THE DEADLOCK OF AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS

A Research Paper Presented by:
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Obtaining the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:
[Governance, Policy and Political Economy] (GPPE)

Specialization:
[International Political Economy and Development] (IPED)

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The Hague, The Netherlands
December, 2016
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Dedication

To the brave people of Afghanistan, the people who are victims of others’ war… God bless them with peace.
Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my research supervisors; Dr. Wil Hout and Dr. Karim Kniou for their valuable guidance. You definitely provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my thesis. Both of you supported me greatly and were always willing to help me, I will always remember you. I also express my gratitude to the entire ISS community for their excellent cooperation and support throughout my studies at ISS.

I am greatly thankful to all those who in any way whatever helped me to complete this research project, I especially thank my all respondents who generously contributed with their valued opinions, constructive comments and feedback.

I would also like to thank my extended family, particularly my parents, my brothers and sisters not only for their tireless support and encouragements but for all of the opportunities I am given. Thank you all for your indefatigable efforts in making my every dream a reality. You are always there from me.

And finally, my special thanks go out to my best friend, my world, my first and last love, and my life partner; Aisha for her encouragement, enduring love, emotional support, and exceptional caring while being physically away from each other but wholeheartedly together. I always remember when you were calling me every early morning to wake up, get ready, take my breakfast first, and then start working. I will never forget when you were texting me every after two hours and saying, “Hojee, take a short break, don’t stress yourself, go and eat or drink something... I trust you can do it...” Yes Aishoo, here we are; we did and made it together, thank you for everything. I love you so much!

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December, 2016
Abstract:

Democratic Liberalism is founded on the notion that liberal states or liberal democracies are more peaceful in their national and international relations than the illiberal states. According to this ideology, maintaining long-term peace requires promotion of liberal democratic values i.e. freedom, justice, human rights, free market, and economic liberalization. This Research Paper discusses the implications and consequences of Liberal Peace-Building practices Afghanistan, the paper focuses on understanding of the divergent liberal perspectives on peace-building in Afghanistan and the way such perspectives have been reflected through the peace-building interventions of external actors. By analysing the nature of the so-called western liberal peace-building approach in relation to the context of Afghanistan, this paper concludes that, giving more attention to the issues of good governance, gender, human rights, equality, and justice would neither help to bring peace nor would make the foreign intervention more liberal as long as the peace-building policies are designed and implemented by foreigners.

Relevance to Development Studies:

Peace is so imperative in any country such that no meaningful development would take place without relative peace. The interconnectedness of peace and development is such that it is un-thinkable to have any development without peace or vice versa, peace and development are two sides of one coin, these are both freedom from internal and external want of any human beings. Since the Cold War, many international development organizations have dramatically increased their engagement in various forms of peace-building programs through missions like humanitarian assistance, poverty reduction and equality, economic and social development. Understanding the underlying elements of peace is crucial for discussing any developmental program or study particularly in the developing or conflict affected countries like Afghanistan. This research shows that, peace is a pre-requisite for development and that without peace, achieving prosperity and human wellbeing is impossible. Furthermore, peace is involved in any development activity; it promotes human rights, democratic norms and values, and helps to create the feelings of tolerance and brotherhood among people.

Keywords:

Afghanistan, Liberal Peace, Conflicts, Deadlock, Social Contract.
Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1. Background:

Afghanistan, (which literally means Land of Afghans) is geographically a mountainous and landlocked country located in Central Asia. This country is placed at a very unique nexus point where numerous civilizations have interacted and often fought, it has a history that goes back to over 5000 years but throughout its long, splendid and most of the time chaotic history, this piece land of the world has always in one or other way been unstable.

Afghanistan is a heterogeneous nation, in which four ethnic groups; Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks respectively make the majority of the population while numerous other minor ethnic groups (Nuristanis, Baluchis, Turkmens, etc.) also call Afghanistan their home. Majority of Afghans (99%) follow Islam as their religion, there are also small numbers of Sikhs.

In the 18th century, Afghanistan began its political history as a modern state with Hotak and Durrani dynasties. In the late 19th century, the country became a ‘Buffer State’ \(^1\) between the then British India and the Russian Empire. Following the third Anglo-Afghan war with the British Empire in 1919, the then king Amanullah announced full and complete independence of the country, though Afghanistan was never part of the British Empire.

Insecurity and instability have long been an issue of sever concerns in Afghanistan, King Amanullah after declaring the independence in 1919 attempted to bring stability and modernize the country but was un-successful. Afghanistan however remained somehow peaceful during later King Zahir Shah’s forty years of monarchy but a series of coups in the 1970s led to un-ending civil war that devastated the entire country and continues till today.

Afghanistan today is severely suffering because of lack of peace and security, this problem has affected lives of every Afghan man and woman to its worst; it has damaged state machinery to function and caused extended corruption, injustice, unemployment, migration and young brain drains. The root causes of current conflicts, insecurity and political instability in Afghanistan however go back to the 1970s and 1980s when the then Soviet Union invaded the country and fuelled the internal conflicts and civil war among different militia groups that have now been lasting for more than three decades, but the September 11, 2001 coordinated attacks that collapsed the World Trade Centre’s complexes in The New York city and shocked the world is one of the most important events in the recent history of the country. Following the 9/11 attacks and the fall of the Taliban Regime, the international security forces led by the U.S. entered into Afghanistan to fight against terrorism and bring peace to the country. The ultimate objective of the U.S. led

\(^{1}\) A buffer state is a country located between two potentially combatant and powerful countries.
international engagement in Afghanistan was the so called ‘Global War on Terror’, bringing peace, security and stability to the country.

Now, it is almost two decades that the U.S, its international allies and NATO member countries have strong military and political presence in Afghanistan to lead the global war on terror and maintain peace in the country, they have spent billions of dollars, have sacrificed lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians, Afghan and international security forces but neither the war on terror is ended nor the peace is maintained, in fact, the situation has become worst, the war on terrorism is lost, the extremist groups re-emerged with new forms and strategies stronger than before and treat daily life of the people.

1.2. Research Problem Statement:

The essence of war and conflicts in Afghanistan is widely due to its geographic position between the Middle East, South and Central Asia which has long been used as a battlefield for strategic wars by superior external powers, in addition to this, the fragmented and polarized nature of Afghan society has similarly led to its multiple internal conflicts and civil wars which have also gained support from different external powers.

The decades-long war and instability have had a devastating impact on the Afghans, millions have been killed, injured and disabled, and millions more have been forced to flee their homes. Meanwhile, the country’s economy has been severely damaged and the infrastructures have all been demolished. The state institutions are incapable of delivering public services, corruption is spreading like a cancer and people’s confidence on their government is lost.

Peace than anything else is the first and for most demand of every Afghan, they have been and are still paying the very high cost with their lives on daily basis but peace is not yet achieved; and now even the distance between the status quo and the conflict’s inevitable resolution seems to appear un-bridgeable.

The 9/11 attacks on the U.S and the subsequent fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 was a major change in the political history of Afghanistan. The international community led by the United States jumped in and in-flowed countless dollars to fight terrorism and stabilize the country. This new post-Taliban era opened a new chapter of life for every Afghan with aspirations for peace and stability. However, the inefficiency and corruption within the post-Taliban government, return of former warlords to power, state capture by mafias and former Mujahidin militias, violence, and widening insecurity once again paved the way for the extremist groups to emerge and re-emerge with new forms and structures stronger than before and expand quickly across the country. This scenario of insecurity and instability turned the hopes for peace down and further increased the already existed gap between the state and society relations.
In September 2010, Afghan government with support from the international community called for a National Consultative Peace Jirga (Grand Council) (NCPJ) to discuss the possibility of peace and negotiation talks with Taliban and other opposition groups. The NCPJ proposed establishment of a High Peace Council (HPC) as an address for peace talks and urged Afghan government to get support of the international community and negotiate peace talks with all opponent groups including Taliban, Hizb-e- Islami Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and other opposition groups.

The HPC since then held several rounds of indirect peace talks with Taliban and other military groups but none of these talks have had a tangible result that could provide a platform for peace agreement and put an end to the ongoing devastating war, similarly, the United States and some other allied countries (UK and Germany) had also directly or indirectly contacted with Taliban several times to discuss peace talks and agree on political arrangements to participate in the government and share power but neither of those contacts helped to bring peace to the country.

The current peace process in Afghanistan has been going on for many years without having made any significant progress. The United States together with international community had spent millions of dollars on HPC with almost no results. The war in Afghanistan is a multidimensional war and has many external factors that need to be dealt with in the first stance, while most Afghans insist the external factors of the war, many international actors involved in Afghanistan including the U.S and some other allied countries stress that both the war and peace are primarily internal Afghan issues and only Afghans can solve it, this is fundamentally the greatest mismatch between the two different perspectives which over the years has resulted in political stalemate and the peace process with the Taliban has reached to a “Deadlock”2.

However, in order to further state the root causes of the research problem and to provide a bit detailed explanation of the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, it is always necessary to have a glace over the historical background of the problem and conflicts. In the next four sub-sections, I will be discussing an overview of this historical background in relation to the helix of current Afghan conflicts so that the nature, structure, and root causes of the research problem is well understood.

### 1.2.1. The Taliban Movement: Emergence, Fall and Re-Emergence:

During the Cold War era when the Islamic Revolution happened in Iran and the Soviet invaded Afghanistan, the United States dishonoured its Cold War adversary and left the region behind with a fundamentalist regime in Iran, a distrustful government in Pakistan, and an already collapsed state in Afghanistan. In 1989, when the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, the country was abandoned by the United States and left with tremendous economic, social and political problems. In 1992, thousands of Afghans and non-Afghans (Chechens, Arabs, and Uzbeks recruited by Osama Bin Laden, the conduit of CIA) who were

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2 In this research paper, the word ‘Deadlock’ is defined as a situation in which no progress can be made or no advancement is possible. Its synonyms are impasse, stalemate, and standstill.
mobilized, trained, and armed by the United States to fight against the Russians entered Kabul and collapsed the state structure of Afghanistan.

In 1994, at the peak of bloody civil war, Warlordism, devastation, lawlessness, violence, and war crimes committed by Mujahedin, Taliban (a group of students trained in the Madrassas in Pakistan) emerged in Southwest Afghanistan as a prominent faction of Mujahedin against the Mujahedin. Under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar, the group spread quickly throughout the country sequestering power from the Mujahedin warlords whose corruption, crimes and despotism tired all Afghan people. In 1996, the Taliban established Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and right after capturing Kabul; they transferred the Afghan capital to Kandahar (the second largest city located in the South of the country).

Ahmad Rashid, a Pakistani journalist, in his book “Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia” provides interesting accounts of emerging the Taliban and of their rapid success in dominating the country. Throughout his lengthy book, Rashid provides fruitful overview of the various U.S/Saudi subsidized groups and the role of the Pakistani Intelligence Services (ISI) in creating and supporting these groups who opposed the Soviet presence and a central Afghan government. The United States government was the actual creator of the “Freedom Fighters” or the “Mujaheddin” who fought against each other, destroyed the country, and committed extreme war crimes. The Taliban arose at a time when Afghanistan was in a virtual disintegration status, Rashid in his book explains this situation and says that, “the country was divided into warlord fiefdoms and all the warlords had fought, switched sides and fought again in a bewildering array of alliances, betrayals and bloodsheds.” (Rashid 2010: 21).

There were several independent governments within Afghanistan, Kabul and its surroundings were controlled by Rabbani and his militia groups, whereas a small region to the south and east of Kabul was under Gulbuddin Hikmetyar’s control. West of the country (mainly Herat and its neighbouring provinces) was under Ismail Khan’s independent government and a Shura (Council) of Mujahedin commanders based in Jalalabad was controlling three provinces in the east on Pakistan border. In the north, General Abdul Rashid Dostum was holding sway over six provinces, while central Afghanistan was under Hazaras control. Southern Afghanistan including Kandahar was divided up amongst several Mujahedin warlords and militia groups who plundered the people at will.

In the essence of local political conditions and the chaotic environment in Afghanistan, the Taliban emerged as an Islamic political movement. Taliban’s dramatic success in capturing Afghan cities and provinces one after another from the Mujahedin groups and bringing relative peace to these places, they created hopes for some Afghans that an Islamic movement led by Islamic students with an agenda of peace and security would finally free them from the cruelty of warlords and militia groups who had desolated their lives, but, the Taliban instead implemented extreme Sharia (Islamic Law) that outraged many Afghans and turned their hopes into sorrow and grief. The Taliban brand of Islamic fundamentalism attracted them global attention as Ahmad Rashid says, “since the end of the Cold War no other political
movement in the Islamic world has attracted as much attention as the Taliban in Afghanistan.” (Rashid 2010: 5). The rare characteristics of Taliban were distinguishing them from those of other Afghan armed groups which had fought against each other and committed many war crimes. Michael Griffin in his book, “Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan” describes the Taliban forces and says that, “It was, moreover, any army which advanced a rare characteristic among the groups which had fought against each other since the Soviet occupation.” (Griffin 2001: 40). He further adds that, “There was no mistaking the Taliban as merely latest in the series of Afghan armed factions. Unlike the mujahedin, who fought for food or the government counterfeit currency, its forces were orderly mirroring the discipline and obedience drummed into students from an early age by the madrassa system.” (Ibid).

If from one perspective, the emergence of the Taliban was a deliverance from Mujahedin’s misrule, from the other one, the U.S support of recruiting, training and equipping, the Saudi support of madrassa system, and the Pakistan role of midwife were all vital in giving birth to the Taliban, they all nourished them to their feet before deciding to kill them. Had it not been because of the September 11, 2001 events, the Taliban would have still been ruling the country and the U.S would have been negotiating with them the construction of mega project i.e. the energy pipelines or the curtailment of drug production.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States government invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime. Though there are many questions why the U.S invaded Afghanistan and what went wrong that disrupted the patron-client relationships between the U.S and Taliban, the Saudi and Taliban, and the Pakistan and Taliban, but harbouring Osama bin Laden (The Leader of Al-Qaeda Network) who the U.S thought was responsible for the September 11 attacks on the United States and was given shelter in Afghanistan under Taliban was the only justification used by Bush to invade Afghanistan, in fact it was difficult to link Taliban with Al-Qaeda or the 9/11 attacks as they denounced and promised to help find the culprits. According to the CNN, Taliban’s foreign minister Wakeel Ahamd Mutawakel and ambassador to Pakistan Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef had both condemned the attacks and refused to have any connections with those attacks. (CNN September 11, 2001).

Yehia Ghanem, an Egyptian journalist who has covered the war and conflicts in Bosnia and Afghanistan for many years in one of his articles published by Aljazeera discusses the fundamental differences between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, he says that, “the western media had unwittingly been informing about the relationships between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, they did not have real information about the two movements and therefore became failed to understand their ideological differences” (Ghanem 2016: 8). Yehia further adds that, “Al-Qaeda was Wahhabi, a Sunni movement that calls for a return to the earliest sources of Islam, including the Quran and the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him. It began as a popular revivalist movement instigated by the 18th century theologian, Mohammad Ibn Adb al-Wahhab, aimed at reversing what he perceived to be the moral decline of Muslim societies and the innovations in Islam.” (Ibid).
While the Afghan community is deeply imbedded by Sufism and the Taliban were not immune to this, Yahia Ghenam narrates one of his own eyed scenes, “There were many instances when I witnessed members of the Taliban participating in practices that would have been anathema to the Wahhabis - venerating saints and visiting shrines. If asked, they wouldn’t have identified themselves as Sufis, but the influences seemed clear to an outside observer.” (Ibid). The west, the United States in particular seemed un-aware of these fundamental differences, or intentionally mixed the Taliban with Al-Qaeda so that it could justify the invasion and overthrow of the Taliban regime.

In 2001, the U.S president George W. Bush asked Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden (Al-Qaeda Leader) who the U.S announced as mastermind of 9/11 attacks, the Taliban instead requested for convincing evidences of his involvement in the attacks but the U.S dismissed the request as a delaying tactic. A month later on October 7, 2001, the U.S together with the United Kingdom attacked Afghanistan and removed Taliban from power. In December 2001 at the Bonn conference, the United States along with its other allies (UK and NATO) established the Afghan Interim Administration headed by Hamid Karzai who later in 2002 during an Afghan Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) also became head of the Transitional Administration. The U.S led coalition once again brought former warlords and Mujahedin into power; they completely ignored Taliban and excluded them from any political participation in the government.

Warlordism, corruption, violence, and the U.S yet another mistake of empowering, supporting and financing warlords whose tyrannies and war crimes during 1970s and 1980s made the emergence of Taliban, are now once again the driving forces behind the re-emergence of them. The increased civilian causalities as a result of U.S bombing Afghan villages, the instalment of largely un-accountable militias and warlords in senior government positions, inability of Afghan government in protecting its people and delivering basic public services, national level chaos, external interference, and finally the war and non-negotiation policy of the U.S in Afghanistan have all together contributed fairly to the re-emergence of Taliban even stronger and more organized than before.

However, over the past years, people’s faith in the government due to extreme corruption, extortion of money and crimes committed by the warlords who are now part of the government has rapidly diminished and paved the ground for the Taliban to re-emerge and challenge the government.

Taliban today, are the main opposition group in the country with whom the U.S and Afghan government want to negotiate and make peace deal. On how to reach a peace agreement with Taliban; is the question that would be examined through this research study.
1.2.2. The U.S Global ‘War on Terror’ in Afghanistan:

The American war in Afghanistan starts from October 7, 2001 when the United States in retaliation to the September 11, 2001 attacks, invaded the country and toppled the Taliban regime. The war was initially supported by U.S close allies but later in 2003 NATO also joined the mission. The public objective of this war was to dismantle Al-Qaeda and to destroy its safe heavens in Afghanistan by removing Taliban from power. This war is the longest war in the American history which is still going on and Afghans are paying its high cost with their bloods.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States together with international coalition forces (mainly NATO) launched “Operation Enduring Freedom” to end Taliban’s regime and dismantle Al-Qaeda’s operation base in Afghanistan. Up to that phase, the U.S and coalition forces with on the ground support of Anti-Taliban forces (mainly the North Alliance, and some other former mujahedin fighters) removed the Taliban quickly, but dismantling Al-Qaeda’s bases was yet another phase of the war that the United States had to be continuing until some unknown time.

After defeating the Taliban, the nature of the war changed to a multi-dimensional, complicated and ambiguous one, the Taliban apparently were defeated but many of their leaders including Mullah Omar (the spiritual leader and founder of Taliban movement) moved to Pakistan and sought refuge in the tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden have also moved to Pakistan and maintained safe sanctuaries there. In 2003, the U.S engaged in another war with Saddam Hussain and left Afghanistan without completing its task and winning the so called global war on terror. The Taliban, exploiting the weakness of the Afghan government (the top most corrupted one amongst the world) and the engagement of the U.S in Iraq, re-organized them and launched insurgency attacks against the Afghan government and the U.S led coalition forces.

The insurgents from Taliban, Haqqani Network, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hetmatyar and other militia groups have all together waged asymmetric warfare using guerrilla raids tactics and ambushes across the country sides. In 2006, the U.S led coalition forces responded by doubling their troops to counter insurgency and win the war, while fighting against the Taliban, the insurgents crossed to north-west Pakistan getting more support and safe havens, they increased their capabilities and launched more organized attacks on military targets in Afghanistan. In late 2010, the Obama administration pushed towards an extra 30,000 final troops surge and fixed July 2011 as the date to start withdrawing troops. The U.S in order to complete the withdrawal, started training Afghan security forces with the aim to hand over all security responsibilities to them by 2014. However, “training of the forces and police has proved extremely difficult due to a large number of suicide bomb attacks at recruitment centres, a drop-out rate of 25 per cent and a high level of drug addiction amongst troops.” (Peace Direct 2015).

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3 According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index 2013, Afghanistan ranks among the top most corrupted countries in the world. For more information please see <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/>. 
On May 2nd, 2011, the U.S Navy forces killed Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in his compound just few kilometres away from a Pakistani military training camp in Abbottabad, Pakistan. For the United States the mission of dismantling Al-Qaeda’s bases was complete as Al-Qaeda had no longer base in Afghanistan and their leader was also killed. Following the death of Bin Laden, in May, 2012, just a year later, NATO leaders announced an exit strategy to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan; the United States has also announced the combat mission ended.

The Afghan government since then has started negotiating peace talks with the Taliban, but the Taliban have constantly refused any talk with the government unless their conditions for peace talks are fully met (the complete withdrawal of all foreign forces among others). Now that almost all foreign forces have left Afghanistan, the country is in an extremely unstable economic, political and security situation, and the Afghan government peace talks with the Taliban has reached a deadlock as the tensions between the two sides has increased unprecedently.

1.2.3. The Role of Pakistan in Both Conflicts and Peace:

Pakistan has a very important and crucial role to play in the current Afghan government Peace Talks with the Taliban. Pakistan had the midwife role in creating and establishing the Taliban movement back in 1994 and was also one of the three countries who officially recognized Taliban’s government. There is a long history of Pakistan’s support and relationships not only with the Taliban but different other paramilitary and religious groups in Afghanistan. Pakistan and the U.S Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) first supported mujahedeen militias during the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion in 1979, later when the Russians withdrew in 1989; Pakistan was supporting different factions of the mujahedeen against the government of Dr. Najeebullah. In 1992 when the government of Dr. Najeebullah fell down and mujahedeen took over Kabul, Afghanistan spiralled into a brutal civil conflict among Pakistani-backed mujahedeen warlords competing against each other. In 1994 at the peak of Warlordism and civil conflicts, Pakistan gave birth to yet another faction of the mujahedeen called the Taliban and has since then supported them strongly until the September 11, 2001 attacks.

However, according to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), “Pakistan after 2001 apparently changed its official strategy towards Taliban and joined the U.S led invasion of Afghanistan but elements within the Pakistani security apparatus still consider the Taliban as a strategic asset for Pakistan’s regional policies.” (ISW 2010: 4). Pakistan’s ISI support of Taliban and other militants’ groups in Afghanistan is not hidden from anyone including the U.S government. According to Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt (2009), the support for the Taliban and other militant groups is generally coordinated by operatives inside the shadowy S Wing of ISI, Mazzetti and Schmitt further adds that, there is very little information about the S Wing of ISI and the way it provides support to the Taliban and other groups, but according to some American officials, the S Wing provides money, military supplies and strategic planning.

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4 Only three foreign governments namely Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates and Pakistan officially recognized the Taliban government in Afghanistan.
guidance to Taliban commanders, Haqani Network and other militant groups to fight against the Afghan government and the international forces based in Afghanistan. (Mazzetti and Schmitt 2009). Though the Pakistani military and civilian leaders publicly deny any support or relation with the Taliban but dozens of Afghan, American and other security officials have several times described the ISI’s continuing ties to militant groups in Afghanistan, even the former Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari once admitted that, “... there are rogue elements within the ISI and the Pakistani military that may be supporting the Taliban on both sides of the border.” (ISW, n.d.), furthermore, in a very recent interview with Washington's Council on Foreign Relations, Sartaj Aziz, the current Advisor to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Foreign Affairs has also admitted that, “Islamabad has considerable influence over the Taliban because its leaders live in the country.” (Siddique 2016: 2).

Pakistan’s support of Taliban is part of its regional policy to avoid any influence of its bloody enemy, India in Afghanistan. Fareed Zakaria in his 2015 article on Pakistan’s support of Afghan Taliban quotes a former Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S, Hussain Haqani and says that, "Pakistan has always worried that the natural order of things would be for Afghanistan to come under the sway of India, the giant of the subcontinent.” (Zakaria 2015: 3). Zakaria further explains that, the Pakistani army is as the "Godfather" of the Taliban, it understands its influence on Taliban very well and believes that, it could only gain its political and economic leverages in Afghanistan through religious zealots like the Taliban (Ibid). The relationships between Pakistan and the Taliban is very much important to understand, no one can doubt that Pakistan’s ISI has more influence over the Taliban than any other country or intelligence service (Riedel 2013). According to Riedel, “It provides critical safe haven and sanctuary to the groups’ leadership, advice on military and diplomatic issues, and assistance with fund raising. But its influence is not complete, and whether it could persuade the Taliban to settle for a political settlement in Afghanistan, is unclear at best.” (Ibid: 5).

The Pakistani double standard policy and some strategic mistakes made by the U.S government have resulted in the biggest quagmire since the Vietnam War. Fareed Zakaria says that, the Washington must get tougher with Pakistan’s military and pressurize them to stop its double dealing, he further adds that, “As long as this military and its mind-set are unchecked and unreformed, the United States will face a strategic collapse as it withdraws its forces from the region.” (Zakaria 2015: 4). However, the U.S government in the past prodded Pakistan for its double game but failed to get any positive commitment from Pakistan. President Ashraf Ghani right after assuming office in 2014, has unprecedentedly extended cooperation hand to Pakistan but soon after turned disappointed as the country continued its double standard policy.

Afghanistan’s problem cannot be solved without Pakistan, it has a considerable influence on the insurgents who are protected, trained, and equipped inside Pakistan and guided to fight against Afghanistan. This is the reality that everyone knows but says nothing, unless the fact is confronted, the problem will never solve.
1.2.4. The Structure of The Afghan High Peace Council (HPC):

On September 5th, 2010, the then president of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai approved the establishment of High Peace Council to negotiate peace talks with elements of Taliban and other military groups; the council was initially chaired by former Mujahidin leader and once president of Afghanistan Burhanuddin Rabani until his assassination in 2011. The structure of HPC since its establishment has been very much symbolic and none inclusive, it did not include the actual representatives of Afghan people, Civil Society, and was captured by former Mujahidin leaders who themselves were involved in civil war and fight against Taliban.

Martine van Bijlert the co-director and co-founder of Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) in one of her articles published in September 2010 called the HPC a “Warlords’ Peace Council”, in part of her article, she further adds that, “this is the old crowd. Where is the innovation, the good will, the promise of more inclusiveness demanded by such a controversial issue as ‘reconciliation’? Instead these are the same people who are always invited to the palace for consultations anyway – the Karzai coalition” (Bijlert 2010: 3). The 68 members list of HPC which was announced by Karzai administration is full of heavy-weight former Jihadi and Anti-Taliban figures i.e. Hazrat Sebghatullah Mujadedi, Burhanuddin Rabani, Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayaf, Pir Sayed Ahamd Gailani, Shaikh Ayatullah Mohammad Asif Muhseni, Hajji Mohammad Muhaqiq, former Dostum’s deputy Sayed Norullah Sadat, and head of the Afghan Ismaili sect-cum militia Sayed Mansour Naderi. The list also includes several but not all regional strongmen i.e. Hajji Din Mohammad, Ismail Khan but not Atta Mohammad Noor, Gul Agha Sherzai or Dostum for instance. There are also names of some leaders of other Jihadi splinter groups (Amin Waqad, Maulvi Salekzada and Abdulhadi Arghandiwal).

Furthermore, names of some so-called reconciled and little known Taliban are also in the list, for instance, Arsala Rahmani, Musa Hotak, Taj Mohammad Mujahed, Naim Khan Kuchi and others, but not influential Taliban leaders, for example; Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef Taliban’s then ambassador to Pakistan, Maulvi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil the foreign minister during Taliban regime, Maulvi Rahmatullah Sangaryar or Moulvi Abdul Hakim Munib who have significant leverage within the Taliban movement and can represent them well. There are also a good number of Karzai’s regular loyalists in the list, for example; Assadullah Wafa, Shir Mohammad Akhundzada, Engineer Ebrahim Speenzada and Faroq Wardak, the list sprinklingly includes names of few women.

A council like this can never be an address for peace talks, there are not representatives of civil society, the moderate political parties who often have close relations with the insurgent groups and could be very much influential in making and facilitating contacts, there is no one from the national business community or private sector, zero representation of media and aid workers who are constantly in touch with lots of insurgent groups as part of their jobs and could be good source of contacts and communication, and finally there is no single person with experience of conflict resolution and or re-conciliation, the council in many ways as Martine van
Bijlert says is just “a reiteration of the myth of the Jihad, honouring those who made the emergence of the Taliban seem like a source of relief, after all the excesses their forces had engaged in.” (Ibid). Other than the very shady and questionable backgrounds of the HPC members, many of them are alleged of war crimes and massive human rights violations, hence not only the Taliban and other opposition groups but many Afghans will have sound reasons to be cynical and not trust the peace process at all. Members of the HPC have not been chosen because of their contacts or mediation skills, but rather because of their armed and increasingly economic power regardless of their backgrounds and impact.

Right after the establishment of HPC, Karzai appointed Burhanuddin Rabbani as the chairman of the council; Rabbani chaired the council until his assassination on September 20, 2011. In April 2012, Karzai appointed Salahuddin Rabbani, the elder son of Burhanuddin Rabbani to succeed his father and chair the council. However, when President Ghani assumed office in 2014, he somehow tried to reform the structure and leadership of the council as was required but he couldn’t, the most he did was just few but yet the old crowd additions with Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani as the new chairman.

1.3. The Research Question:

The current peace process of Afghanistan is intriguing for many reasons. Firstly, it is one of the most difficult, complexes, multidimensional and lengthy process that the government of Afghanistan and the international community is struggling with. Secondly, “Afghanistan remains a violently contested and unsettled land. There are serious concerns about the deteriorating security situation. Jihadists and insurgents pose multiple challenges to the prospects of peace and security in this volatile country.” (Kaura 2016: 1). And third but most importantly, instability, insecurity and conflicts in Afghanistan are rapidly growing in intensity and scope which present critical challenges to the Afghan government and people at all levels, hence, there is no other way but to negotiate with the insurgents, maintain peace, and promote stability.

On how to build peace, there are many critical questions in every Afghan’s mind in respect to the current peace-building approaches under taken by the United States and other international organisations in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. As for example, in spite of billions of dollars spent by the international community, loss of hundreds of thousands civilian lives, decades of time, and unlimited financial resources if were invested in human capital and economic development, Afghanistan would have now been a second Switzerland or at least not less than that, but still peace is not yet achieved? Is it really because of the complexity of the Afghan society or there is something seriously wrong with the current peace-building approach? What is this peace-building approach? Is it based on the so called western liberal ideology? And, to what extent liberal or external imported peace-building models can help to address the root causes of the conflicts in the context of Afghan society?
However, considering the fact that, the current Afghan peace-building approach is an external donor driven practice that aims at achieving certain liberal goals (good governance, democracy, state building, human rights, and marketization) as the preliminary conditions for maintaining long-term peace, I formulate the main question of this research study as following;

**Is the current peace-building approach in Afghanistan based on liberal peace theory? If so, to what extent this liberal peace approach is conducive for resolving the ongoing conflicts?**

As stated above in the problems statement section, the U.S invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was apparently justified as legitimate intervention for maintaining peace and stability in the country via promotion of democratic values as preliminary conditions for achieving long-term peace and stability. However, given the fact that the Afghan society is built on strict conservative and traditional norms, the imposition of a western liberal ideology would definitely have adverse outcomes if it is not adequately aligned with the facts and realities of the Afghan societal context.

Therefore, the above research question is framed around this direction to first find out where or not the current peace-building approach in Afghanistan includes these liberal values and then to analyse and see if the liberal peace building approach is the appropriate one to address the core problems of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan; therefore, any claims, propositions and conclusions are based on empirical studies and not on more or less credible and idealized assumptions.

**1.3.1. The Research Objectives:**

The objectives of this research study are specific; it will not try to provide general explanations of what is peace or what are its underlying concepts. Rather, it focusses on analyzing the nature and characteristics of current Afghan peace-building process in relation to the liberal peace-building approach that is under taken by international donors involved in Afghanistan as the practices to maintain long-term peace and stability in the country. I will specifically be focusing on the structure and nature of liberal peace-building approach in the context of Afghanistan in order to find out where or not such an approach is conducive for resolving the ongoing, multi-faced, and intermingling conflicts of the Afghan society. Therefore, this research study has the following two main objectives which are pursued to answer the main research question:

1) To formulate a set of assertions concerning the current peacebuilding practices in Afghanistan based on the liberal peace theory and the realities of the Afghan society, particularly when the main purpose of these peace-building practices is to promote western liberal peace.

2) To develop a methodological framework based on the mentioned assertions to guide, the practitioners in their peacebuilding and peace-making efforts in Afghanistan.
Chapter 2  
Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Introduction:

Democratic Liberalism is founded on the notion that liberal states or liberal democracies are more peaceful in their national and international relations than the illiberal states. Since the end of the Cold War, the theory of liberalism – or democratic liberalism – or liberal peacebuilding has become more prominent because of the hegemony of the western ideology. According to this ideology, maintaining long-term peace requires promotion of liberal democratic values i.e. freedom, justice, human rights, free market, and economic liberalization. In this chapter, I will address the liberal peace theory as the theoretical framework of this research study that makes the basis of liberal peace-building.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyse the concept of liberal peace and its implications and consequences in the context of Afghanistan. In the next section one, I will briefly explain what the liberal peace is, what is the underlying theory, and how valid is the concept of liberal peace in conflict-prone societies like Afghanistan. Section two will analyse the current peacebuilding approaches in Afghanistan in relation to the liberal peace theory; this section will specifically check and balance the ongoing peacebuilding efforts against the nature and principles of liberal peace-building theory, while section three will conclude section one and two in order to answer the first part of the research question, that is, whether or not the current peacebuilding approach in Afghanistan is based on the notion of liberal peace theory. The final section four is the methodology using the ‘Social Contract’ lens (defined as the structural base for durable and sustained peace in this research paper) to analyse and find out whether or not the liberal peace-building approach is conducive for resolving the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan.

2.1. What is Liberal Peace Theory?

The democratic peace or the liberal peace theory was first introduced by the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant in his essay, Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch written in 1795. Kant’s liberal peace theory was based on the assumption that a world with only republican constitutions would be the necessary conditions for peace, according to Kant, if all nations or states are democratic republics, then the war would end, because there would not be aggressors and the majority of the people would never go to war, unless in the situation of self-defence (Kant 1795).

Kant’s theory of liberal peace is employed to explain that democratic (republic) states are interdependent and share common economic, social and political values, therefore, republican nations do not choose the strategy of war in order to settle down their conflicts because their interdependences particularly the economic interdependence, make it rational for them not to go to war as they will lose opportunities of trade and development, hence, war will cost them severe economic and social damages. This viewpoint of Kant however stands in contrast to the
realists’ thoughts who argue that without other political factors that preclude the war strategy; the only mutual interdependences cannot guarantee that republic nations will not go to war.

The dissolution of the former Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall and most importantly, the end of the Cold War have all together paved the ways for the ideology of liberalism and the liberal vision of democracies to be further strengthened, as a result of these events, the West had embodied the concept of liberal peace or liberal democracy in their efforts to expand toward the East (Tziarras 2012). The concept of liberal peace as the basis for democratic development and protection of human rights was also adopted by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Right in 1993, the basis for this adaptation was also underlined in Kant’s liberal peace theory that democratic nations or republic states are less likely to engage in war with each other and that democracy fortifies peace and stability (Ibid).

The liberal peace theory has a central position in liberalism and is driven by the notions of democracy and interdependence, whereas “liberalism suggests that economic interdependence creates favourable conditions for international cooperation among governments and peoples; since their destiny is common, as it is defined from several mutual economic and political problems, states – as rational entities – realize that international cooperation is necessary for the management of their common fate.” (Ibid: 2). According to the liberalism, democracy functions as the basis for global peace and democratic states have limited freedom to engage in war or pursue geopolitical deceptions because they have to be accountable for the people who voted for them. However, as Kant himself says democracy which is a form of sovereignty is often confused with republicanism which is a form of government, according to Kant’s liberal peace theory, the presence of a republican constitution is a primary criterion for attaining perpetual peace (Pugh 2005). Peace in Kant’s liberal model is “a function of the form of government of the two potential parties to a conflict, the logical implication is that liberal republicanism must be diffused and made universal in order to achieve perpetual peace among states.” (Ibid: 3). According to this perception, autocratic and despotic governments will avoid war and oppressing their citizens as long as they share common liberal values and will also help to strengthen democratic peace theory.

However, authoritarian states view liberal states as a threat “because of this ideology that values the diffusion of liberalism to other states, which would of course threaten the authoritarian leader’s own power. Liberal states, on the other hand, would not feel threatened by the universalistic outlook of other liberal republics since they already share a similar form of government.” (Ibid). On the other hand, as Tziarras (2012) says, one of the main critiques of the liberal peace theory is that its advocates do not explain adequately why democratic or liberal states are aggressive toward illiberal states and that why some liberal states are not aggressive. According to Tziarras, “… One could easily notice that threatening and nationalistic tendencies are no stranger to democracies” (Ibid: 4), while lack of tendency for reconsideration of territory in some democratic states could be the key for not being aggressive.
Howsoever, “in order for liberal peace to be materialized, democracies have to be stable, while stability cannot be understood only in military or economic terms.” (Ibid: 2). As stated above, the core of the liberal peace theory is based on the values of freedom, democracy, justice, and human rights which these values then constitute the definition of sustainable and long-term peace in societies. Promoting these values is (at least apparently) the reasoning behind the current peace-building approach in Afghanistan, in the next section, I will discuss and analyze the nature of current peace-building approach in Afghanistan to basically find out whether or not this approach is based on the liberal peace-building theory which I just stated above.

2.2. The Nature of Current Peace-building Approach in Afghanistan:

Peacebuilding attempts in Afghanistan have a history of almost four decades-long; some of these attempts even date back to 1982 to the so called “Geneva Accords”, an UN-led negotiation process in the Cold War era during which the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan and the Mujaheddin overtook. Although the Geneva Accords marked an important achievement for the United Nations, but, “the subsequent attempts not only of the UN but also of other actors have suffered from changes in the international scene rather than internal developments.” (Zia 2000: 1). The peacebuilding interventions and efforts in Afghanistan range from broad international level political negotiations to national and local level direct and indirect peacebuilding practices, however, the U.S intervention of 2001 is a bold point of consideration in the field of peace-building efforts in the country.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States together with international coalition forces (mainly NATO) launched “Operation Enduring Freedom” to end Taliban’s regime, dismantle Al-Qaeda’s operation base in Afghanistan, and maintain peace via promotion of democratic values – liberal peace-building. While there were already many criticisms about the negative impacts of liberal peace building practices that, “it is part of a larger “hegemonic” project whose “ideological purpose” is “to spread the values and norms of dominant power brokers.” (Pugh 2008, as cited in Paris 2010: 11), the U.S reaction to the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan added much more to these critics. However, the United States justified its invasion of Afghanistan based on liberal grounds “as a means of providing the benefits of democracy and freedom to oppressed societies” (Paris 2010: 12), the U.S approach of peace-building to stabilize Afghanistan was also similar to liberal peace-building approaches pursued by the United Nations elsewhere in conflict affected countries; both the U.S and the UN had the liberal peace elements of free elections, good governance, market economy, state building, human rights, and gender equality as central to their peace-building approaches in Afghanistan.

As was stated above, the liberal peace-building approach aims at fostering democracy, the creation of democratic state and institutions, presence of independent and functional judicial system, promotion of human rights, gender and equality, and the development of civil society organization as the strategic means for achieving and maintaining long-term peace. While these are the most favourable
aims that one could expect from adopting liberal type of peace, but paving the necessary conditions to achieve these holy aims at least in the context of Afghanistan is not easy if not impossible. The current peace-building approach in Afghanistan is purely designed based on these liberal values, the international donors and peace-builders have over emphasized on the aspect of state-building as the pre-requisite for achieving peace without considering the social structures and local conditions of Afghanistan. The liberal peace-building approach in Afghanistan is criticized broadly, “... one line of criticism is that external interventions are not sufficiently liberal, since most interventions follow the path of a limited, top-down state building agenda instead of cross-societal liberal peace” (Richmond and Franks 2011, as cited in Florian 2013: 57). Therefore, such over emphasize on state-building makes the key objective of achieving peace more inconsistent between the liberal peace-building as an approach of achieving long-term peace, and the state building as the narrow practical manifestation of this approach. The agenda of State-building in Afghanistan according to this perspective is viewed as the only remedy to the resolution of internal Afghan conflicts, and over the time, it has now become convergent with the peace-building even to the extent that they become mutually reinforcing and inseparable (Goodhand and Sedra 2013). However, “this transformative agenda is operationalized through a range of interconnected initiatives, including security sector reform, constitution writing, good governance and rule of law initiatives, macro-economic reforms, reconstruction, rural development, and so forth.” (Ibid: 2). The current peace-building approach in Afghanistan is an exported liberal peace model which consists both state and non-state actors involved in complex sub-contracting arrangements.

Nonetheless, there are many criticisms of the U.S and international community’s peace-building approach in Afghanistan, many scholars and peace-builders have questioned the applicability and usefulness of this approach even to the extent that this is not primarily a liberal approach of peace building, giving more attention to the elements of human rights, gender and equality, transitional justice, and reconciliation would not make the current peace-building approach liberal as long as these element are just used as ways to facilitate external intervention (Florian 2013). However, while there are many critics on the counterproductive results of the current peace-building approach in Afghanistan, it is primarily designed based on the liberal peace theory and encompasses the liberal values in its nature.

2.3. Conclusion:

As was discussed through the above sections, the liberal peace-building approach is understood as an antidote to conflict resolution, market sovereignty, and promotion of democracy. The liberal peace-building emerged after the Cold War as dominant western paradigm and policy response to conflict resolution and peace-building in conflict prone states. The underlying theory of liberal peace-building approach is based on achieving liberal democratic values i.e. good governance, strong state institutions, protection of human rights, and promotion of democracy as the preliminary conditions for long-term peace. Taking these values of liberal peace-building into account in relation to the peace-building in Afghanistan, I conclude that, the current peace-building approach in Afghanistan is based on liberal peace-
building theory and has liberal democratic values in its nature though its implementation is widely perceived as illiberal and counterproductive.

2.4. The Research Methodology:

The methodology of this research study is not to just collect data to either reject or accept the liberal peace-building approach, but to analyze and challenge it in relation to the context of Afghan society. The liberal peace theory as stated above will be used as the central theoretical framework to analysis the current peace-building practices in Afghanistan considering the principles of liberal peace-building approach while taking into account the concept of Social Contract, the structural base for sustainable peace or equilibrium in the long-term interpersonal, social or international relations of societies; as a “Guiding Lens” to analyze, compare, and explain the nature of liberal peace-building approach in relation to achieving long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Social Contract lens will also be used in the findings and analyses part of this research paper in order to analyze, compare and discuss as to what extent the liberal peace-building approach is conducive for resolving the ongoing conflicts and achieving long-term peace in Afghanistan; that is to basically answer the second most important part of the main research question. However, in order to properly implement this methodology, I am using “Qualitative” analysis which is an exploratory research approach that will help to understand the underlying reasons, views, motivations and perceptions of the research problem. This approach will help me to dive deep into the core of the problem and analyze, evaluate, and compare the results of the research study.

The data collection method for this research study is mainly selecting the most relevant academic literatures and theories as the foundation while also conducting some field work, the “Un-Structured” interviews with qualified respondents on the research topic. The strategy for the selection of the respondents is the “criterion-based” one, this strategy is crucial in obtaining qualified candidates who can provide the most credible information to the research study. These criteria include but not limited to 1) Willingness to openly and honestly share information. 2) Appropriate knowledge of the research problem. 3) Interests in the research topic. 4) Relevancy to the research objectives, and 5) In/Direct relation to the under research problem.

The analysis of the field data (mainly the interviews) is done through proper discourse analysis method taking into account the exact view points of the interviewees and their analysis of the relevant research topic, all of the interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and the interpretation and translation of the interviews are cross checked with the original recordings. Selection of quotes and literature are done based on an extensive review of most up to date and relevant academic literatures, statements, and working papers.
Chapter 3
The Social Contract

Introduction:

As was discussed in chapter two, the current peace-building approach in Afghanistan is purely built based on liberal peace-building ideology which seeks to bring peace via achieving liberal values. The liberal approach of peace-building is a western model designed to intervene illiberal states which are perceived as threat to liberalism, democracy, and global security. The liberal states justify their interventions legitimate for maintaining global security and peace, because according to them, the illiberal states are conflict prone and do not have the liberal values of democracy, human rights, rule of low, free markets, and strong state institutions in their governmental structures, hence, these states in order to come out of conflicts and to maintain long-term peace, they need to be liberalized.

The liberal peace-building approach focuses on building of strong state institutions, good governance, promotion of democracy, and protection of human rights as the preliminary conditions for achieving peace, this as stated in chapter two, is the same peace-building agenda of the U.S and other western countries involved in Afghanistan since 2001. They have imported a western liberal model of peace-building to Afghanistan which according to many criticisms is not compatible with the contextual and structural realities of the Afghan society. However, this chapter elaborates on the notion of Social Contract which will be used as an analytical lens to evaluate and analyse the liberal peace-building approach from a rather realistic perspective to discuss its applicability and usefulness in the context of Afghanistan.

In section one, the next, I will briefly explain what the Social Contract is, using Joseph Rudolph Rummel’s definition of social contract, this section will also elaborate on the underlying principles of social contract in relation to the liberal peace. In section two, I will discuss and justify as why I use the Social Contract lens to argue and analyse the liberal peace-building in relation to the context of Afghanistan.

3.1. What is Social Contract?

An old yet surprisingly relevant political idea – the social contract, is rising in today’s global development paradigm. The social contract as is defined by Rummel (1981) is the structural base of peace and has diverse forms and structures that interconnect and overlap in different ways to order societies. Given a word limit for this research paper, I cannot explain all varieties of the social contracts here; rather, I am focusing on three main points outlined by Rummel so that the overlapping, and multi-layered nature of social contract – thus peace is clear.
In explaining the social contract, Rummel discusses the following three points:

- “A social contract is the outcome of parties balancing their mutual interests, wills, and capabilities based on a particular balance of powers.” (Rummel 1981: 15).
- The powers that constitute the “balance are not necessarily coercive or authoritative; threat or legitimacy is not the only base for social contracts.” (Ibid).
- And finally; a social contract – thus peace is “equilibrium in the long-term interpersonal, social or international relations of societies.” (Ibid).

However, if we look into the nature of a social contract, it is part of a social process by which parties in conflict adjust their different and changing interests and capabilities, it establishes a balance of powers (an interlocking equilibrium) between what they want or can get from such a process. On the other hand, peace is an outcome of social contract between these parties based on a balance of their powers (interests, capabilities, expectations, and wills). A social contract as Rummel (1981) says may be implicit or explicit, conscious or subconscious, and formal or informal, whereas, peace as a social contract occurs at different levels of social relationships.

According to Rummel, peace may occur at international level – global peace, or at central government (national) level whereas peace at this level is the outcome of internal civil war or political turmoil (Ibid). In addition to these two levels, Rummel also suggests a third level where peace can occur, this level involves group relations within state such as among classes, unions, or religious, political and ethnic groups (Ibid). A state at its central government level, “may be peaceful, manifesting a stable social contract, while some of its regions may experience continuing group violence” (Ibid: 7). However, considering the fact that the conflicts in Afghanistan exist at all these three levels, therefore peace also needs to occur at these levels. Peace as a social contract as conceptualized by Rummel involves a number of social principles i.e. conflict, cooperation, gap between expectations and cooperation, and the master peace principle. Here, I would like to briefly explain some of these principles that somehow relate to the main discussion of this paper:

3.1.1. The Conflict Principle

There are various definitions of conflict. When discussing the conflict, what would immediately come into our minds would most likely be the disagreements between or among parties, groups and individuals. Having that, if we ask the question; what is conflict? It can be described as a disagreement between and among parties, groups or individuals characterized by antagonism and or resentment. Such a disagreement is usually derived from the opposition of one party to another in order to achieve their contested and different objectives i.e. in the case of Afghanistan where the government and the Taliban as two different parties have different objectives to achieve, there are various elements involved to allow the conflict continues.
In order to understand what causes the conflict, it is required to consider the common sources of conflict and the factors that make the conflict to arise. Daniel Katz, an American psychologist proposes three main sources of conflicts; the economic, the value, and the power (Types of Conflict, n.d.). According to Katz, an economic conflict arises by limited amount of resources, whereas the value conflict is generally concerned with varied ideologies and preferences that parties have as their principles. The conflict of power occurs when the parties involved in the conflict intends to maximize their influence in the society (Ibid). However, conflict of power is in fact the root source of almost all types of conflicts among or between parties as is in Afghanistan; conflict therefore “is a balancing of powers among interests, capabilities, and wills. It is a mutual adjusting of what people want, can get, and are willing to pursue. Conflict behaviour, whether hostile actions, violence, or war, is then a means and manifestation of this process” (Rummel 1981: 8).

3.1.2. The Cooperation Principle

Cooperation is a social process in which individuals, groups or parties work together for common benefits as opposed to competition for personal benefits. Cooperation is an essential principle in resolving the conflicts; most of the conflicts as Morton Deutsch says involve a mix of cooperative and competitive motives (‘Conflict Research Consortium’ 2001). However, the key element in understanding the nature of cooperation is the type of goal based on which the parties cooperate with each other, “parties goals' may be negatively interdependent--one party's success correlating with the other's failure. Such situations tend to yield competitive relationships with a win-lose orientation. Parties' goals may be positively interdependent--success correlating with success, or failure with failure. These situations tend to yield cooperative relationships where the parties have a win-win orientation” (Ibid: 1). Cooperation also depends on power and the expectations aligned with it, the balance of power or harmonization of expectations between parties can only be achieved through cooperation. According to Rummel, “This balance is a definite equilibrium among the parties' interests, capabilities, and wills; the agreement is a simultaneous solution to the different equations of power, and thereby the achievement of a certain harmony--structure--of expectations. At the core of this structure is a status-quo or particular expectations over rights and obligations. Conflict thus interfaces and interlocks a specific balance of powers and an associated structure of expectations” (Rummel 1981: 17).

However, In the case of Afghanistan, the government and the Taliban as two parties in conflict are extremely lacking such principles of cooperation, their interaction with each other is based on antagonism not cooperation and they are not able to harmonize their mutual expectations. The nature of cooperation between the government and the Taliban is negatively interdependent – one’s success is the other’s failure. Such relationship between them tends to yield in competition with a win-lose orientation – thus conflict.
3.1.3. The Gap Principle

This is the most important principle in a social contract; in fact, the gap of expectations between the parties in conflict if not met, causes the increment of tensions between them. The larger this gap is, the greater the tensions will be. If we take the current Afghan government peace process with the Taliban as an example, there is a huge gap between the expectations both parties have from each other, the Taliban expect the government to accept their conditions for peace talks. However, the government expects Taliban quite the opposite, an un-conditional peace talks. Such nature of un-harmonized expectations has considerable social lethargy and incompetence, while the expectations between the two parties can change rapidly, their interests in peace talks can also shift – thus the gap shifts.

3.1.4. The Peace (Master) Principle:

Rummel outlines this principle and says that, “Through conflict, violence, and war, international actors mutually adjust their expectations to their changing interests, capabilities, and wills. The result is a balance of powers and a correlated structure of expectations—that is, a social contract. This contract then establishes a region of mutually reliable expectations, a region of peace and cooperation.” (Ibid). This is very much applicable to the case of Afghanistan as well, if the Taliban and the government mutually adjust and harmonize their expectations through high level agreement that paves the ground for new legal structures – thus ‘Political Settlement’ where, “a political settlement should be a legitimate process of negotiation between power holders leading to power sharing, forgiveness, reconciliation, security and peace” (‘Conciliation Resources’ 2015). The result of such political settlement will create the necessary conditions for making peace where all groups, parties and individuals cooperate with each other based on agreements and responsibilities.

As discussed, a social contract is generally negotiated through conflicts, when parties in conflict are negotiating their “opposing interests, capabilities and wills; such a process determines some forms of a social contract.” (Rummel 1981: 19). According to Rummel, “it is social as there is a relationship or interaction between two or more wills, and it is a contract as there is an agreement to harmonize the opposing wills, expectations, and interests – thus conflict resolution.” (Ibid). Peace then is the outcome of the social contract.

3.2. Why The Social Contract Lens?

The challenge that peace has varieties of definitions is that; it derives its meaning within a theory or framework, for instance, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus see peace differently from each other as will the pacifists, socialists, and libertarians, however; they all share one or more values of peace as Rummel says, “In this diversity of meanings, peace is no different from such concepts as justice,

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5 Such as complete withdrawal of all foreign forces, release of Taliban prisoners and removing names of Taliban members from UN blacklist.
These are in fact also the values that a liberal peace theory includes, but how these values are translated into liberal peace-building practices is what makes the liberal perspective, “through a perspective peace is endowed with meaning by being linked to other concepts within a particular perception of reality; and by its relationship to ideas or assumptions about violence, history, divine grace, justice. Peace is thereby locked into a descriptive or explanatory view of our reality and each other” (Ibid).

The ‘Social Contract’ lens has some merit; it includes the most complete list of peace concepts including the liberal peace and illustrates the importance of social level in defining and distinguishing these concepts (Rinehart 1989). Some concepts as Rinehart says, “see the starting point at international relations, some at interpersonal relations, and some are in between” (Ibid: 3). However, in this research paper, I use Rummel’s definition of peace in which he sees peace as, an equilibrium and balance of power in a society – thus social contract. Rummel’s definition of peace (the social contract lens) mostly fits into the Afghan context of peace; the underlying social principles of this lens as stated above not only include most of the current viewpoints on peace-building in Afghanistan, but also, addressing these important social principles is necessary for achieving a sustained and durable peace in Afghanistan. Moreover, the concept of peace as a ‘Social Contract’ is much inclusive than the too narrow, popular and commonly used western concepts such as peace as ‘absence of war’ or ‘absence of conflict’ which according to Rinehart (1989) have failed to direct the pursuit of peace.

Furthermore, using the lens of ‘Social Contract’ helps to address the fundamental issues causing the conflicts in a society; it also describes the multidimensionality and imbedded meanings of peace and explains the intermingling social factors that avoid making peace. Provided the fact that peace in Afghanistan is complexed and multifaceted, the concept of Social Contract will cover most of its elements – If not all. Therefore, in order to describe the nature of current liberal peace-building approach in Afghanistan, I will use the social contract principles to explain, analyse and compare as to what extent such liberal approach will help to support the current peace-building process to resolve the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan.

In the next chapter four, I will be discussing and analysing the current liberal peace-building practices in Afghanistan via the social contract lens in order to find out as to what extent these liberal peace-building practices help to achieve long-term peace in Afghanistan and to resolve the ongoing conflicts.
Chapter 4
Research Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, I will be analysing the research findings in relation to notion of liberal peace theory via the analytical lens of social contract as stated in chapter three. Using the social contract concept of peace, I will discuss whether or not the liberal peace-building approach is applicable to Afghanistan and that to what extent liberal peace-building will help to address the root causes of the current Afghan conflicts; that is to seek answer for the second part of the research question in light of the theoretical and conceptual framework as stated in chapter two of this paper, supported by empirical evidences from the collected data.

In the next section one, I will briefly describe and analyse the ongoing conflicts of Afghanistan in relation to the liberal peace building approach, section two will explain the outcomes of the liberal peace-building approach in Afghanistan. Section three will describe how to design an inclusive peace-building model that is compatible with the condition of Afghanistan, while section four will mainly focus on how to achieve a sustained and long-term peace via strengthening state-society relations, which is to form a Social Contract.

4.1. Liberal Peace-building and The Ongoing Afghan Conflicts:

The ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan are a bizarre of external and internal factors, there is a destructive influence of foreign interests and an intra-Afghan problem that drive the conflicts. Hamish Nixon (2011) in his detailed paper on Achieving Durable Peace: Afghan Perspectives on Peace Process published by Peace Research Institute Oslo explains that, Afghan leaders emphasize on some particular aspects of the conflicts which are different than the external analysis of policymakers and have important implications on designing a successful peace process. According to Nixon, “Some of the elements of this “Afghan” understanding of the conflict are that the US is seen as a foreign interest and a principal party to the conflict, and that the intra-Afghan conflict must be seen both in terms of a legitimacy crisis around a faulty and captured post-Bonn government as well as a struggle for power defined in ethnic, tribal or factional terms.” (Ibid: 7).

Most of the Afghans believe that the foreign so called liberal interventions particularly those of Pakistan and Iran are the main reasons behind the conflicts, according to them, Pakistan has its particular interests in Afghanistan, for instance, manipulating the long-standing issue of Duran Line and countering Indian influence in Afghanistan, Pakistan also desires a weak and Pakistan-dependant Afghan state to easily gain its economic interests. However for some other Afghans, Iranian interests in the Afghan conflicts are mostly due to its opposition to the U.S presence in its borders and promoting the Shia interests.

The conflicts and war in Afghanistan are an international intermingling puzzle; it is a broader geopolitical game in which the Unites States and its NATO allies under the so called liberal peace-building interventions are the main players. One of the
interviewees, Ziaulhaq Amarkhil, the founder and chairman of National Stability Society illustrates this puzzle:

*Every single Afghan knows that; the war and conflicts in Afghanistan are not an Afghan war and conflicts; these are somethings related to the regional, to the neighbouring countries, and somethings related to the big players like the U.S and other western countries. Since the war and conflicts are connected to the others benefits, the peace process is also connected to the big players, it means they need to play a role in that, they need to be committed, and they need to be very honest with Afghan people to support the peace process in general.* (Amarkhil 2016, personal interview)

The structure and composition of the High Peace Council since its establishment is widely perceived among Afghan as an American liberal project of reconciliation is the biggest barrier towards peace talks with the Taliban, the existence of former anti-Taliban figures in the council is a big challenge ahead of peace talks with the Taliban:

*The structure of the peace council was made of warlords and warlords never believe in peace process because they understand that if there is peace then they will not be in power, they understand if there is peace, their families will not be in power, and they understand if there is a peace process, it means there will be justice and the warlords cannot see the justice as they will be prosecuted and that is why there is a huge obstruction inside the government as well as from senior politicians.* (Amarkhil 2016, personal interview).

The uncertainty and dependency of the Taliban’s leaderships and their inconsistent positions towards peace talks with the Afghan government are also important factors that block the way for peace talks. It is difficult to predict how much are the Taliban independent to talk directly with the Afghan government, how much do they really believe in a peace process, and how much do they think if agree on a peace deal, they will get what they look for. However, the interests of the regional and supra-regional players and their considerable influence on the Taliban and the Afghan government make it difficult for both sides to directly and independently negotiate peace talks. In such situations of lack of confidence and trust, both sides avoid face to face and direct talks, they rather talk to the U.S, Pakistan, China or others. This lack of confidence and trust, and indirect approach of peace talks have made it almost impossible to gain tangible results from the peace process.

The external factors are not the only reasons functioning behind the conflicts, there are also considerable internal factors adding equally to the conflicts. Some of the Afghan elites and politicians work for foreign countries, just because of their vicious ambitions to get foreign support to stay in power and accumulate wealth. There are also some corrupt Afghan politicians who don’t want peace at all as they see their life in conflicts not in peace, “there are some internal players who don’t believe in peace because if there is peace then they must be taken into justice, they don’t say that publicly but they work seriously towards that” (Amarkhil 2016, personal interview).

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interview). Moreover, Nazar Mohammad Mutmaeen, an Afghan writer and political analyst also affirms this and exemplifies how some Afghan leaders including Hamid Karzai, the former president constantly refused a possible peace settlement with the Taliban since their removal from power in 2001:

In 2002, around 12 Taliban leaders including Mawlawi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakel, the then Foreign Minister of Taliban, made contacts with Gul Agha Sherzai who was governor of Kandahar at that time, they asked Sherzai to allow them to come to and live in Kandahar, when Sherzai contacted president Karzai to ask him if these Taliban leaders can come to Kandahar but Karzai refused the request and instead told to Sherzai that we need to arrest these people and send them to jail, Karzai government did so, they arrested Mawlawi Mutawakel together with the other Taliban leaders and jailed them all in Bagram. (Mutmaeen 2016, personal interview)

In fact, excluding the Taliban from Bonn conference in 2001 was a big mistake by the U.S and other allied countries as Mutmaeen says, “...it was a big mistake in Bonn 1 that the Taliban were ignored to be involved in the government that was installed by NATO and America.” (Mutmaeen 2016, personal interview). Most Afghans believe that, if the U.S and other international community wouldn’t have ignored the Taliban, and instead would have brought them to the government just like they did with other mujahedeen militias, the Taliban wouldn’t have now been opposing the government and we would have a broad political participation of all factions and groups instead of few who captured the state.

According to Nixon (2011), “... Afghanistan’s internal problems and conflicts have become increasingly prominent as the post-2001 conflict worsens, and are exacerbated and enabled by foreign influences. Chief among these are the failings of the Afghan government and a widespread perception of its capture by criminal, economic, ethnic and factional interests. Diverse and complex personal, local, tribal, and national grievances drive insurgent recruitment in Afghanistan.” (Giustozzi and Gopal, as cited in Nixon 2011: 8). The insurgency in Afghanistan as Nixon says is a “network of networks” which has different motivations and principles; he further adds that, “a growing body of primary research with insurgents finds their stated objectives principally consist of the removal of foreign forces and Western influence, and correcting un-Islamic, corrupt or predatory government. This was also the language found among those interviewed for this project.” (Ibid).

However, a considerable number of respondents whom I have interviewed for this research paper spoke about the weakness of Afghan government to deliver proper public services, unemployment, poverty and the large scale corruption in government institutions as other significant factors of conflicts and insurgency in the country. One of the respondents and a prominent businessman based in Kabul stated with the condition of anonymity that:

The main problem with the government is that, there is no honest or uncorrupt person on whom you can count, for example, if we look at previous Karzai’s government, the whole government including Karzai himself, his deputies, his cabinet ministers, his governors and every one in his government was corrupt, you look at the shameless corruption cases in ministry of defense and interior..., who did this corruption?... You or me, or the Taliban?? I don’t mean that the Taliban were good but at least they were not corrupt as these government officials.⁸

The inefficiency and incapability of the Afghan government have led to the failure of the international community; most of the Afghan people are even sceptical about the role and presence of the international community in Afghanistan as one of the interviewees stated:

The U.S and international community are also lying to people, they apparently complain about the warlords but who brought these warlords to the power?? Of course the U.S and other foreign countries, they support the warlords financially and politically to work for them, we even have cabinet ministers appointed by foreign countries and work for their interests, you cannot get a job unless you know someone within the government or have links with a foreign country. So, how can you trust on a corrupt government like this?? Certainly not... This government is even not acceptable to the people who voted for it so how can you expect the Taliban to accept it? You better to forget about peace and leave this country.⁹

Warlordism and the wide spread corruption in the Afghan government is a serious threat to stability and peace in the country, Nixon states that, “Afghan leaders have a variety of views on the particular failings that drive the conflict. Among the most prominent are the prevalence of corruption, the abuses perpetrated by government officials and the empowerment of certain factional leaders, the failure to provide security to the general population, or the inability to manage or reap sufficient benefit from aid to Afghanistan.” (Nixon 2011: 10).

The problem of factional and ethical imbalance in the formation of post-Taliban government right from the Bonn process is yet another major factor pointed out by many interviewees as a significant reason behind the conflicts in Afghanistan. Dr. Faiz Mohammad Zaland, a professor at Kabul University says that:

Afghanistan is home to everyone, it doesn’t belong to one party or one district, the exclusion of the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami from the Bonn conference was a big mistake that the U.S and international community intentionally made; they gifted Afghanistan to the warlords and to specific groups without considering the heterogeneity of Afghan nation. If we look at the core of the ongoing conflicts, these are just because of the ethical

⁸ Personal interview with a prominent businessman based in Kabul (anonymous) on Afghan Peace Process, Kabul, 20 August 2016.
⁹ Personal interview with a civil society activist (anonymous) on Afghan Peace Process, Kabul, 15 August 2016.
However, as Nixon (2011: 14) says, there is an ethnic dimension to understandings of the conflicts, but, it is broadly agreed that the Taliban movement is not primarily ethno-nationalist in its aims or mobilizing narratives.

The nature, complexity, and multidimensionality of the ongoing Afghan conflicts as analysed above helps to highlight the kinds of most important and core issues that a peace process should have to address. In section two, the next, I will discuss what kind of the process is required to support a possible peace settlement in Afghanistan.

4.2. The Outcomes of Foreign Liberal Peace-building in Afghanistan:

The overthrow of the Taliban in November 2001 created a high tide of optimism in the beginning, but it is simply not the case that everything was perfect until now. Rather, “a number of crucial flaws in the international community’s approach to Afghanistan have merely taken time to reveal themselves in all their ferocity.” (Maley 2008: 2). According to Maley, the international community led by the United States committed major mistakes in Afghanistan, the first and for most was the Bonn Agreement with non-Taliban parties which contained many positive features of a possible peace agreement with the Taliban (Ibid 2008). The Bonn agreement from its beginning was extremely exclusive and induced only few political factions, “...departments in the new interim administration were distributed to political factions as inducements to participate in the process; indeed, the recent memoirs of U.S. Ambassador James F. Dobbins show how new ministries were created simply so that there would be more prizes to go around.” (Ibid: 2). Nonetheless, most of these factions were “patronage networks rather than modern political parties, this set the scene for a spoils system of appointments to public office and encouraged fiendish competition for donor dollars, which worked against the development of a consensually unified political elite.” (Ibid). Maley further adds that, too much rely on Pakistan and calling it a strategic ally in fighting terrorism was yet another big mistake of the United States and other allied countries as Pakistan proved a ‘far-from-adequate’ ally in fighting the transnational terrorism (Ibid 2008).

The decades-long war and conflicts have evolved a powerful lobby in Afghanistan whose stakes as K. Iqbal (2016) says are better served if the country remains unstable, “... Ashraf Ghani, otherwise a prudent leader is often swayed by this lobby. Who would know better than him the dynamics of war economy, and power of the interest groups thrown-up by such economies. However, he needs to know more about the political options exercised by other countries which came out of similar turmoil that bedevils today’s Afghanistan” (Ibid: 2). However, overcoming this powerful lobby is extremely important for successful negotiations with the Taliban and achieving a sustained peace, it only needs a strong political will, and President Ghani has no lack of that. While the international community is making an all-out

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10 Personal Interview with Dr. Faiz Mohammad Zaland on Afghan Peace Process, Kabul, 8 August 2016.
effort to negotiate with the Taliban through various peace building approaches such as the so called Afghan Peace Process, the Doha Office process, the Norway Conference, and very recently, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and the United States, yet, the insurgency have become increased than ever before and the peace talks have become stalled. In such circumstances, it is difficult to expect an immediate end in sight to the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, lack of stable, inclusive and legitimate governance, corruption, Warlordism, and most importantly; the internal rifts of the twin-headed unity government over peace talks with the Taliban means that new conflicts will continue to rise. However, there is a small but steady hope towards building a strong sense among Afghan people at local levels to mediate the conflicts, they have felt the fatigue of the decades-long war and now have more tolerance to embrace each other.

4.3. Designing a Conducive Peace-building Approach:

The structure and design of current peace-building approach in Afghanistan is considered to be one of the most critical challenges towards peacebuilding and negotiations with the Taliban. Lisa Schirch, the Director of Human Security at Alliance for Peacebuilding says that, the current negotiation efforts fail to learn lessons from peace process in other countries; she further adds that, the process also avoids some key issues like the urgent need to tackle the corruption and reform in the government institutions. (Schirch 2012). According to Schirch (2012), the current negotiation efforts rely on too many “one-off” events rather than a sustained and structured process to address the root causes of the conflicts.

In 2010, when the then president Hamid Karzai announced the establishment of High Peace Council through which the government would negotiate with the Taliban to put down their arms and join the peace process, the decision however was widely welcomed by many Afghans in the beginning but the announcement of HPC’s members list which was full of former warlords, anti-Taliban figures and few little known western technocrats, created huge doubts and questions among Afghan people, they realized that this is yet another symbolic action of the government and international community just to deceive the public. One of the interviewees and a Civil Society activist says with the condition of anonymity:

You can never bring peace with a council like this; it is just a milk cow for its thirsty warlord members, all these people who are in the council were involved in the war... there is no difference between the Taliban and them, they were destroying Afghanistan yesterday and the Taliban are doing the same today. Karzai didn’t make the council to bring peace to the country; rather, he wants to feed up his own coalition so that he can stay in power...[

The existence of warlords and few local elites in the HPC whose constituencies are widely controversial across the country was not the only problem towards peace talks with the Taliban, but the process in general was non-inclusive and left out key

11 Personal interview with civil society activist (anonymous) on Afghan Peace Process, Kabul, 10 August 2016.
and important stakeholders as Schirch says, “The Bonn Conference and other Afghan peace efforts leave out key stakeholders and forgo the need for public buy-in and wide consultation. A successful transition from war to peace in Afghanistan requires more than Taliban and government diplomats negotiating on a ceasefire and discussions with the Loya Jirga. Afghan civil society leaders are still largely left out of peace talks.” (Schirch 2012: 5). The composition of the HPC’s leadership was not only unacceptable for the public people but for the Taliban too as Thomas Rutting (2016) says, the Taliban even considered the HPC members as their ‘legitimate targets’ to kill, in 2011 the first chairman of the council, Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated by Taliban, a year later, his successor and acting chairman, Arsala Rahmani was also assassinated by Taliban. According to Rutting (2016), even when President Ghani announced the new setup for the HPC, it’s at least 40 provincial officials have been so far killed by Taliban.

The peacebuilding efforts of Afghan government particularly those of the HPC in the past nearly one decade have been completely fruitless, former Afghan president Hamid Karzai travelled more than 20 times to Pakistan in order to get support of the Pakistani government for bringing up the Taliban to the negotiation table, and the U.S and international community have spent millions of dollars on the so called peace process but neither of these attempts have been successful, instead the peace process have become a good entertainment and income source for the HPC’s leadership, its members and other government officials affiliated with the process. Ahmad Fawad, one of the interviewees and a shopkeeper in Mandawi-e-Kabul (one of the biggest shopping areas in Kabul city) says that:

A month ago, we saw that President Ashraf Ghani and Indian Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the ever biggest electricity dam in Herat (Salam Dam, also known as Afghan-India Friendship Dam) at a total cost of USD 300 million, Last night, I was listening to the news and heard that, the annual expenditures (salary, allowances and operational costs) of the HPC is at around USD 600 million which is two times more than the total cost of Salma Dam, this means if we don’t have this useless HPC, we can build two dams like Salam every year in other provinces as well, we will at least have enough electricity to light up our homes, you see now we even don’t have 24 hours electricity in Kabul which is the capital of the country...

Though the Afghan government and the HPC call their peace efforts a success, yet many ordinary Afghans, political analysts, civil society activists, and some members of parliament (both lower and upper houses) call the peace efforts ineffective and the HPC as an ostentatious entity, they insist that, the council has so far made no significant gains while its expenditures are pretty high. Zaheermal, an afghan journalist in his article on ‘Peace Council - the high cost of doing nothing’ affirms this via quoting some of the MPs, Zaheermal says that, Saleh Mohammad Saleh a member of Wolesi Jirga (the lower house) claims that, the former president, Hamid Karzai set up the HPC to please a number of influential tribal elders and to counter the influence of those figures, most of these people are tainted by corruption.

12 Personal interview with Ahmad Fawad (Shopkeeper) on Afghan Peace Process, Kabul, 24 July 2016.
According to Zaheermal, even some officials of the HPC also confirm their failures and agree their spending has been useless, “… One of its members, Maulvi Shahzada Shahid, admits their achievement is zero. He links the dismal record of the council to inadequate coordination among members and the chokehold of some circles.” (Ibid: 3). Zaheermal further adds that, according to Shahid, this unpalatable reality should not be hidden from the people, those who are in the council are more interested in advancing their personal interests and have been unable to make any progress. (Ibid 2015). However, the class-based systems within the HPC and the flawed delegation of powers have been the main reasons of the council’s incompetency and failure in making progress towards peace talks with the Taliban and or other opposition groups.

The current Afghan peace process severely lacks the fundamental qualifications of an all-inclusive and successful peace process, it excludes certain key actors as representatives of civil society, academia, gross root level local representatives on whom all parties can trust and depend, moderate political parties who often have close relations with the insurgent groups and could be very much influential in making and facilitating contacts, representatives of media and aid workers who are constantly in touch with lots of insurgent groups as part of their jobs and could be good source of information and communication, and most importantly, the process does not include any single negotiator with experience of conflict resolution. A successful peace process as Schirch (2012) says must include all relevant stakeholders and allow public inputs, according to Schirch, a sustainable peace agreement address all key issues and include long term international support for implementation and transition from war to peace, Schirch further adds that, countries like the Philippines, South Africa, Mali, and Guatemala are making transition from war to peace because they had an all-inclusive peace processes and agreements, and for long time, the international community is supporting those processes and agreements (Ibid).

Peace is a “social contract” as is defined in this research study; it requires a process that includes all important social principles of proper conflict resolutions through understanding, cooperation, and negotiation. A social contract is not just an agreement among parties, individuals or societies, rather, it is a responsibility of individuals in society to protect and be protected. The outcome of a social contract is peace, thus, peace is a social process through which people agree to form the contract and support the agreement, the success of a peace process (social contract) depends on its inclusiveness as Schirch says, “the more people a peace process includes, the more they may support an agreement” (Ibid: 6). However, as stated above, one of the main challenges of the current Afghan Peace Process is indeed its non-inclusiveness and lack of social principles, according to many Afghans, this process is not designed to bring peace, rather, it is a joint U.S and Afghan government project to play politics. Zaman Muzamel, an Afghan writer and political analyst says that:

_The current peace process is designed to serve only the U.S and government’s interests, it’s a totally governmental process which excludes anyone else, peace is not a piece of agreement that the government, the U.S, the British,
France or other players are making via bribing few insurgents in Helmand, Kapisa, Kandahar or elsewhere. Peace rather requires a process, a comprehensive social process that includes all not few, we need to first understand the problem, the current war and conflicts are not of few individuals, these are of all and we need to find the solutions via including the society... (Muzamel, personal interview).  

War cannot be won with war and likewise a sustained and durable peace cannot be achieved without inclusion of all parties and an appropriate negotiated process, the design of a peace process as Schirch says affects the likelihood of achieving a sustainable peace, and the dissatisfactions with peace agreements can lead to increased violence and the continuation of conflicts as with the genocide following the Rwandan Arusha Accords (Ibid 2012). An all-inclusive and comprehensive peace process can create a more legitimate outcome and public consent for the government, such a process will also address a range of factors that contribute to the conflicts. By providing an opportunity for key actors like civil society, gross root level local leaders, academia, and other factions of society will build consensus among people and will pave the way for a participatory and inclusive peace process – thus democratic governance. But too often, diplomats look for a quick fix and skimp on any strategic planning for the process. Since peace is an outcome of a social contract, hence involving and engaging all key actors of the society will form a broad public consensus on resolving the conflicts through dialogue and negotiations not war and violence.  

Afghanistan has been pushed back to stone-age by internal conflicts and external interference; it extremely needs for peace and stability. But a stable and long-lasting peace cannot be achieved without a comprehensive social process, the international community and Afghan government must design and structure an all-inclusive peace process to involve all factions of the society. Afghanistan like Mali has a large tribal population and an all-inclusive local level peace process could be structured to involve more people. In Mali according to Schirch (2012), each locality worked to identify core grievances, address socio-economic concerns, develop local security guarantees and political power sharing deals, and to implement the agreements they made. The same can be applied to the case of Afghanistan too, the international community and the Afghan government have to support a peace process that includes all key actors of the society and engage in effective dialogue with the Taliban to identify and address the core grievances through negotiating sustained and durable peace agreements- thus a social contract.  

While the international community and the Afghan government are making all-out efforts to reach a possible peace deal with the Taliban, it is time to learn from successful peace processes in other countries and design an all-inclusive peace process to engage massive local leadership and solve this social conundrum via triggering effective dialogue and negotiation. An all-inclusive Afghan Peace Process will certainly enjoy greater public support, acceptability, legitimacy, and will ultimately lead to more democratic governance.

4.4. Achieving a Sustained and Durable Peace – Forming Social Contract:

As was discussed throughout the analysis of this paper, in spite of the over emphasis on the issue of state-building, the absence of ‘State Legitimacy’ in Afghanistan has always been the main reason of many uncertainties which eventually leads to upheaval and conflicts. State legitimacy is a key aspect in state-society relations (social contract); state repression and violence result in negative experiences of the people with their state and create a legacy of mistrust. Absence of ‘State legitimacy’ can originate from various factors such as ineffectiveness of public institutions, inadequate service delivery, lack of representation and accountability. However, in Afghanistan, the state fundamentally lacks such legitimacy, according to the general public, the state in Afghanistan is not seen or perceived to be legitimate; it is a captured state by few who best serve the interests of the U.S and other foreign countries as one of the interviewees with the condition of anonymity says:

_We even don’t have something to call a state... you better to forget about a legitimate state at all. In fact, Afghanistan has been in a state crisis for the past four decades, we were not and are not the owners of our country and state, nobody believes in democracy or elections anymore... look what happened to the recent 2014 elections... did we vote for one or two presidents? Where in the constitution is that the country should have more than one president and that the power should be divided 50/50 between only two groups? Who did so, we the Afghan people or the John Kerry of the U.S? In Afghanistan, there is nothing that can connect people with the state even not the elections because it really doesn’t matter if we vote or don’t, the U.S will make it for us, so thanks to the U.S for not bothering us..._  

State legitimacy is an important factor in building confidence and trust among society; people see state’s legitimacy only through its actions and behaviour. When the state is not legitimate or when it is unable to build and earn legitimacy, then nothing even a democratic process such as elections can ensure to achieve sustained and durable peace. The quality and behaviour of the Afghan government as Nixon (2011) says is an almost universally acknowledged driver of the ongoing conflicts in the country, people’s disappointment with and mistrust on government are sound reasons to oppose and pave the way for conflicts to rise. Since 2001, many national and international organizations have been working in Afghanistan to sustain peace

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14 Personal interview with (anonymous) on Afghan Peace Process, Kabul, 15 August 2016.
through variety of programs like peacebuilding, good governance and accountability, civil society development, public awareness, gender and equality, but none of these programs helped to even break through the conflicts. However, achieving a sustainable, long-lasting and prosperous peace in a conflicted country like Afghanistan requires a greater focus on building and strengthening the relationship between the existing state and the various actors within the larger society, this is the main focus on a “Social Contract” that I have adopted in this research study.

A Social Contract (in its holistic nature) in this research paper is defined as a structural base for peace, it is an outcome of parties balancing their mutual interests, wills and capabilities, more specifically; it is an equilibrium in the long-term relations between state and society and among various actors within the society. While a social contract outlines mutual responsibilities and the balance of mutual interests and capabilities to eventually bring peace and stability to the society, I consider such a social contract in Afghanistan as an outcome of dialogue and negotiation process where the government works with the society to achieve sustained and durable peace and to collectively solve the problems that apart the state from the society. In Afghanistan, the international community and donor organizations have been overemphasizing on state and institutions building from a ‘Political Settlement’ view to achieve and build peace in the society but in fact there is a clear dichotomy between the donors state or institutions building and the society peacebuilding. According to the Africa Platform (a civil society organizations’ partnership), it is not possible to build state or an institution without involving the society as a main source for the legitimacy and existence of the state. Likewise, it is absolutely futile to attempt any peacebuilding initiative without recognizing that the conflicts are linked to the actions of the state itself. (African Platform, n.d.).

The overemphasis and too much focus of donors on political settlements instead of durable peace agreements according to OECD (2011) expands the temporal scope of conflict analyses and brings attention to the need for settlements to evolve. However, while the settlements may temporally end the conflicts but all settlements are not robotically preferable to a complicated and prolonged negotiation and reconciliation process such as the Afghanistan’s. According to OECD (2011), the donors shouldn’t emphasize too much on specific institutional arrangement, instead, “they should help ensure that the process of institution-building itself is sufficiently inclusive and that mechanisms for the future adaptation of institutions are agreed on. The process, its inclusiveness, perceived legitimacy and rootedness in local structures is no less important than the actual content of the resulting settlement. Rather than support settlements per se, international actors should seek to promote
their responsiveness and broaden inclusion, which would normally have a positive effect on a settlement’s appropriateness, legitimacy and durability.” (Ibid: 12). However, “Bitter experience of the collapse of political settlements based on narrow elite bargains has helped draw attention to what many international actors have neglected – namely, that legitimate and effective state-building requires support, space, and respect for inclusive public politics. An emphasis on inclusive public politics creates the environment for a robust social contract.” (UNDP 2016: 16). According to UNDP (2016), most international actors in Afghanistan and Iraq assumed that peace and stability would follow automatically once state is built, they have given priority to executive authority (mostly financial), formal process like elections, and to centralized judicial system. Nevertheless, such approaches of state building confined merely to improving formal government capacities have also failed to have satisfactory outcomes (Call, 2011; Putzel, 2010; Bertoli and Ticci, 2012, as cited in UNDP 2016).

While efforts such as holding elections are necessary to refurbish some measure of people’s confidence in state, but I don’t believe these are necessarily the priorities or the first steps towards forming a social contract. In fact, elections if not held under circumstances of strong cohesion can lead to more conflicts as exactly was the case with Afghanistan’s recent 2014 elections due to which contradictions, clashes, and perverse effects rose highly. Due to the utmost conflicts caused by the 2014 elections, the international community led by the United States intervened heavily and made a fabricated government through political arrangements and a none-transparent elite bargaining process with mixed and problematic results challenging the future as William A. Byrd says, “The new political arrangement, whatever its benefits, has built-in problems for the future and may well weaken the government’s ability to implement reform” (Byrd 2015: 2). Likewise, if a peace process targets the state and society as separate entities, the result will be superficial and the legitimacy of the state remains a questionable factor that will quickly lead to large scale conflicts.

One of the most important approaches for achieving sustainable peace is the state building approach, it is a specific approach of peacebuilding that improves government’s capacity to perform its functions, deliver public services, and provide necessary conditions for socio-economic development. The state-society relationship is the natural subsidiary to statebuilding and provides the necessary conditions for increasing the likelihood of sustainable peace. The social contract rooted implicitly within the state building then provides the foundation for the state-society relations as Seth Kaplan states, “Without a minimum degree of social cohesion, states are
unlikely to construct robust governments - no matter how much outside help they receive - nor foster the conditions necessary for stability, growth, and development.” (Kaplan 2010: 94). However, the term ‘Social Cohesion’ as is used by Kaplan refers to the Social Contract; therefore, building a socially accepted, accountable and legitimate state is the necessity of a long-term peace and stability.

In order for Afghanistan to achieve a sustained and durable peace, it first needs to establish an agreement (a social contract) between the government and the people based on what needs to be done to achieve a sustained peace, who needs to do it and over what period of time. This agreement should address the fundamental driving factors of the ongoing conflicts and the disputed issues over a comprehensive peace process, more importantly, this agreement should clearly identify the role of external actors in the peace process, what they should and should not do, and what approaches of peacebuilding they should apply in order to achieve a sustainable peace instead of making the so called political settlements (clandestine deals) with individual groups under the peace process.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

Throughout this research paper, I have presented multiple arguments in an attempt to discuss, analyse, and compare the so-called liberal peace-building approach in Afghanistan. By analysing the nature of current peace-building approach which is primarily built on the values of liberal peace theory, it has become clear that this approach is not compatible with the Afghan context and has had counterproductive results in solving the conflicts. The external-led implementation of the liberal peace-building model in Afghanistan has had tremendous shortcomings, "beside mainstream observations about problems of sequencing, timing and horizontal and vertical dilemmas, one interesting line of argument explains the failure of external policies because of a too narrow focus on state building and an absence of broader liberal peacebuilding policies." (Krampe 2013: 72).

The external liberal peace-building interventions in Afghanistan under the too narrow approach of state building and provision of security, has imposed external policies that excluded Afghans from the decision making process on how to deal with the root causes of the ongoing conflicts. This narrow approach has implied an external regulation of the Afghan peace process under the apparently expanded umbrella of promoting democracy, human rights, gender, equality, freedom, and marketization – thus imposition of the western liberal imperialism. The U.S ‘apparently liberal’ intervention in Afghanistan had nothing to do with building long-term peace; the apparently liberal approach that the U.S is following in Afghanistan is all about the national security and geopolitical interests of the U.S, if it was really about maintaining liberal peace, Afghanistan would have now been in much better conditions.

As was discussed, the liberal peacebuilding approach in Afghanistan was just used a policy agenda to justify external intervention, this agenda sine was not compatible to the context of Afghanistan, has rather worsen the conditions and made the conflicts more intermingling. Therefore, the liberal peace-building agenda has had inconvenient consequences and inevitable counterproductive results. The primary obstacle to achieving long-term peace in Afghanistan is not about the tensions between liberal peace-building norms and the state building practices, but “focus on these tensions rather diverts attention from the realization that both agencies are imposing their agendas on domestic subjects. Western elites, comprising diplomats, policymakers and the human rights community, engage in top-down regulatory practices while justifying their own actions through seemingly liberal norms.” (Ibid: 73). However, a sustained and long lasting peace as discussed throughout this research paper requires vital efforts to provide the foundations of state-society relations. It requires deep institutional reforms, socio-economic development, and broad domestic consensus – possibly a new Social Contract.
However, the only short-term solution to the ongoing conflicts, particularly to the current peace with the Taliban, is to engage massively with the Taliban leadership as Khan (2011: 3) says, “…excluding their very top leaders, second- and third-tier Taliban leaders might be wooed if offered loads of money and increased participation in Afghan politics. They might also help in the capturing of top Al-Qaeda leadership if Americans are able to win their favours”. Additionally, the Unites States must be tough enough with the Pakistanis particularly the military establishments to stop supporting terrorism and insurgency in Afghanistan, “some in Pakistani intelligence agencies may be supporting the Taliban still in the interest of getting more economic assistance; a dollar-hungry Pakistani establishment needs to stop its covert support for the Taliban and its obsession with India. Only then can they get some economic aid from the U.S” (Ibid). If the international community but the United States in particular pursues these strategies together with supporting the Afghan government in building its capabilities, there is still a possibility of succeeding the peace process with the Taliban.

Giving more attention to the issues of good governance, gender, human rights, equality, and justice would neither help to bring peace nor would make the foreign intervention more liberal as long as the peace-building policies are designed and implemented by foreigners; such types of peace-building policies worsen the conflicts and restrict Afghans from becoming the owners of their sovereign rights.

And finally, Afghanistan needs to be studied seriously in its own right, the recent one and half decade experience of the foreign so-called liberal peace-builders’ intervention in Afghanistan have made them more chastened, watchful, and perhaps more sceptical than they were before the intervention.
Bibliography:


