An Enduring Lesson from the History of Peacemaking in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Peace processes offer opportune moments for social and political transformation in embattled nations. There is no perfect formula or peace recipe. As per the existing literature, the 'ripeness' of circumstances and timing of a peace process and pertinence of the 'substance' of settlements to the root causes of conflict are the main components of a viable peace agreement. In the past 30 years, Afghanistan experienced two unsuccessful peacemaking episodes: first after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the second following the removal of the Taliban in 2001. While failure of the former is primarily attributed to the complexities of circumstance at the time, ineptness of the latter is linked to the primacy of imposed deadlines over inclusive consultations and inadequacy of contents of the Bonn Agreement. By briefly examining substantive characteristics of peacemaking processes in the context of Najibullah's National Reconciliation Policy and the Bonn process, this article argues that meaningful structural change in favour of an inclusive and participatory political system and institutionalization of a regional balance of interests in foreign relations remain central to enduring peace in Afghanistan.

Keywords

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Introduction

With the commencement of US-brokered direct intra-Afghan peace talks in Doha, the prevailing sentiment is that Afghanistan is at a critical juncture where despite myriad domestic and external challenges, a narrow window of opportunity for achieving a resolution of the protracted conflict is emerging. In the contemporary history of Afghanistan, the closest parallel with the current political and security environment is the situation surrounding the last years of President Najibullah's tenure and his attempt at achieving a negotiated settlement through what was called the National Reconciliation Policy (NRP). Several recent analyses compare the two situations in terms of the similarities of foreign troop withdrawals, intensity and spread of conflict, chaotic internal power politics and political psychology of the leading players. In contrast, there is a limited understanding of NRP's substance and its potential relevance to the ongoing peace negotiations.

On the other hand, the Bonn process, which laid the foundation of the current political system, is often blamed for its quick fix, unambitious and technocratic approach to peacebuilding. While the Bonn process established and promoted a series of universal individual rights and liberties, superficial discussion and narrow institutional design ignored the underlying internal and external causes of the 30 years of conflict. This imbalance between a progressive regime of rights and liberties and a rigid structure of government undermined Afghanistan's path to national reconciliation, stability and lasting peace. Hence, further than the famous 'original sin' of not including the vanquished Taliban in the Bonn process, there are specific procedural and substitutive lessons to be highlighted and addressed during the ongoing negotiations between the state of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Peace Processes

The process leading to a political settlement is often lengthy, complex and multifaceted. Depending on the context, a constellation of factors must come together to produce a viable peace agreement and an enforcement mechanism. There is no perfect formula or peace recipe; however, according to the existing literature, the components for achieving a viable peace agreement can be classified under two broad categories:

Ripeness and Readiness: It refers to timing and conditions conducive for the commencement of a peace process (Haass, 1988; Zartman, 2003). The ripeness, in a nutshell, involves the perception of a mutually hurting stalemate, a clear desire among belligerents for seeking a way out of the conflict, emergence of consensus among external stakeholders for a peaceful settlement as well as political psychology and motivation of the leading players. Ripe moments appear naturally or induced deliberately by conflicting parties or their external supporters. It often transpires when a conflict reaches a point of inflection, and a mutually hurting military stalemate develops. Alternatively, an abrupt but inconclusive defeat of one of the belligerents, or a significant major foreign intervention into or withdrawal out of the conflict zone can also create a ripe moment for peacemaking.

Substance of Peace Agreement: It describes political and social principles and, institutional and technical methods needed to gain the consensus of belligerent to abandon violence as a means of achieving their goals. Peace agreements, according to Ghani and Lockhart (2007, p. 278), 'offer a mechanism for laying the foundation for a state-building process'. The contents of peace agreements include a new or modified structure of the state, rules and procedures that define the roles and functions of domestic and external stakeholders in the post-settlement dispensation.

Each category and factor have their features and characteristics and can be further divided into sub-categories depending on the depth of analysis. Moreover, the structure, methodology and design of negotiations are also becoming significant elements of successful peace processes. This article focuses on the substances of the NRP and the Bonn process.

In the last three decades, according to this criterion, the '*open moments*' i.e. the conditions favourable for the commencement of a peace process in Afghanistan presented themselves, in a workable combination, at least on two occasions. First, after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989 and the establishment of the Mujahidin government in 1992. Second, between the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and the first presidential election in 2004. The crucial open period of negotiating a peace agreement:

> presents the opportunity to delineate a systematic and participatory process that can create the foundational institutions of the state, but if it takes more haphazard, unsystematic approach to state institutions, there is a risk, at best a missed opportunity and at worst damage to the functioning of state institutions, which may be felt for generations. (Ghani & Lockhart, 2007, p. 279)

The value of such open moments and the relevance of peace agreements also depends on the approaches assumed to address the underlying causes of conflict. The prevailing neoliberal approach to peacemaking assumes that:

> intrastate violence is an irrational phenomenon that occurs in the context of the breakdown of state institutions and that re-establishing, or in some cases simply establishing, those institutions through a number of mechanisms across the security, governance, and transitional justice sphere will help build peace. (Westendorf, 2015, p. 4)

In the context of protracted civil wars, peacebuilding is primarily a political process and needs a political approach. Therefore, the 'technocratic approach' is structurally weak and insufficient to address the underlying social and political causes of a protracted conflict. Westendorf (2015, p. 5) argues, 'recognizing that civil war–affected societies are, not simply broken states that require 'fixing' by the international community is crucial to this engagement. Instead, they are societies in the midst of complex and contested processes of social change and political negotiation'. After briefly reviewing these general conditions and prevailing approaches to peacemaking, the rest of the article examines substantive elements and central ingredients of the NRP and the Bonn process at the domestic political structure and foreign policy orientation.

National Reconciliation Policy

Najibullah's NRP was a package of several ambitious social and political reform initiatives. The policy envisaged creating a condition conducive to the orderly and face-saving withdrawal of Soviet military forces, establishing terms for an enduring political settlement with amenable opposition groups, and fostering a peace and non-aggression agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Najibullah, 2018; Saikal, 1987, p. 54).

The idea of national reconciliation was conceived in early 1985. Moscow informed the administration of President Babrak Karmal (1979–1986) that Soviet troops would leave Afghanistan soon and that Kabul must prepare to take up the responsibility of defending the country and reaching a political settlement with the insurgency. In a critical meeting between Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Babrak Karmal in the Kremlin later that year, Soviet officials in the room noticed that Najibullah, then the head of state intelligence agency (KHAD), was the only one in the Afghan delegation who seemed to agree with the idea of the withdrawal of Soviet forces and a national reconciliation initiative (Garthoff, 1994, p. 728).

Later as the president of Afghanistan replacing Karmal, Najibullah owned and energetically pursued the policy course that was dubbed national reconciliation. He emphasized that NPR's approach is exceptional in the domestic context, but it was a necessary step that could take the country out of conflict and lead toward harmony and national 'unity' (Najibullah, 1986).

The substance of NRP could be divided into two broad themes: (a) forging a new political identity through democratization and restructuring the state; (b) transitioning from overreliance on the USSR and reorienting Afghanistan's foreign relations vis-à-vis the region.

Changing the Structure of Government

As a significant step towards reconciliation, the NRP recognized the need for change in the structure of the government to make the political system more inclusive and legitimate. This step was aimed more at aligning the authoritarian one-party system of government towards a parliamentary democratic model to attract buy-in from the Afghan opposition and notable diaspora in the West. President Najibullah emphasized that 'knowing that peace and democracy cannot occur without an increase in political pluralism, we have proposed conciliation among and a coalition of all Afghan factions' (Najibullah, 1990, p. 1). To achieve an inclusive and pluralistic state, the NRP recognized that orderly and consensus-based devolution of power could significantly reduce the reliance on the use of violence in pursuit of political goals. The policy thus foresaw certain measures in pursuit of horizontal and vertical devolution of state authorities and responsibilities.1

On horizontal devolution, Najibullah envisaged a multiparty parliamentary democracy as an ideal form of government, where, he argued, 'in accordance with the results of the election, a new government will be formed by a party or coalition

of parties which form the majority in the parliament. That government will rule the country according to the new constitution'. To guarantee freedom and fairness of the election, he added, 'we are ready to accept an international commission to observe the election so that fraud can be, prevented, and electoral fairness and legality assured' (Najibullah, 1990, p. 2).

The need for democratization, particularly the establishment of a parliamentary system of government, was one of the few reform suggestions embraced by individual political opposition who still doubted the fairness of any election as long as Najibullah's regime was in power (Kakar, 1990).

The NRP took an incremental approach towards the realization of horizontal devolution. As a first step, Najibullah reinvigorated the dual executive system by appointing a technocrat prime minister with considerable executive powers and accountable to the parliament. This government formation was similar in many ways to the executive branch structure during the decade of democracy under King Zahir Shah (1933–1973). As the following step and to prepare for future democratic elections, Najibullah's government redefined the purportedly 'Marxist–Leninist' Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) as a centre-left nationalist party akin to those of sister political parties in other Soviet satellite states. The PDPA was renamed Hizb-e Watan (Homeland Party). In this ideological reorientation, 'national reconciliation' replaced the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as the central pillar of the manifesto of Hizb-e Watan.

On vertical devolution, recognizing the shift in the social, political and economic conditions in Afghanistan and looking at the experiences of similar demographically diverse nations around the world, Najibullah acknowledged that

> the era of gaining victory for one line of thought through the suppression of other opinions is gone. Now we shall live together in peace. This is possible only through conciliation and understanding of the thoughts and views of all Afghans. In such a solution, all Afghans will benefit; no one will be defeated. (Najibullah, 1990, p. 2)

Legal guarantees to protect the rights of all sections of the Afghan society, the recognition of individual rights and freedoms required transfer of a series of decisions from the Centre to regional and local governments. Such decentralization has often been a contentious subject in the political history of Afghanistan, where, for over a century, state-building is presented as an effort to centralize power at the expense of handing over authority to localized forms of governance. However, the NRP took an unprecedented step towards recognizing national diversity aimed at gradually strengthening regional and local bodies.

As an interim measure, the revised Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan (1990), in its article 13, underscored that 'the Republic of Afghanistan is a multi-national [ethnic] country'. Ensuring political, economic, social and cultural equality among all ethnic groups, clans and tribes, the article promised that 'the state shall gradually prepare the grounds for the creation of administrative units based on national characteristics' (Constitution of Afghanistan, 1990, pp. 4, 5).

Fostering national sovereignty through recognizing and effectively managing national diversity is visibly discernible from discourses and documents of the

NRP era. Najibullah emphasized that preservation of Afghanistan's independence at the cost of the blood of countless peoples of the land remained the highest mark of national unity. Throughout the history, national sovereignty and independence were intrinsically linked to the national unity of its people.

It is evident that NRP not only recognized the need for horizontal and vertical devolution of authority and responsibilities as significant ingredients of the peace and reconciliation process but also took legal and practical initial steps towards their realization. Moreover, these domestic reform initiatives were to be complemented by a careful reorientation of Afghanistan's relations with its neighbouring countries and regional powers.

Foreign Policy Issues

There is a near consensus among the academic and policy circles that Afghanistan's geopolitical position at the intersection of the three regions, South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia, has made the country strategically significant for surrounding neighbouring and great powers. It is also well documented that for most of its modern history, Afghanistan has played the role of a buffer state between her powerful neighbours (Andisha, 2015).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent American-led military and financial support to Afghan resistance groups in Pakistan once again demonstrated the maxim that conflict in Afghanistan is primarily driven by competing interests of regional and extra-regional powers. The invasion disrupted a delicate power equilibrium in the region and placed Afghanistan at the centre of active East–West hostility, triggering a cycle of violence and conflict in the country which continues until now (Barfield, 2010, p. 238; Freedman, 1991; Ghaus, 1988, p. 209). Many policymakers and scholars suggested for Afghanistan's return to neutrality. Within the NRP's framework, it was argued that Afghanistan's return to neutrality would restore stability and tranquillity (Andisha, 2015). This policy line was endorsed by President Najibullah, who attempted to turn Afghanistan into a permanently neutral state. He called on the Secretary-General of the UN to hold an international conference on Afghanistan to discuss the reinstatement and confirmation of Afghanistan's permanent neutrality and to work out a programme of international aid in support of his NRP (Government of Afghanistan, 1989). In May 1990, Afghanistan's constitution was amended to reflect the regime's desire for neutralization and demilitarization. An entirely new chapter in the amended constitution was dedicated to foreign policy, and for the first time in the country's history, the term 'permanent neutrality' featured in its constitution.2

In one of his correspondence, Najibullah (1990) explained the goal of adoption of permanent neutrality as follows:

> I advise that you read the plans in the light of historical examples from Switzerland, Finland, and Austria. Our goal is the permanent cutting off of foreign hands from the internal affairs of Afghanistan and launching a positive competition among foreign

powers for the socio-economic development of our country. Permanent neutrality can be credible only when it is recognized by all relevant countries, which explicitly means continuous and unblemished respect for the national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of our country by all signatories to the final document of the international conference, including great powers and Afghanistan's neighbours. The principle of respect and guarantee for Afghanistan's position of permanent neutrality in itself negates all types of interference and aggression against our country.

The downfall of the bipolar world order and declining Soviet power meant that Afghanistan's foreign policy had to be reoriented towards emerging regional realities. Improving relationships with the neighbourhood and surrounding region became a top priority. Hence, building on the relative success of Afghanistan's traditional neutrality, a declaration of Afghanistan's permanent neutrality in return for a regional non-aggression treaty enforced by an international guarantee was the most desirable course correction for Najibullah.

Notwithstanding their merits and initial domestic success, his initiatives hardly attracted any serious support at the regional and international levels. The Western capitals and the Afghan resistance force, the 'Mujahideens' were predicting an imminent collapse of the Kabul regime soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.3 They perceived the NRP initiative to be simply an attempt by the regime to ensure its survival beyond the Soviet departure. Besides, at that juncture, when the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, neither Kabul nor Moscow had enough political capital to garner broader support for such an ambitious proposal (Andisha, 2015).

While the NRP appeared like a transformative reconciliation attempt at the end of the Cold War, a decade later, the Bonn process exhibited all features of a 'quick-fix' settlement to a post-Cold War intrastate conflict.

The conflict in Afghanistan, particularly during the 1990s, exposed and exploited all potential ethnic, communal, linguistic and sectarian fault lines of a diverse nation. Grievances over power, rights, past injustices and identities exacerbated mistrust, which ran deeper than to be 'fixed' by the restoration of old institutions and infrastructure. Afghanistan's traditional political structure was no more sufficient to accommodate the emerging sociopolitical demands generated by the realities of the three decades of 'revolutions', 'jihad' and 'resistance'.

However, when the ouster of the Taliban in mid-November 2001 opened an unprecedented opportunity for building the foundation of a *new Afghanistan*, the advocates of technocratic 'quick-fix' and speedy settlement compelled a rushed agreement.

The Bonn Process

Bonn process refers to a series of benchmarks designed by a team of international experts and endorsed on 5 December 2001 after a week of discussion, by the delegations of four Afghan political groups4 in the German city of Bonn. The document that established the Bonn process, formally known as 'the Agreement on

Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions', was a diplomatic improvisation on a 'template' for managing the political transition in post-Taliban Afghanistan. It briefly outlined steps from the creation of an interim administration to making a new constitution and holding elections.5 The Bonn Agreement, according to Suhrke 'was not a peace agreement but a statement about the structure of the post-war order, shaped by the military-political logic of total victory and written by the U.S. and its allies as they were driving the Taliban from power' (Suhrke, 2011, p. 21).

As the agreement's name suggests, the prevailing mentality in Bonn was 're-establishing' government institution rather than negotiation a substantive settlement for the underlying social and political cause of Afghanistan's protracted conflict. Therefore, negotiations among four politically rival Afghan groups which fought, deposed and slain each other for over three decades concluded in perhaps the shortest recorded time.

The agreement did not specify which type of 'permanent government' will be re-established. However, references made to the 1964 constitution and earlier consultations between the United Front 'Northern Alliance' and the Rome group was an indication of returning to a dual executive, a parliamentary system with the former king acting as its unifying figurehead. Nevertheless, the interim and transitional administrations (2002–2004) followed a co-opted centralized structure with a president and five vice-presidents encompassing all major political and ethnic groups at the helm. The transitional system, instead of serving as a free chapter for crafting a new social contract and laying the foundation of Afghanistan of the 21st century and becoming an opportunity for remedying the painful legacy and historical injustices, was surreptitiously used to prop up a centralized model as the most viable option. The model was ultimately enshrined in the new constitution.

Unlike the NRP's strategy of horizontal and vertical devolution, the Bonn process concentrated on horizontal and vertical centralization of powers and responsibilities by all possible means. Dozens of justifications, from a rigid interpretation of a Weberian state, to an excessive emphasis on the existential threat of warlords, were put forward in favour of ratification of a consolidated presidential system.

In hindsight, the Bonn process released two diametrically opposing developments in motion. An overly centralized and patrimonial system with little or no checks and balances pulling backwards to 'the golden eras' of a strong leader and omnipresent centre, and a progressive regime of individual rights and freedoms charging forward to an open, inclusive and democratic society. The executive system put in place to realize the latter aspiration was succinctly visualized by an Afghan intellectual as 'a single-engine scooter tasked with pulling a multi-compartment carriage on a dirt road'.

A multi-ethnic and bilingual society such as Afghanistan, in the words of Francesc Vendrell, long-time UN and EU special representative, 'needed a decentralized parliamentary system which would spread power among several categories of people, [not] a presidential system concentrating power in one person who was irremovable during his five-year mandate' (Vendrell, 2012).

On the horizontal level, the final version of the new constitution dropped the notion of an executive prime minister, reduced the number of vice presidents from five to two and removed the portfolios given to each vice-president during interim and transitional administrations. Constitutionally, the two vice-presidents are ceremonial titles designed to physically symbolize the diversity of the nation and inclusivity of the state. The constitution establishes little checks and balances for abuses of executive powers. The Single Non-Transferable Vote system, among other things, led to a weak and ineffective legislature. The judiciary never rose to the challenge of an independent branch of a democratic state and remained as a traditional department of the executive branch.

On the vertical level, relations between national and sub-national units followed a strict pattern of centralization. The main argument in favour of such a system was the existence of entrenched regional strongmen warlords capable of challenging the central government's authority. Nevertheless, the appointed governors and sub-governors, neither accountable nor representative of the people they were supposed to govern, often became a liability to the state-building process. Elected provincial councils have no budgetary or decision-making authority in their-own local administration, and constitutionally mandated district council and municipal elections have not been held (Worden, 2011).

The creation of an 'Independent' Directorate for Local Governance in 2007 and the Subnational Governance Policy in 2010 meant to improve efficiency by decentralizing responsibilities, democratizing local governance and reducing the gap between state and society. However, according to several pieces of research, while the initiative 'improved communication between the province and the center and the speed of decision-making,… its reporting line directly to the president's office has rendered it a highly politicized institution, and its methods tend to reinforce rather than reduce central control' (Saltmarshe & Medhi, 2011, p. 11).

Trusting the collective wisdom of communities in electing their governors and mayors enabling the provincial councils, and devolving certain resources and responsibilities to the provincial level could have saved precious economic and political capital and provided official accepted channels for the resolution of political conflict. Instead of rebalancing power between central and provincial governments through democratic participation, the system encouraged a vicious cycle of often co-opting the worst local strongmen. This pattern limited the prospects of empowerment and upward mobility of local communities, making already existing cleavages deeper and periodically creating new ones.

Post-Bonn Foreign Policy

After the 1989 Soviet withdrawal and the subsequent end of the Cold War, Afghanistan lost its strategic position in global politics. During the five troubled years of the Mujahideen government in Kabul from 1992 to 1996, internal conflict and a badly divided government prevented the possibility of making an independent foreign policy. The country became a battleground of conflicting

foreign policy interests of the neighbouring states. As a new force in the regional proxy war, the Taliban administration that controlled Kabul (1996–2001) was more of an extremist ideological movement than a government with articulated domestic and foreign policy goals (Roy, 1998, p. 210).

The Bonn process, which initially enjoyed an unprecedented international consensus and cooperation, offered an opportunity to devise a pragmatic and balanced foreign policy for the new state of Afghanistan. Surprisingly, the Bonn Agreement remained utterly silent concerning the direction of Afghanistan's foreign policy. Only one year later, on 22 December 2002, the transitional government of Afghanistan signed a declaration of Good Neighbourly Relations with its six neighbouring states. In this one-page legally insignificant document, the participants reaffirmed 'their commitment to constructive and supportive bilateral relationships based on the principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, cooperation and non-interference in each other's internal affairs' (United Nations, 2002). Subsequent documents such as the 2003 Declaration on Encouraging Closer Trade, Transit, and Investment Cooperation and 2005 Kabul Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation show that the diplomatic engagement with neighbouring and regional states was kept at economic and development spheres. Except for few marginal calls for restoration of Afghanistan's traditional neutrality (Gharekhan & Ansari, 2003) and the imperative of maintaining a balanced regional approach, Afghanistan's foreign policy in its first decade after Bonn was guided by a desire for forging strategic partnerships with the United States and other NATO member states.

Conclusion

Even with a brief examination of written materials at hand, it is hard not to see the NPR and the Bonn process in the recent history of Afghanistan as missed opportunities for reaching a durable political settlement. The NRP-led peace process did not meet necessary ripeness conditions; however, it presented a fresh and enduring perspective on the depth and breadth of national reconciliation. It underscored that a comprehensive reconciliation process must begin with the recognition of social, economic and political shifts in the country, and political and strategic changes in our region. Transformation is possible by adjusting and managing new realities, not insisting on re-enacting politics and policies that have failed in the past.

The Bonn process offered the best conducive environment for building a new Afghanistan, at peace with itself and a partner for its neighbours and friends. Regrettably, the passive and minimalist substance of the Bonn Agreement presented a short-term and technocratic quick-fix to a deep-rooted and multi-dimensional conflict in Afghanistan.

The mains lesson from the Bonn process is that durable peace in Afghanistan requires a practical and endogenous sociopolitical structure insusceptible to authoritarianism and dictatorship of any type and manifestation. Moreover, the conflict in Afghanistan has an equally crucial regional dimension, which the Bonn

Agreement entirely overlooked. Sustainable peace thus also needs reaching a credible regional consensus by carefully calibrating and balancing the difference in perceptions, calculations and incentives, as well as historical rivalries among the major external stakeholders in Afghanistan.

These are the most relevant lessons to be highlighted and included in the agendas of the ongoing peacebuilding efforts. Otherwise, it would add to the tragedy if the ongoing negotiation is condemned by the same failures.

Afghanistan's effort at nation-building, including the institutions of the state (i.e., state-building), during the first 100 years since the reclamation of its independence (1919–2019) can be best summarized as a period of trials and errors. At the dawn of the second century as an independent nation-state, Afghanistan once again is at a critical juncture, either it succeeds at ending a decades-long bloody conflict through a national consensus and reconciliation, or it enters a new era of war and conflict.

The overwhelming national and international support during the inauguration of negotiations in Doha on 12 September 2020 indicated that this time the condition for both domestic and external stakeholders is likewise conducive to secure a durable peace for Afghanistan. As the maxim goes, 'to make war is far easier than to make peace', translating this rare opportunity into a durable peace is a solemn responsibility of all relevant stakeholders, including citizens of Afghanistan. Making the best of the moment, among other things, requires undertaking a critical, calm and transparent review of past errors and missed opportunities to avoid repeating previous mistakes.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1 Horizontal devolution refers to the shift of decision-making power from the executive branch of government towards the legislative and judicial branches, often an aspect of democratization. Vertical devolution means delegation of power and control over resources down to local governments. See Rondinelli et al. (1989).
2 The preamble reads, '…creating favourable conditions for determining the legal status of permanent neutrality of Afghanistan and its demilitarization'. See Constitution of Republic of Afghanistan (1990).
3 For example, the prevailing attitude of the US government mirrored in the National Intelligence Estimate, dated March 1988, strongly argued that: 'we judge that the Najibullah regime will not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal even with continued Soviet assistance. The regime may fall even before the withdrawal is complete'. See Director of Central Intelligence (1988).

4   The four Afghan factions at the Bonn talks were the United Front, Northern Alliance, composed of several parties united in fighting the Taliban; the Rome process, built around the former King Zahir Shah; the Peshawar Convention; and the Cyprus group, involving refugees and the Afghan diaspora.

5   The Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions' 2001. https://peacemaker. un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF_011205_AgreementProvisionalArrangement sinAfghanistan%28en%29.pdf

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