, particularly the departure of the president when the negotiations were not going well. I want to say something before the departure of the president and the collapse in Kabul, which was that we had reached understanding finally with president Ghani...President Ghani did not like one key part of the Doha Agreement, which was the word NEW GOVERNMENT in the text of Doha Agreement...new Islamic government...the Islamic was used because either part was Islamic republic and Islamic Emirates...on August 14 or 13, president Ghani Agreed that he would step aside [from his position] and there would be negotiations on the formation or composition of a new government [by then the military situation has changed a lot... Taliban got close to the gate of Kabul..] the Taliban agreed not to enter Kabul [told us], a senior delegation would go to Doha, a new government would be formed, the division of ministries some progress made on that...General McKenzie [the U.S commander in Afghanistan] would recall that the next day when we had plan the delegation (of government) come, the government collapsed. We were surprised by that.”

Antony Blinken, then US State Secretary also confirmed the above-mentioned statement made by Khalilzad. During a testifying session at House Foreign Affairs hearing on Afghanistan withdrawal, he was requested to provide details on the purpose of his visit to Kabul in April 2024. In this regard, Blinken detailed that (broadcasted on CBS News, n.d):

“I was there to see the situation directly and take the Taliban negotiation with the Afghan government. we made a lot of efforts until Ghani fled. I was on the phone with him the night before he fled the country, on 14 August. He told me that he wanted to continue working to get an agreement with the Taliban but if he could not, he would fight until death. We were surprised by fleeing President Ghani”

Abdul Matin Bek, Chief of Staff to the President and a former member of the Islamic Republic Negotiation Team, verified the statement made by Khalilzad during an exclusive interview with Afghanistan International (n.d). He confirmed that on August 14, the President gave his consent to resign. This led to the formation of a delegation composed of himself (Bek), former president Karzai, and others, headed by Dr. Abdullah, chief of the HCNR. This delegation intended to travel to Qatar to continue talks regarding a political arrangement. Bek noted that this phase of the negotiations was different from the previous ones since the president had accepted to

relinquish power. He acknowledged that though given the Taliban's control over almost the whole country the negotiation at such juncture were far from ideal, they might have been able to facilitate an interim administration and thus avoided a complete collapse of the entire system. When asked why did the President decided to flee the country, Bek replied: "in my opinion, he fled the country and violated his agreement [for a political settlement] due to his cowardice and selfishness."

Concerning the Taliban, during a testifying session (broadcasted by CBS News, n.d) at the House Foreign Affairs hearing on Afghanistan withdrawal, Antony Blinken said that "the Taliban failed to stop violence against security forces [of Afghanistan]. the Taliban failed to negotiation with the government. NATO Secretary General Opposed unconditional withdrawal."

3.2.5 A Review of the Parties' Peace Stances from Research Participants' Perspectives

When the interviewees were specifically asked about the commitment of the Islamic Republic and Taliban to a negotiated resolution during intra-Afghan negotiations, their responses varied. Some of them explicitly stated that neither sides demonstrated a genuine interest in a negotiated resolution. The remaining attributed greater responsibility for the failure of reaching an agreement to the Taliban.

The Chargé d'affaires' comment below not only confirmed the lack of interest in both parties, but also revealed a deceptive tactic used by the Taliban through a fabricated narrative:

"The Taliban's negotiating team came up with an appealing narrative that included three points: Firstly, "we, the Taliban, would not make the same mistakes as our first rule (we would grant women's rights, people's political rights, and would avoid monopoly of power). Secondly, cooperation with the international community is essential to our success. Thirdly, without comprehensive political participation from all political and ethnic groupings, we are unable to govern. We would grant inclusivity." These three themes were consistently made by the Taliban in all of their meetings with UN representatives and diplomats. The international community and the people of Afghanistan began to think that the Taliban had evolved and genuinely wanted peace as a result. In one scenario, we could argue that the Taliban were lying and exploiting this narrative to deceive the populace and achieve their aim. The [Taliban] negotiation team, on the other, might have believed this, in my opinion, but they lacked the power to make a decision since decision were being made somewhere else [by their leaders]. In summary, both parties were somewhat unprepared for a negotiated resolution of the conflict. I can't speak for the Taliban since I didn't have access to their side, but everyone knows that the Afghanistan's president and his administration were never prepared to cede power for peace or share it. During the course of the negotiations, while our team was engaged in discussions, the president was simultaneously contending with his political opponents within the government. He dismissed the Minister of Health, who affiliated

to Abdullah, as an example. Such kind of actions indicated that Mr. Ghani was signalling his disinterest in pursuing negotiations.”

The following perspective from senior advisor to the State Ministry for Peace, shared with the author, is aligned with the argument made by the Chargé d'affaires concerning the lack of commitment from the government and the Taliban to a negotiated resolution of the conflict:

“Based on my first-hand observations, Ashraf Ghani was not interested in a settlement which did not secure his role as head of state and hence adopted a deliberate strategy of stalling and delaying talks. The Taliban were clearly not interested in the direct negotiations because they had already secured US exit in the Doha deal. The Taliban had a very clear strategy of running out the clock so the US/NATO forces get close to the withdrawal deadline. Both parties were not ready for these talks but were forced to sit across each other by the US.”

The expressions “deliberately stalling”, “delaying”, and “running out of the clock” along with “buying time” and the US “pressure”, identify either the Islamic Republic government and the Taliban as false negotiators. These terms are some characteristics for a false negotiator as discussed under the theoretical framework of this study.

Conversely, Nader Nadery, the spokesperson and negotiating team member of the Islamic Republic, without giving further details, identified the Taliban as a false negotiator who were stalling for time, saying that the government was committed to peace:

“The IRA was very committed to a negotiated settlement to end the conflict. But the Taliban shown little or no interest in finding a solution and they did not demonstrate any urgency to end the conflict politically.”

For the head of the Islamic Republic’s negotiating team, each party wanted peace on their own terms. This suggest that he implicitly refrained to exonerate the government of its responsibility to demonstrate further action for peace, while identifying the Taliban as the main party resisted peace due to their leverage gained via their agreement with the US:

“The main issue was the fragile nature of the Doha agreement, which primarily focused on the withdrawal of troops. This agreement was signed while the Republic was excluded from direct negotiations between the United States and the Taliban. As a result, the Taliban gained a dominant advantage, which weakened the Republic's negotiating power and eroded its international legitimacy and influence. One significant mistake was the omission of any mention of the Islamic Republic in the agreement. Consequently, each side sought peace on their own terms, particularly the Taliban. It is now clear that they were not prepared for a negotiated settlement; they believed that the United States had granted them what they desired, despite all the efforts made by the Republic side toward progress.”

To conclude, except for Nader Nadery who clearly insisted on the government's commitment to peace, the aforementioned perspectives for the rest of the interviewees, either explicitly or implicitly, suggest that both sides can be identified as false negotiators.

3.3 The Impact of the US-Taliban Agreement on Achieving Peace in Afghanistan

As discussed in Chapter Two, following the 9/11 attacks, the United States of America requested the Taliban to hand over Al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden. The Taliban refusal to comply led to ousting of their first regime in 2001 by the US and its allies in cooperation with the United Islamic National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan. Subsequently, the United Nations initiated a conference in Bonn of Germany to establish a new representative political set-up for Afghanistan. The Taliban was excluded from this conference. As a result, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with support of the United States was established. Shortly after the Islamic Republic formation, the Taliban re-mobilized and began waging a nearly two-decade war against the Afghanistan's government, Americans, and NATO forces. The conflict involving the Taliban, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and the United States costed 176,000 fatalities, comprising 52,893 opposition fighters, 46,319 civilians, and 69,095 Afghanistan's military and police personnel. The United States also incurred expenditures of \$2.13 trillion in the conflict (Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 2021). Eventually, the United States concluded that the war had no military solution and that the presence of American troops in Afghanistan would no longer serve the interest of the US. Moreover, it was assessed that the potentials originating from Afghanistan for terrorist attacks had been significantly diminished. This perception along with a strategic shift in focus to China and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine prompted the US to make a deal with the Taliban to end the war. "The US withdrawal gained us to re-organized our focus and resources on the current challenges including China and Russian war on Ukraine" said Antoni Blinken during a session at House Foreign Affairs of the Congress (CBS News, n.d). (for further information about the background of US-Taliban agreement see: *Trump's South Asia Strategy and The US-Taliban Deal*, discussed in the literature review).

For the aforementioned purpose, the US appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad as Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (SRAR) in 2018. The negotiations lasted around 18 months in the absence of the government of Afghanistan. Ultimately, the agreement between the United States and the Taliban signed on February 29, 2020, during Trump's first administration, but implemented by President Joe Biden. It aimed to bring an end to what has

been referred to as the ‘forever war’ or the longest war of the United States history in Afghanistan. This agreement comprised the following four key components:

- 1) Preventing the use of Afghanistan’s soil against the United States and its allies;
- 2) Setting a timeline for the United States to withdraw from Afghanistan, namely during 14 months following the agreement;
- 3) Commencement of the intra-Afghan negotiations, and
- 4) The inclusion of a permanent ceasefire as a topic in the agenda of the intra-Afghan negotiations.

This agreement facilitated direct talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Taliban Movement in September 2020 for the first time in their twenty year of war, but it failed in bringing about peace in Afghanistan. What impact did the US-Taliban accord have on the conflicting parties in reaching an agreement? The author posed this question to the interviewees involved in the present thesis. Some reflections from the US then State Secretary and the Special Envoy concerning this question are also resembled.

According to Masoom Stanikzai, head of the Islamic Republic negotiating team, the agreement legitimized the Taliban, undermined the legitimate government of Afghanistan, affected the moral of the society and the National Security Forces. He also asserted that conditionality of the agreement in relation to the Taliban was not adequate to ensure a ceasefire. Consequently, this created a scenario in which the Taliban gained an upper hand and thus lost interest in pursuing further negotiations with the government. Stanikzai stated that:

“The influence was significant on both sides but in different ways: first, please review the Text of the Doha Agreement that speaks by itself about how it undermined an internationally recognized legitimate government existence and lowered its position to Afghan factional groups. Secondly, the most critical condition that must have been agreed upon in exchange for the release of the prisoners was a ceasefire not granted in the agreement. The agreement negatively impacted the morale of society, and the security forces further weakened the government's position. The terms on the Taliban side in the contract were specific and time-bound, while the conditions the US negotiated were vague and not measurable. The conditionality was not strong enough to guarantee peace. It only guaranteed withdrawal. These transformed the Taliban from a banded terrorist group into a legitimate political movement, with conditions that the Taliban and their supporter found themselves in a situation where they could get all rather than reach an agreement.”

The head of the Republic’s team, Masoom Stanikzai, appears to reference the term ‘intra-Afghan negotiations’ used in the Agreement instead of the ‘negotiations between the government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban’ when he discusses ‘*lowering the position of the government to the Afghan factional group*’. Because the term ‘intra-Afghan’

encompasses not only the government but also other political factions as counterparts for the Taliban during the negotiations. The following statement of the US Envoy, made during a debate at Global and National Security Institute (n.d), who drafted and signed the agreement with the Taliban, strongly support this interpretation:

“...the other factor related to the Afghans and the current situation that the agreement [US-Taliban) does not say “the negotiation between the Taliban and the government” rather it says that ‘the Taliban and the other Afghan sides’. So there are still afghans that negotiate with the Taliban according to the agreement (this is an opportunity). The Taliban now say the Republic is no longer there. With who do we negotiate. But the agreement said other afghans sides not the Republic. the wording allows even for the current circumstances.”

The second issue that Masoom Stanikzai has pointed out is legitimizing of the Taliban by the agreement. Here is an example from the text of the US-Taliban agreement that can further shed light on his aforementioned statement:

“The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban will not provide visas, passports, travel permits, or other legal documents to those who pose a threat to the security of the United States and its allies to enter Afghanistan.”

The term ‘*formation of the post-settlement Islamic government*’ that has been stipulated in the agreement could also offer avenues to interpret how the Doha Agreement affected the moral of society and the security forces. This phrase suggests that then incumbent government had been decided to be replaced with a new administration. Such perception might impact the morals negatively. The term ‘*Islamic Government*’ is the one which the US Special Envoy has mentioned earlier in this chapter that President Ghani did not like it.

Nader Nadery, spokesperson and member of the Islamic Republic team, argues that the US-Taliban agreement constrained the government overall leverage. He views the prisoner release, which has previously been discussed, as a notable adverse consequences of the Doha agreement for the government, while simultaneously enhancing the Taliban’s leverage. Nadery believes that “the Doha deal limited the space within which the Republic would negotiate a peace deal. It gives up key leverage of Afghan government ahead of the actual two side negotiations. e.g. prisoners release.”

The senior advisor to the State Ministry for Peace, Shoaib Rahim, confirmed with the author the viewpoint of the spokespersons, asserting that the Taliban had no interest to negotiate following the agreement achieved with the US:

“The Doha Deal completely robbed us from the opportunity to meaningfully negotiate a political settlement. The Taliban had no interest in talking to the Republic and said so during the face to face

meetings. The Republic lost leverage over the Taliban after the Doha deal since the US already committed to leaving and forced the Republic to release 5000 prisoners. This put the Republic side at a much weaker position.”

Ghulam Farooq Majrooh, a member of the Islamic Republic negotiating team shared a viewpoint consistent with that of the other interviewees. He considered the Doha agreement as the gravest mistake by the United States which encourage the Taliban to contemplate seizing power, as well as, complicated the negotiations process. He further asserts that greatest error of the government was to accept this agreement as the basis for the intra-Afghan negotiations. Majrooh considers that:

“The Agreement was the most significant error of the United States. The gravest mistake of the Islamic Republic’s government was to accept this agreement as the foundation for the intra-Afghan negotiations. This agreement, on one hand, ensured the victory and gaining the power for the Taliban, On the other, it eroded the moral of the national security forces of Afghanistan, thereby making the negotiations complex”

Lastly, during his testimony at House Foreign Affairs hearing on Afghanistan withdrawal, the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken acknowledged that the Doha agreement had a detrimental impact on the government of Afghanistan. The dialogue between a congressman and him, which has been broadcasted by CBS News (n.d), is presented as follows:

“Congressman: Was the Afghan government in Doha as your partner when negotiating Taliban?

Blinken: No. they were not.

Congressman: why it (the Doha agreement) was excluded the government the we appointed?

Blinken: I cannot answer that but they were not.

Congressman: Then that (the agreement) could undermine the government confidence and its future?

Blinken: Yes, indeed.

Congressman: As general Mackenzie testified, the Doha agreement undermined the confidence and future for the afghan government. does it have a moral impact on Afghan security forces?

Blinken: yes.

Congressman: Despite all, we are asking the Afghan government and the Afghan security forces to resist the Taliban. That sounds contradictory. In conclusion, we did get out of Afghanistan in the sacrificing the Afghan government and security forces and the people of Afghanistan?

Blinken: Yes. That is what the Doha Agreement led.”

Overall, the Doha Agreement elevated the Taliban and undermined the government’s leverage, leading to change of power dynamics. This chapter has also revealed that the absence of the Islamic Republic in this agreement led the President to see it as a direct threat to his power and thus doubted about its intention (As some example, refer to Khalilzad, National Security Advisor Hamdullah Muhib, and Shoaib Rahim (under

presidential election) comments presented in this chapter). Therefore, the President opted a reactive stance resulting in demonstrating insufficient flexibility during the intra-Afghan negotiations.

3.4 Peace Failure: The Interplay between False Readiness and Negative Hybrid Peace

The concepts of false readiness theory and hybrid peace have been extensively examined under Section One of Chapter Two. The current part will show how both the false readiness of the conflicting parties and negative hybrid peace efforts intersected and contributed to the failure of the intra-Afghan negotiations.

3.4.1 Common Grounds Between False Readiness Theory and Negative Hybrid Peace

Firstly, the details that have been presented so far in this study demonstrate the presence of common grounds between the false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace concept. An illustration of these commonalities support this thesis to scrutinize the interplay between the two, both theoretically and practically, namely in the context of the Doha peace process. Below are outlined some points for this purpose.

- Both theories highlights complexity of a conflict and peace process
- Both theories insist the importance of the presence of genuine commitments and collaboration among the parties involved in peace process. They criticize those peacebuilding initiatives that lack these elements
- Both theories emphasize on the influence of power dynamics over the peace process
- Both theories recognize influential role of external actors in peace making
- Both theories acknowledged multiplicity of actors, interests and issues in peacebuilding, where it is not “pre-determined” to achieve durable peace. In false readiness theory, it is not for sure that the negotiating sides to exert effort and strive decisively toward an agreement or to use the negotiations for other goals rather than peace. Similarly, according to the negative approach, the assumption that international actors can manage and control the hybrid peace to achieve a consistent outcome is not only realistic but also overly simplistic
- Last but not least, both theories assert the potential utilization of peace process for strategic goal, rather to achieve a just and durable peace. According to the false readiness theory, in the protracted conflict, the parties may enter the negotiations but play with it to gain their strategic objective. Likewise, in a negative hybrid peace, international

actors co-opt local agency to serve their own interest, which may result in a peace that fails to address the root causes of the conflict and the existing power imbalance.

Secondly, the two theories appear to correlate one another as underlined:

- *Negative Peace*: A negative hybrid peace emerges from inadequate cooperation between the local and international actors
- *Mistrust*: This deficiency in cooperation is, in turn, a consequence of the mistrust that exist among the parties involved in the peace process. Oliver Richard, in a debate on Peace-building and State-building, argues that many of locals do not trust that the international actors work for them genuinely (Shkolla Politike, 2015)
- *False Negotiations*: The false readiness theory posits that in an intractable conflict, parties may engage in negotiations while they utilize the process to gain their strategic objectives rather than to reach peace. This is as a result of mistrust between the parties, which stems from prolong hostilities and power dynamics
- *Impact of Mistrust*: As the mistrust increase among the actors involved in peace process, the degree of cooperation and commitments to peace diminish
- *Outcome*: This results in the failure of peace initiatives.

3.4.2 The Interplay of False Readiness Theory and Negative Hybrid Peace in the Context of Doha Peace Process (Intra-Afghan Negotiations)

Lack of cooperation between the local and international actors: This study figured out that there was a lack of effective and sufficient cooperation between the government, Taliban, and the United States of America during the intra-Afghan peace negotiations. For example, as previously quoted, the US envoy holds the government of Afghanistan responsible for showing insufficient cooperation for peace:

“President Ghani did not believe that the US would withdraw. So they prefer the status quo to a political settlement. They were not serious for a political settlement. Later they understood that they miscalculated. Both the State minister of US and I made efforts to convince Ghani to take serious the negotiations. Many Afghans were asking us to pressure Ghani but we did not do it enough. We were gentle towards Ghani. We had to told Ghani that there would have not been military support to his forces if he did not take serious the negotiations. that might work. Because he wanted to stay on [in power]”.

The Taliban also demonstrated a lack of genuine interest in collaboration to achieve peace, as had been indicated by the senior advisor to the State Ministry for Peace:

“The Taliban had no interest in talking to the Republic and said so during the face to face meetings. The Republic lost leverage over the Taliban after the Doha deal since the US already committed to leaving and forced the Republic to release 5000 prisoners. This put the Republic side at a much weaker position.”

Similarly, the United States failed to effectively cooperate with the local stakeholders, particularly the government, in pursuit of a peace agreement. The US primary objective was to ensure a safe exit from Afghanistan, irrespective of the prevailing conditions. In an interview with the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the US House of Representatives (2023) regarding the US withdrawal, Khalilzad indicated that he was mandated by President Trump “to negotiate an agreement [with the Taliban] that allows a safe and orderly withdrawal, ensure that Afghanistan would not revert to a haven for terrorist organizations, and the necessity of intra-Afghan negotiations.”

Mistrust Between the Parties Involved: Neither local nor the international actors trusted each other’s intention to reach peace. This presence of mistrust resulted in inadequate cooperation. Below are some examples explaining the stances for each actor, encompassing the Republic government, Taliban and the United States.

The government: The government did not trust in US nor in the Taliban intentions to make peace. Its exclusion from the US-Taliban talks led to significant growing skepticism about the peace process. Hamdullah Muhib, the National Security Advisor to President Ashraf Ghani, expressed this sentiment in an interview (Face the Nation, n.d):

“The decision that was directly talk with the Taliban excluded the government was protested, including by myself. This exclusion and not being transparent led to the collapse. During the negotiation our hand were tied behind. We were not allowed to carry out offensive, but the Taliban were attacking the National Security Forces across the country. We were not receiving support anymore from the U.S.” He further added (cited in CNN, 2019), that:

“The perception in Afghanistan and the people in the government think, perhaps, perhaps all this talk is to create a caretaker government of which he will then become the viceroy... the reason he’s delegitimizing the Afghan government and weakening it and at the same time elevating the Taliban can only have one approach. It’s definitely not for peace.”

Taliban: The Taliban lost believe in a negotiated settlement as their agreement with the United States secured their victory, as reflected earlier by the senior advisor. Additionally, during a testimony at the House Foreign Affairs hearing on Afghanistan withdrawal, former US State Secretary Blinken said: “The Taliban failed to stop violence against security forces [of Afghanistan]. the Taliban failed to negotiate with the government.” (Broadcasted by CBS News, n.d)

The US: The United States had no trust in either the Taliban or the government regarding their determination to achieving a negotiated settlement. Therefore, the Doha agreement was not conditioned upon the success of the intra-Afghan negotiations, as noted by the interviewees. This lack of trust was also a factor in decision to exclude the Republic from the US-Taliban Talks. The US envoy has confirmed this point during one of his debates at Global Security Institute (n.d):

“There was a great deal of pessimisms whether the afghans will ever reach that agreement that different sides would use that (the condition) for the wrong purposes. So, at the end a decision was clearly made not to link the withdrawal of the forces to an intra-Afghan agreement. because of that uncertainty, we did not it, afraid of getting stuck in Afghanistan and get back to war”

Impact of Mistrust: Each of the actors aimed to reach their own strategic goals. The US implemented its primarily goal of ending its longest war by withdrawing from Afghanistan. The Taliban used negotiation to buy time and to obtain legitimacy as they were confident that they had already secured military victory via the Doha agreement. Lastly, in response to being excluded in the US-Taliban negotiations, the government did not show adequate compromise. Rather, the President pursued a narrative of incorporating the Taliban into his administration, refraining to concede his position until the collapse of the Republic.

Predetermined/Predictable outcome: The false readiness theory posits that entering parties to negotiation does not mean reaching peace. In this context, the intra-Afghan peace negotiations commenced but failed to produce an agreement due to a lack of cooperation, which was stemmed from the absence of genuine commitment for peace. likewise, according to negative hybrid peace, the international actors cannot ensure a consistent outcome during peace process. As seen in the Doha agreement, a new government was supposed to emerge from the intra-Afghan negotiations. However, this pre-planned expectation was not realized. It was also agreed that the intra-Afghan negotiations would start on March 10, 2020, but this was postponed to September 12 of the same year. The Doha agreement additionally called for a reduction in violence. Yet, this goal failed to be achieved as the Taliban escalated military operations.

Co-opt local agency: According to negative hybrid peace approach, international actors utilize local agencies for their interest. The US exerted pressure on the Afghanistan’s government to release Taliban’s prisoners. Consequently, the government convened Loya Jirga to justify its decision, which stemmed from the US pressure, to fulfil the US demand. In another note, on the same day the Doha agreement was signed between the Taliban and the United States, NATO and the government of Afghanistan issued a joint declaration. This was a strategic move

aimed to secure local legitimacy through the government's endorsement of the Doha agreement.

Power dynamics/imbalance: As mentioned earlier, one of the factors that contributed to the United States' decision to conclude its presence in Afghanistan was realignment of its strategic priorities, specifically concerning the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as, the need to contain of China. This shift significantly affected the peace negotiation in Afghanistan. The US Taliban agreement altered the power balance and dynamics in favor of the Taliban, which in turn influenced their interest to a negotiated peace with the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, the government of the Islamic Republic was reluctant to step down from power for establishment of an interim administration. This struggle for power along with the shift in power dynamics, shared elements in both the false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace theory, influenced the conflicting parties' willingness to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

Third Party Pressure/Top-down peace: As a hybrid framework, Doha peace process could not secure an inclusive and emancipatory approach. Instead, it facilitated domination of a top-down negative peacemaking. It pressured the parties to set around the table with a failed outcome due to lack of a genuine interest of the parties in peace. The senior advisor to the State Ministry for Peace of the Islamic Republic told the author that: "Both parties were not ready for these talks but were forced to sit across each other by the US."

The Doha agreement affected the willingness of the Islamic Republic and the Taliban in two different ways: The exclusion of the government from the US-Taliban negotiations led to its mistrust to peace and the intention behind the process, which in turn resulted in lack of genuine cooperation by the government. Conversely, the Doha agreement offered an upper hand to the Taliban and that motivated them to sense the victory for granted, not showing genuine interest in pursuing peace negotiation with the Republic.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter opened with the conceptualization of the peace efforts in Afghanistan, particularly the Doha peace process, which encompassed the US-Taliban negotiations and the intra-Afghan negotiations, thereby defining it as hybrid in nature, a model of peacebuilding that was failed. Using process tracing method, perspectives from the interviewees, and other relevant data, this study conducted an extensive analyze of the stances for the Islamic Republic and the Taliban respectively towards peace within the timeframe of the present thesis. It was discovered that neither sides demonstrated sufficient commitments to achieving a negotiated settlement for the conflict- although the Taliban has been identified greater responsible. Willingness of each

conflicting party has been influenced by the Doha agreement but in different ways. The Doha agreement secured military victory for the Taliban, while it undermined the leverage of the Republic in the negotiation. This was occurred due to the exclusion of the government from the U.S-Taliban negotiations. As a result, the President of the Islamic Republic, who had already been following a strategy of integrating Taliban into his administration, became dubious about the intention of the US-Taliban negotiation, leading him to resist the efforts that would demand quitting his position.

Lastly, in a critical attempt to hybrid peace model, this chapter revealed that the Doha peace process of Afghanistan failed due to an interplay between the false commitments by the negotiating parties and existence of negative hybrid peace approach. It has been evident that the hybrid peace is not always the “only game in the town” for the societies emerge from conflict. Rather, it holds a potential to perpetuate structural violence, undermine local agency, and to provide avenues for international actors to achieve their strategic objectives. There is a relationship between negative hybrid peace theory and false readiness theory. An increase in negative hybrid peace practice led to a decrease in genuine commitments to peace from conflicting parties. This is what has been practiced in the intra-Afghan negotiations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

Dominant conflict resolution theories, such as ripeness theory and readiness theory, have traditionally asserted that negotiating parties almost want to resolve a conflict when they engage in peace talks (refer to Chapter Two). However, this argument is not true in all cases. The Israeli-Palestinian Oslo negotiation serves a notable example that challenges the aforementioned assertion (Schwartz & Gilboa, 2022). Similarly, the conflicting parties in Afghanistan entered negotiations and conducted multiple rounds of talks, but they failed to settle the conflict peacefully. False Readiness Theory has been introduced to explain that the mere act of entering negotiations does not necessarily demonstrate a genuine commitment of disputing sides to resolving conflict through negotiated means. This theory holds a critical approach about the ripeness and readiness theories.

Additionally, hybrid peace building model has been prescribed as suitable for societies that emerge from conflict. Nonetheless, the current research has provided evidences that challenge this viewpoint. Conversely, the findings of the study support a critical perspective on hybrid peace theory, namely advocating negative hybrid peace's argument (see Chapter 3 for further information).

This chapter will discuss and interpret the results that already presented in Chapter Three. It will concentrate on whether the findings support the thesis's argument and address the research questions. The theoretical and practical implication of the results for the field will also be explored. This will be followed by an illustration of the study's limitations, as well as, its recommendations. The chapter will be closed with an overall conclusion of the dissertation, which also include a self-reflection by the author.

4.1 Discussion

4.1.1 Do the Findings Support the Argument and Aligned with Theoretical Framework?

The central argument of this thesis is that both the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban demonstrated insufficient interest in a negotiated resolution to the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations. This deficiency in commitment was about power dynamics (existed on both sides of the conflict) and the Taliban-US agreement signed on February 29, 2020 in Doha. Doha agreement influenced reaching peace by the conflicting parties. It affected the parties' approaches to the pursuit of peace in different ways (ref. Chapter 3). Ultimately, this situation led to dominance of negative hybrid peace perspective over the process. Evidences presented for each of these points in chapters two and three. However, these topics are briefly re-discussed separately in the following pages.

This dissertation examined stances of the Islamic Republic and the Taliban in three phases throughout the peace process, spanning 2018-2021: Prior to and during the US-Taliban negotiations, throughout the intra-Afghan negotiations, and in the concluding phase of the peace negotiations. The conduct of this investigation aimed to answer the research questions through utilizing process tracing method, interview with members of the negotiating team and former officials of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, as well deploying credible secondary data. The positions of the conflicting parties regarding the key events in the peace process were assessed using process tracing method. The secondary data extracted not only from different reliable sources, but also from actors who were directly involved in both the US-Taliban and intra-Afghan negotiations. Most of these actors held either leading or decision-maker roles in the peace talks. These players included president of Afghanistan, the national security advisor to the President, chief of staff of the President, chief of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), the US Envoy for Afghanistan's peace process, and the US Secretary of State, to name a few.

Concerning the interviews, specific questions were posed to the research participants. These questions composed of “to what extent were the Islamic republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban committed to achieving a negotiated settlement for the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations? and in what ways did the US-Taliban agreement influence the parties in terms of achieving peace?”. The key findings of the current dissertation are presented below, resulting from the deployment of a combination of three aforementioned data collection techniques:

- The Taliban viewed the US as the primary source of the problem in Afghanistan. Upon reaching an agreement with the US, they thus had no longer a genuine interest in achieving negotiated settlement to the conflict with the Islamic Republic. Because the Taliban could secure their victory through the Doha agreement which guaranteed withdrawal of the United States troops from Afghanistan.
- The president of the Islamic Republic did not indicate adequate willingness to support a political set-up that would undermine his position. Instead, he sought to incorporate the Taliban into his administration. This was an impractical and unrealistic objective.
- The Islamic Republic government was skeptical about the United States intention in the peace process. Primarily because the US-Taliban negotiation had excluded the Islamic Republic. This states of affairs led the government, namely the President, to believe that the peace process would jeopardize his existence in power. Therefore, he adopted a reactive stance that resulted in lack of smooth cooperation during the intra-Afghan negotiations.
- Both parties entered the negotiations largely due to exertion of pressure from the United States, and they strategically used different stages of the peace process for their political purposes.
- A combination of false negotiations and negative hybrid approaches contributed to the failure of the intra-Afghan peace negotiations.
- Lastly, the findings of this study challenge the hybrid peace model being best suit for the societies emerging from conflict. Instead, the results, presented in Chapter Three, align with the critical perspective to hybrid peace. This critical approach posits that hybrid peace theory holds potential for a peace process to be influenced by international actors, ultimately resulting in a hybrid negative peace.

Quick Explanatory Look at the Above-Mentioned Findings

As was comprehensively explored in chapters 2 and 3, the Taliban regarded their first regime (from 1996 to 2001) as legitimate government. They viewed overthrow of their rule by the United States as occupation of Afghanistan. In this context, the Taliban never accepted to recognize the US-backed Islamic Republic which was established during the Bonn Conference in 2001. They considered the Islamic Republic, including President Ashraf Ghani's government, to be mere puppet of the United States. Consequently, the Taliban Movement have persistently denied to engage in direct talks with the government. Instead, the movement opted to negotiate with the United States to end the what they termed "occupation".

Ultimately, the Taliban negotiated with the United States and they reached an agreement in February 2020 in Doha with the absence of Afghanistan's government. Exclusion of the government from the Doha agreement led the Taliban to gain both political and military upper hand over the Republic. By virtue of the Doha agreement, the Taliban accepted to enter in direct talks with the government of the Islamic Republic, but not as the main and only counterpart. Rather, they viewed the government as one of the factions among the domestic political community (refer to Masoom Stanikzai's comments). This viewpoint is also evident in the name of the peace negotiations, being referred to as "the intra-Afghan negotiations" rather than "negotiations between the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Taliban Islamic Movement."

Approaching the deadline for the US to withdraw from Afghanistan, Taliban prolonged the intra-Afghan negotiations. Therefore, it lasted three months to establish rules and procedures only. Certain factors led the Taliban believe in their inevitable victory after the US withdrawal. These factors include the absence of a condition-based approach in the US-Taliban agreement to be linked to the success of the intra-Afghan negotiations (Stanikzai), the cessation of the US military support to the Republic, and the Taliban's advancing military position. This argument has been supported by evidences obtained from the research participants and the US officials cited in Chapter 3. The US-Taliban agreement text also serves as a reference in this regard which treated the Taliban as a waiting government. For example, this agreement asks the Taliban (at that time the group was not a government) not to issue passports and other legal document for individuals who pose a threat to the interest of the United States and its allies.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see the statement delivered by the Taliban's chief of delegates in Moscow conference) and Chapter 3 (see opinions of the Chargé d'affaires), the Taliban strategically made attractive promises that indicated a shift in their worldview and policies. These narratives contributed significantly in shaping international and the public perception about the Taliban. Last but not least, it is worth noting that the way the Taliban approached intra-Afghan negotiations, influenced by their agreement with the US, suggests that how an external actor can assist false negotiators to hide their genuine intention and reach strategic objectives. This exemplifies the interplay between false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace approach.

Concerning the second point of the findings, the President's reluctance to endorse a political solution that could threaten his position is exemplified by his stance on interim government

and his peace proposals, notably the proposal presented at Kabul Process in 2018 (see Chapter 3) and the three-phase peace plan introduced in 2021 (see: *Reponses of the Government to Moscow Conference*, Chapter 2). Both proposals explicitly indicted President Ghani's desire for a peace that could secure his position. The President favorite peace was contingent upon the Taliban's recognition of the Constitution and to accept joining his administration (see comments by the US Envoy in Chapter 3). This approach was impractical. Because the Taliban believed that accepting the Constitution and to join the Republic would undermine legitimacy of their combat against a government, which they regarded as the US puppet. The reluctance of the President to any peace formula that would project his relinquishing power further prompted with the US-Taliban agreement and the demands by local politicians for an interim government. Such events fostered mistrust between the government and politicians, Taliban, and the international actors, namely the US. This lack of trust resulted in an inadequacy in authentic and collaborative efforts for a peace agreement. Accordingly, these explanations well illustrate the relationship between false readiness theory and negative hybridity in peace-making.

Lastly, in relation to strategic use of the peace process, some examples are being presented in the lines to come. While the Taliban utilized the negotiations to gain power and diplomatic legitimacy, the President used this process as a means to prevent the Taliban from assuming power through a legitimate political arrangement that could compelled the president to step aside from office. Additionally, citing the need for legitimacy to decide on peace process, the President held presidential elections despite domestic and international call for its postponement. In this way, he could manage to contain pressures from his political rivalries that questioned his legitimacy and were asking for resignation in favor of an interim government. By holding the presidential elections, the President maintained his power constitutionally and politically, enabling him to resist an interim government from a stronger position based on the legitimacy he achieved as a president elected by the populace. Consequently, he emerged as the sole decision-maker on peace, circumventing his political rivalries, including Abdullah, the chairman of the Peace Council. He cited peace process to conduct elections, thereby ensuring that no one possessed authority to negotiate regarding his political fate.

4.1.2 Implications and Contribution of the Thesis to Peace and Conflict Studies

Importance of a study is driven from its contribution to the respective field both in theoretical and practical terms. As will be discussed below, the author believes that the present dissertation contributed significantly to the field of conflict resolution by not only addressing the gap (covering the Islamic Republic approach to peace) regarding intra-Afghan negotiations, but also it has fostered critical perspective to hybrid peace model, along with offering fresh pathways for developing some new conceptual framework.

Theoretical Implications

Firstly- The current study is supposed to present only the second case by far for the application of the false readiness theory after Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This in turn makes significant contribution to the advancement and verifying of the theory as a new critical conceptual layout to traditional conflict theories, such as ripeness theory and readiness theory.

False readiness theory was introduced by Schwartz and Gilboa in 2021 in their article titled '*False Readiness: Expanding the Concept of Readiness in Conflict Resolution Theory*'. It is a new development in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies. According to this theory, in protracted conflict parties may engage in negotiations not out of genuine desire for peace, rather to reach their strategic objective. This perspective is in contrast with the existing conflict resolution theories, namely ripeness theory and readiness theory. These theories posit that conflicting parties are inclined to seek peaceful settlement once they have "crossed the Rubicon", a term that refers to a point, if reached, parties will no longer alter their decision. This term suggests that conflicting parties' entry into negotiations demonstrate a genuine desire for peace.

Secondly- results of this study challenge the argument made by advocates of hybrid peacebuilding, such as Mac Ginty (2010), who posits that this model is particularly well-suited for societies emerging from conflict. These advocates contend that integration of local and international efforts can lead to establishment of a relevant, just, and contextually appropriate durable peace. Mac Ginty asserts that the interplay between resistance against the liberal peace values and negotiation combined between local and international factors foster a hybrid form of peace which commensurate with the international norms while respecting local context. Nonetheless, the case of Afghanistan holds avenues for a critical perspective to the hybrid model of peacebuilding. In hybrid peace efforts entirely, international actors have been able to exert detrimental influence over locals and peace attempts in Afghanistan starting with the Geneva Accords (1989) through the Bonn Process (2001) all the way to Doha peace process

(2018-2021). For instance, the Taliban's exclusion from Bonn Process, as discussed in Chapter 2, was primarily due to the reluctance of the United States. This decision later was referred to as "original sin" by Lakhdar Brahimi, former chief of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), who served as a key architect of Bonn process. The exclusion of the Taliban contributed to the resurgence of the conflict, and finally, their return to power. A similar influence was evident during the Doha peace process with excluding the Republic from the United States -Taliban negotiations, as elaborated in the preceding chapters.

Furthermore, Mac Ginty argues that the interplay between resistance against the liberal peace values together with negotiation between local and international factors can foster a hybrid form of peace which commensurate with the international norms while respecting local context. Let us consider this argument in the context of Afghanistan, where both negotiations and resistance related to liberal peace efforts have been deployed. The government of Afghanistan demonstrated flexibility to embrace major liberal peace principles, such as free market, institutional reforms, human rights, and elections, while the Taliban resisted liberal peace through militarily measures and also during negotiations. To give a notable example, in terms of military resistance, the Taliban fought the post-Bonn Republic and other outcomes (liberal peace) for around twenty years. They also resisted liberal peace principles in the US-Taliban agreement, reached via negotiations. The agreement did not mention anywhere critical issues like human rights or elections. Consequently, neither via negotiations nor resistance, a sustainable and successful hybrid peace, the one enhances justice, state-building, development, and human rights, has been realized in Afghanistan. Stated differently, the combination of resistance and negotiations between locals and international actors did not brought peace to Afghanistan. This demonstrates that the interplay between local actors and international actors failed to establish genuine cooperation and trust among them to establish durable peace. Consequently, findings of this study indicate that further deliberation is necessitated regarding the effectiveness of hybrid peace model. The results suggest a prudent approach when designating hybrid peace as the most suited framework for the conflicting societies.

Thirdly- This thesis presents evidences that draw a theoretical relationship between false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace concept, suggesting potential avenues for developing a new theoretical layout. By illustrating the impact of the US-Taliban agreement on the commitments of the conflicting parties to pursue negotiations, the study discovered how the interplay between false readiness and negative hybridity can prompt failure of a peace process. The exclusion of the Islamic Republic from negotiations between the Taliban and the

United States resulted in a reactive stance by the President, whereby he resisted any political formula that would jeopardize his position. He thus prolonged the process, as seen in the prisoner exchange. Meanwhile, the Taliban felt victorious after securing the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan in the absence of conditionality linked to success of the intra-Afghan negotiations. This sense of victory, along with the power imbalance created by the Doha agreement, led the Taliban not to genuinely cooperate in the continuation of peace talks.

Practical Implications

The applicability of the findings in real world is a substantial matter that a reader may consider to further evaluate the relevance of this research. According to lessons learned from the present thesis, it is essential to create mechanisms before entering negotiations to ensure that conflicting parties cannot use peace talks as a means for their strategic objective. These mechanisms include (a) agreement on a neutral and capable mediator who empathizes the grief and peace of the conflicting parties, (b) establishing a temporary ceasefire or other similar measure while negotiations are going to be underway to test commitments of the parties to a negotiated settlement, and (c) promoting informal communication between conflicting parties to reach a mutual understanding. The results presented in this dissertation explicitly demonstrate how the lack of these elements played a significant role in the failure of the intra-Afghan negotiations. For instance, the absence of a mediator led to persistent stalemates, allowing the negotiating parties to hide their genuine intention behind rhetoric. Additionally, escalation of violence changed the power balance, ultimately diminishing both hope and motivation for reaching an agreement.

The study further offers valuable insights for strategists to avoid any miscalculation at the onset of negotiations and encourage readiness of the parties involved. In this context, it is important to note that, with the Taliban currently in power in Afghanistan, they are most likely to play a significant role in shaping future political landscape of the country. By presenting a detailed assessment on the Taliban's treating the intra-Afghan negotiation, this study will assist policymakers in identifying and addressing the gaps concerning the Taliban approach to peace.

Another crucial lesson derived from this study is that the exclusion of a key internal player from peace initiatives in Afghanistan could result in revival of conflict and, consequently, led to collapse of any incumbent administrations. This calls for meaningful inclusion of local players in future peace efforts. To reinforce this statement, it is pertinent to highlight the Geneva Accords and Bonn Process as an example to anticipate the possible direction of the current situation in Afghanistan resulted from Doha peace process (intra-Afghan negotiations).

As outlined in Chapter 2, the Geneva peace efforts excluded Mujahedeen as the primarily resistant group against the Soviet and its backed regimes. Ultimately, they prevailed to overthrow then incumbent government in 1992, three years following the Soviet withdrawal. In a similar vein, the exclusion of the Taliban from the Bonn conference in 2001 eventually contributed to a resurgence of the conflict and Taliban's return to power. lastly, exclusion of the Islamic Republic from the United States - Taliban accord significantly played a role in the failure of the intra-Afghan negotiations. Considering this historical fact, which has been extensively explored in this study, the present dissertation outlines that the country may experience a new difficult era if the Taliban ignore the prevailing sentiments expressed in various forms against the current situation in Afghanistan.

The exclusion of a key internal player fosters mistrust and followed by a deficiency in commitments and collaboration necessary for the success of peace endeavors. This was clearly evident in relation to the US-Taliban agreement and the government reactive stance. This serves as a lesson for international actors to embrace a more realistic, genuine and equitable strategy regarding Afghanistan domestic stakeholders in the future. The remnants of this approach are still evident in some initiatives related to Afghanistan, particularly in international community's neglect of political dissents and civil society. For example, a process has been undertaken by the United Nations on how to promote engagement with Afghanistan. during its third meeting held in Doha from 30 June to 1 July 2024, concerns were raised regarding exclusion of other stakeholders, especially women. Sima Samar, former chairperson of the Independent Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan (AIHRC), in an interview with CIVICUS (2024), criticized the process for its lack of transparency, sincerity, and its exclusion of Afghanistan's women. This study has presented concrete examples explaining the failure of such approach to peace efforts in Afghanistan, suggesting the international actors should reconsider their strategies.

Further critical lesson this study offers is that the root causes of conflict should not be treated as preconditions for achieving peace. Rather, it is crucial for the conflicting parties to keep discussion open over these roots. The Constitution, political system (the Islamic Republic), and governance were pivotal causes for the war in Afghanistan. The Taliban consistently had rejected the Constitution and the Islamic Republic, viewing it as a product and puppet of the United States. Therefore, the President's proposal for the Taliban to accept the Constitution and integrate into the Islamic Republic implicitly framed a condition, which proved

impractical. In protracted conflicts like the one in Afghanistan, parties to conflict should be receptive to powers-sharing and deliberate on a new political framework.

Importantly, based on the author personal observations, the political community in Afghanistan often hopes change to come from outside the country. This approach is being adopted currently regarding the present situation. This study suggests that reliance and trust on international actors should not be overstated. There is a pressing need for fostering indigenous programs and initiative aimed to establish a balance between the reliance on external actors and domestic capacities and mechanisms.

Last but not least, during nearly three-year of the author's educational journey at ASBU, it has been discovered that the materials offered by Social Sciences University of Ankara (ASBU) on Peace and Conflict Studies lack covering Afghanistan as a case. This suggests that the university is potentially missing adequate focus and literature in this regards. The present work may serve as a credible attempt to draw attention of pertinent lecturers, researchers, and students to the case of Afghanistan.

4.1.3 Limitations and Recommendations

The range of research participants could have been broader. The limitation initially arose from time constraint and obstacles in reaching these individuals, as most of them were either notable former officials or prominent political figures who were not effortlessly available for interview. Although the interviewees represented divergent backgrounds in terms of political views and profession, and were directly and plausibly relevant to the topic, the limited number may not comprehensively reflect views of a larger populations. Therefore, future research with a wider range of participants, especially from the Taliban, is recommended to validate these findings and improve their generalizability.

The author invested plenty of efforts and his time to obtain perspectives of either the Taliban's negotiation team members or their officials. In mid-December 2024, he succeeded to contact former head and two members of the Taliban negotiation team with the Islamic Republic. The author distributed the questionnaire to them through WhatsApp. However, except for one who committed providing his insights (but not realized), the rest did not reply to the author's communication. To relatively address this limitation, the author resorted to public interviews and opinions of the Taliban's officials, as well as insights from pertinent third parties. While this attempt provided significant materials to overcome the limitation, obtaining the Taliban's viewpoints would have strengthened the findings further.

This study has provided pivotal insights into the relation between False Readiness Theory and Negative Hybrid Peace concept by examining the extent to which the Doha agreement influenced reaching a peace deal between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban. However, to substantiate a direct relationship between these theories, further research is recommended about various cases. It is crucial to conduct ad hoc studies to explore different range of conflict resolution with diverse contexts to collect further empirical evidences, thereby expanding and validating generalizability of the findings presented in this study.

Moreover, the present study indicated (in Chapter 2) that both the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban perceived the ‘source of problem’ out of themselves. While the Islamic Republic viewed Pakistan as the source of problem and thus sought to negotiate with it, the Taliban attributed the source of the problem (conflict) to the United States. Although this study quickly touched upon this matter, it did not delve comprehensively into the topic. Therefore, a research is advised to be conducted whether the perceiving a third party as source of conflict impacts willingness of conflicting parties to negotiate genuine peace with one another.

Lastly, in spite the fact that this thesis explored the concept of hybrid peace and its connection to the false readiness theory, it did not meet a chance to adequately investigate every aspect of it. Consequently, the challenge of achieving a balance between local and international actors in terms of ownership and leadership in a hybrid initiative remains essential to be addressed. In this context, a comprehensive comparative study between the Bonn Process (2001) and the Doha Process in Afghanistan is recommended. Such a study will offer valuable insights regarding development of new ideas on how to turn failed hybrid peace efforts in Afghanistan into successful attempts.

4.2 Overall Conclusion

At the outset, this section aims to refrain reiterating of redundant points. It commences with the study's main finding concerning the conflict and peace efforts in Afghanistan. Subsequently, the section will restate the central argument, followed by the significance of the study. Readers are referenced to Chapter One for further information on methodology, chapter breakdown, objectives of the study, and others alike. This clarification is essential to avoid any redundancy and to maintain the reader's focus on the pivotal achievement that the thesis presented.

The extensive review of the literature revealed that the conflict in Afghanistan has been protracted and hybrid in nature. The Afghanistan's conflict is characterized by power dynamics, ideology, identity, and the involvement of multiple domestic and international actors. This aligns with both the false readiness as the main framework and negative hybrid peace theoretical concept.

One of the notable insights that this dissertation has offered is the interconnected evolution of the conflict since 1960s, with each phase building on its predecessor. Moreover, a critical contribution of this study concerning the history of the current conflict in Afghanistan is the challenge it poses to the dominant narrative attributing the origin of the conflict to President Daoud's coup in 1973. Instead, the literature review conducted in this study traced the initial roots of the conflict back to the Constitutional Decade during King Zahir's reign. The paradoxical stance of the monarch, particularly his lack of genuine commitment to political reform and his dispute with Daoud over policies and power, set the stage for the 1973 coup. Although the monarch signed the 1964 Constitution allowing political parties to be established, he failed to enact the political parties' bill, reflecting a strategic move to maintain his power. This eventually led to the abolition of the monarchy in 1973, which was succeeded by presidency of Daoud, a series of communist regimes, the Soviet invasion, the emergence of Jihad, and the rise of the Taliban (refer to Chapter 2).

The peace efforts in Afghanistan, all being hybrid in nature, hold a long and complicated history. These efforts can be traced back to the Geneva Accords which was signed in 1988 between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and the United States. This accord facilitated withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989. The United States and Pakistan strategically used the Accords to achieve their goal of the Soviet withdrawal, remained their commitments unfulfilled after the withdrawal. Furthermore, the National Reconciliation Program (NRP), initiated by President Najibullah, aimed to by trust of Mujahedeen and backing

of international actors. However, influenced by Geneva Accords, among others, the programme failed. It has also been suggested that Najibullah intended to utilise the NRP to maintain his power as the Soviet was approaching to retreat (refer to Chapter 2). The false readiness theory and the negative hybrid peace, particularly regarding the strategic use of the process and the impact of the external actors, are evident in these peace efforts. Lastly, the Bonn conference held in 2001 to establish a representative political system excluded the Taliban, largely due to the influence of the international actors, resulting ultimately in reorganizing of the group and resume of the war.

Importantly, negotiation between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban initiated under the pressure from the United States. Nonetheless, these talks failed to bring about peace due to a lack of commitment from both parties, influenced by the US-Taliban agreement. This formed the core argument of the thesis. By a detailed analysis of the intra-Afghan negotiations and the US-Taliban agreement, presented in Chapter Three, the study layouts new conceptual frameworks aimed at establishing a direct relation between the false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace efforts, as discussed in chapter 3 and 4. Additionally, the case studied in the current dissertation is arguably regarded as the only second application of the false readiness theory after the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo negotiations, as revealed in the literature reviewed in this research. Therefore, these are representing a vital theoretical contribution to the field of conflict resolution. Furthermore, this study is pioneering in its comprehensively investigation of both the Taliban and the Islamic Republic stances towards a negotiated settlement of Afghanistan's conflict, thereby challenging the dominant narrative which blame solely one side of the conflict. Addressing this gap, the findings demonstrated that both the government and the Taliban lacked genuine determination for peace. Interview with primary sources, namely members of the intra-Afghan peace negotiations, constitutes another important distinct of this research, providing credible insights regarding the case.

The contribution and importance of this study are further enhanced by identifying its theoretical and practical limitations, which have led to generation of significant ideas and recommendations for future research. These include how to develop theoretical relationship between false readiness theory and negative hybrid peace, as well as achieving a balance between the influence of local and international players in a hybrid peace efforts scenario, to name some. Critical practical recommendations and lessons have also been articulated, as explored under the *Practical Implications* in the current chapter.

Finally, peace efforts in Afghanistan, from Geneva Accords all the way to the Doha Process, have failed to bring a durable peace. Each of these attempts highlights the complexities and challenges of achieving peace, influenced by both internal and international actors. The false readiness theory and the negative hybrid peace conceptual frameworks provided valuable insights to analyze the failure of these efforts, underlining the need for genuine commitment and comprehensive inclusion. A durable peace in Afghanistan requires more than just negotiations, agreement, or stopping the gunfire; it necessitates true and genuine commitments, concession, collaboration, and inclusive approaches that can be able to address the root causes of the conflict. Only then we can hope a lasting peace in a country that has been going through a prolong and devastating conflict.

As the author concludes this thesis, he reflects on the transformative experiences that have reinforced his academic and intellectual growth. Throughout the dissertation course, both opportunities and challenges have contributed to a profound learning journey of the author. He learned that methodology is the cornerstone of a rigorous research. The complexity of methodological considerations has illuminated the necessity of a strong, well-structured foundation, guiding the author toward a deeper exploration of research principles and processes. Moreover, this thesis has infused in the author the courage to revise his long-standing assumptions and critically engage with established theories that he once perceived them as beyond scrutiny. The present study has also encouraged the author's development of professional confidence in evaluating and challenging existing knowledge, fostering a more analytical and curious approach to academic discourses.

In addition to its intellectual contributions, the research has provided avenues for new academic collaborations with esteemed scholars and experts within and beyond the ASBU, enriching the author's research skills and expanding his professional network. These interactions have not only enhanced knowledge of the author in peace and conflict studies and methodological expertise but also deepened his understanding of the need for scholarly collaboration in research. The dissertation has sparked a passion for scholarly writing and publication, marking a milestone in the author's academic career. With two of his articles set for publication, and writing around five other assignment research papers related to different courses in the field of peace and conflict studies during the Master's program, this work serves as a catalyst for future research endeavors, inspiring him to continue his education journey and contribute to the academic community with meaningful and well-researched insights.

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APPENDIX I: LIST OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) To what extent were the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban committed to achieving a negotiated settlement for the conflict during the intra-Afghan negotiations?
- 2) In what ways did the US-Taliban Agreement influence the parties in terms of achieving peace?
- 3) Why the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was not included in the US-Taliban negotiations?
- 4) Why the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan held the 2019 presidential elections while the intra-Afghan negotiations were about to happen and also demands were increasingly appearing for the postponement of the elections including from the US and the domestic politicians?
- 5) Was there any disagreement regarding the peace process between Arg (presidential palace) and High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) of Afghanistan? If so, what were those?
- 6) Why a ceasefire was not announced by the negotiating parties during the intra-Afghan negotiations?
- 7) What were the most contested topics in the negotiations? Were there any redlines for the parties? If so, what were those redlines for each the Islamic Republic and the Taliban?
- 8) What was the positions of the Taliban and the Islamic Republic about power-sharing and revising the constitution of Afghanistan?
- 9) Why there was no formal mediator in the negotiations? And what were the positions of the Taliban and the Islamic Republic on this issue?
- 10) How did you find approaches of the Taliban and the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan towards peace negotiations after the US forces withdrawal from Afghanistan?
- 11) Why the Istanbul meeting which was supposed to be attended by high level delegations from Taliban and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, scheduled for April 24 until May 4, 2021, was cancelled?

APPENDIX II: ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

Karar: 118104

KARAR(ISSUE NUMBER): 03.06.2024/



T.C.
ANKARA SOSYAL BİLİMLER ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI
VE
BİLİMSEL YAYIN ETİK KURULU
(SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND
HUMANITIES RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION)

ETİK ONAY BELGESİ (CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL)

Araştırma Yöntemi (Research Method)	Mülakat ,Diğer : In addition to interviews, this study shall be partially relied on the relevant accessible official documents of the former government, the Taliban and UN. The secondary data including books, journals, newspapers, and websites will also be used.
Araştırmanın Adı (Study Title)	Conflicting Parties' Readiness and Peace Negotiations: A Case Study of the Afghanistan Doha Peace Talks (2018-2021)
Sorumlu Araştırmacının Adı Soyadı (Principal Researcher Name Surname)	SAMİUL HAQ QAYOMİ
Karar (Committee Decision)	UYGUN (SUITABLE)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. M. Hakan TÜRKÇAPAR
Başkan (Chair)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Ejder OKUMUŞ
Üye(Member)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Sutay YAVUZ
Üye(Member)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Mehmet Emin BİLGE
Üye(Member)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Aşlı AKAY
Üye(Member)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Mustafa ÇEVİK
Üye(Member)

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. İsmail ÇAKIR
Üye(Member)

Belge Takip Adresi : <https://turkiye.gov.tr/ebd?eS=5451&aD=B554AC3UE2&aS=118104>

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