

Position Paper  
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## On Mutually Hurting Stalemates, Peace Building, Actors, Factors, and Mechanisms



### About APPRO:

Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO) is an independent social research organization with a mandate to promote social and policy learning to benefit development and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and other less developed countries through conducting social scientific research, monitoring and evaluation, and training and mentoring. APPRO is registered with the Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan as a non-profit, non-government organization and headquartered in Kabul, Afghanistan with five regional offices. For more information, see: [www.apro.org.af](http://www.apro.org.af)

APPRO is the founding member of APPRO-Europe, a network association for disseminating applied research findings from conflict environments, conducting training, and carrying out evaluations. For more information, see: [www.apro-europe.net](http://www.apro-europe.net)

APPRO also acts as the Secretariat for the National Advocacy Committee for Public Policy, comprising sub-committees on Education, Food Security, Access to Justice, Anti-corruption, NAP 1325 and Access to Health. For more information, see: [www.nac-pp.net](http://www.nac-pp.net)

During Eid al-Fitr, June 16-18, a ceasefire was declared by the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, resulting in large numbers of Taliban flowing into major cities of Afghanistan, to be greeted by civilians, the police, and army personnel.

Since the three-day ceasefire, and the unsuccessful attempt by the government to extend it for another 10 days, there have been numerous conversations about the concrete possibility of negotiating a peaceful settlement between the government and international security forces on one hand and the Taliban on the other.

The three-day ceasefire after many years of fighting is a strong indication of what has come to be known as a “mutually hurting stalemate” in conflict

environments, with two sides fighting each other in protracted and sporadic battle but with no clear winner, resulting mostly in deaths of the fighters from both sides and mounting civilian casualties and misery for the broader population.

In these situations, two conditions are necessary for the warring sides of a conflict to negotiate peace. First is the persistence of a deadlock in a long conflict that cannot be overcome by either side escalating the conflict. Second is the existence or possibility of a mutually perceived way out with both sides seeing that a negotiated solution is possible and that a framework, satisfactory to both parties, can be found or established to begin dialogue for peace.\* These two conditions hold true for Afghanistan.

On July 19, 2018 NATO invited representatives from selected national NGOs in Afghanistan to the “Peace and Reconciliation Forum”, held in Kabul at NATO’s Headquarters. A few days prior to this gathering, the invitees had been asked to answer three questions regarding the peace process as a follow up to the momentum created by the three-day ceasefire between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, June 16-18, 2018.

The main concerns raised by the participants during this meeting included the following:

- Protection of women’s rights, particularly in relation to access to education, health, justice, and employment.
- Protection of the rights of minorities.
- Taking into account citizens’ sentiments about peace, their reservations, and general concerns during negotiations.

During the discussion, the representative from APPRO invited the participants to consider a number of key questions that needed to be answered prior to attempting to answer NATO’s questions. Below are NATO’s questions, numbered 1-3, with suggested questions to be considered prior to answering each of the three questions.

### **1. What are your concerns regarding peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan?**

The process for a peace dialogue for Afghanistan is not yet defined. To address this deficiency, the following questions need to be answered first:

Who are the key actors? For instance:

- Will the Afghan Government negotiate together with the Taliban, or will the American Government negotiate with the Taliban, or will all three parties negotiate at the same time?
- Who will represent the interests of Afghanistan as a whole? What is the division of influence and decision making between the government and civil society?
- Who will represent civil society? (We must avoid having the favorite few NGOs representing everyone).

What are the main factors? For instance:

- What can influence the negotiations, positively or negatively?
- How inclusive and transparent will the process be for negotiation and reconciliation?

- People want peace, but how do the negotiators know the price people are willing to pay for peace? In other words, what are peoples’ general concerns about peace with the Taliban?
- How will a negotiated peace affect the most vulnerable such as women and minorities?

What are the mechanisms for negotiating peace? For instance:

- There is no clearly defined or known mechanism for peace negotiations. Who will define the parameters of the mechanism?
- Who / which actors will be included in the mechanism?
- What degree of influence will be given to each actor within the mechanism?
- How does the mechanism incorporate the needs and aspirations of different segments of Afghan society, what they think of a negotiated peace, how they picture it, and what they are willing to give up for it?

Women and peace negotiations:

How will the provisions of NAP 1325 (and numerous other provisions on women’s rights) be incorporated in peace negotiations?

### **2. What role do you believe Afghan civil society should play in peace and reconciliation?**

The role played by civil society depends on the type of mechanisms in place (see questions raised in response to Question 1, above). The mechanism for peace negotiations, actors within the mechanism, and the terms of engagement within the mechanism need to be defined in such a way as to ensure the presence of, and a voice for, civil society. This includes ensuring that there are clear provisions for civil society to be present and actively participate in the peace process, and clarifying where, in the hierarchy of decision making, civil society will be placed.

### **3. How can NATO/ Resolute support help you in your efforts?**

NATO can make a case for the conduct of an inclusive public opinion survey across the country to assess the price ordinary people are willing to pay for a negotiated peace. It is clear that the vast majority of Afghans want peace with Taliban, but it is not all clear what price they would be willing to pay, or what trade-off they would be willing to make, to get peace.