

Geneva Peace Week 2025

Convergence & Divergence in Regional & International Dynamics in Peacebuilding & Peace-Making: The Case Study of Afghanistan Since Doha Talks 16 October 2025, 13:00 to 14:30hrs, GCSP Conference Room, Maison de la Paix, Geneva

The grave situation in Afghanistan formed the central theme of a vital discussion (Peace Panel) held during Geneva Peace Week 2025, titled “Convergence & Divergence in Regional & International Dynamics in Peacebuilding & Peace-Making: Case of Afghanistan since Doha Talks.” The panel was moderated by Ambassador. Dr. Andisha, with distinguished guests featuring Ms. Fawzia Koofi, Mr. Mirwais Naab, Prof. Michael Simple, and Dr. Mustafa Mastoor, each with extensive experience and expertise on Afghanistan, contributed to the discussion by sharing their insightful remarks.

Amb. Andisha opened the panel, highlighting the escalating crisis in Afghanistan, observing that the notion of a "fragile peace" the Taliban claimed to bring is ending, with the country risking a relapse to a "very hot geopolitical game". The discussion continued with distinguished experts analyzing the failures of the past peace processes and charting a new, urgent course for peace.

Main Themes and Highlights of the Discussions

Women and Peace

Ms. Koofi started her remarks underlining the persistence of exclusion of women in all processes of peace, including the Doha (referring to pre-2021 talks), women’s rights and their bodies are weaponised, thus making them suffer the most in wars. She added that on the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolution 1325, women’s inclusion in peace processes has increased only from 6% in 2010 to 14% in 2022. She referred to the Sham-al-Shaikh’s Summit for peace in the Middle East as a clear example of such a failure.

In the current context of Afghanistan, she underlined the suffering of women not only due to the war, but also due to the sexual violence perpetrated against them. She added that women’s rights are weaponised as a tool for both power and the continuation of some ideologies. She emphasised that whereas under the Taliban regime women’s participation in civil services and politics has dropped to zero, and the women of Afghanistan feel betrayed by the international community, they have remained highly active, engaging in both political spheres and contributing to international accountability mechanisms, such as within the UN system or the International Criminal Court.

The Failed Promise of Doha and Deepening Geopolitical Divergence

Speakers largely converged on the view that the seeds of the current disaster were sown during the U.S.-Taliban negotiations. Amb. Mirwais Nab, former Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, traced the initial convergence—the international fight against terrorism—which began to diverge following the decision by the US. to leave Afghanistan after 2010. He asserted that the Doha process, started unilaterally by the US, did not account for the demands of the Afghan people for peace but instead served the US's immediate plan for a safe withdrawal and an agreement on counterterrorism. This deal, compounded by secretive

annexes, led to the legitimization of the Taliban and the wiping out of the two decades of progress, including on women's participation. Consequently, this created deep suspicion both within the Afghan Republic government and the regional countries.

Taliban having a complex relation with many different terrorist groups, particularly regional groups of Tahrak-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Uzbekistan Islamic Party, East Turkistan Islamic Movement, etc, shows their very nature. The group is and remains an instrument for the geopolitical interests of others, and is unable to either build or run a state. Commenting on the recent move by India to invite the Taliban Foreign Minister, giving him a red-carpet reception, signifies the priority some countries place on geopolitics over human rights and democratic values.

Former Afghan Minister of Economy and Peace Council Advisor, Dr. Mastoor, however, pointed out that divergence began when regional countries pushed for a difficult U.S. and NATO withdrawal. This, combined with internal drifts inside Afghanistan disheartened the NATO led to what became the Doha talks, and now we deal with the result of it. The conflict has continued for over four decades, and the people of Afghanistan have tried through various fora to bring dialogue and political settlement for the country, in Tirana by Women Forum, in Antalya the CDP-G, in Vienna – the Vienna Process, in Istanbul by Forum for National Dialogue. However, all these political efforts can only succeed with the support of the region and beyond.

He lamented that over 1,500 days post-Taliban takeover, the international community often uses the excuse that their "plate is full" and Afghanistan is not a top priority. He also highlighted the problem of radicalization, noting that while schools remain closed for girls, the Taliban prioritized hiring 100,000 new teachers for jihadi madrasas last year, spending \$500 million, a situation that poses a long-term threat of radicalization.

An Active Conflict: Geopolitics and the Nuclear Risk

Professor Michael Semple, Long-term Expert on Afghanistan, emphasized that Afghanistan is currently experiencing an "active conflict," demanding an urgent pursuit of peace. He characterized the situation as unique: Afghanistan is the "only country ruled by a violent jihadi movement" that utilizes all state resources for its violent jihadist ambitions that also extend beyond its frontiers. This was only made possible by the Doha peace talks, which, instead of bringing peace, brought the Taliban into power. He stresses that as the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan has changed, so must the international community's approach. The Taliban, pursuing a pure ideological form of state, does not seek peace rather the establishment of an ideological state also outside of Afghanistan.

The conflict between the Taliban and Pakistan is a key demonstration of the Taliban's strategic commitment to overthrowing the Pakistani constitutional order and replacing it with an emirate. He warned that Central Asia would likely be "next". Such risks must be taken seriously. The international community needs to support the democratic forces to overcome the Taliban. Professor Semple, while answering a question, also raised profound concerns regarding nuclear security, given that Pakistan is a nuclear-armed state. He specifically pointed out that the Taliban have prioritized shifting state resources to the Afghan Nuclear Institute, securing its site with the Taliban intelligence service, and developing

secret technical cooperation with Iran and Russia. He deemed this investment and secrecy one of the most important non-proliferation dossiers globally.

Charting a New Path Forward

The consensus among the panelists was that the tactics of the past are obsolete and a fundamentally new approach is required, especially since Dr. Mastoor highlighted that the UN-led MOSAIC plan currently excludes non-Taliban Afghans and favors the Taliban's clear demands (recognition, ending travel bans, releasing central bank reserves) while the international community's requests remain vague.

Professor Michael Semple articulated that peace cannot be achieved by or through the Taliban, who are strategically committed to different outcomes. Since many Afghans, including some within the Taliban movement, believe the Emirate is unsustainable, the international community should focus on preparing for the eventual collapse of the Islamic Emirate and support the democratic forces of the country. The critical next step, he argued, is to provide safe, secure spaces (in Europe and the region) for Afghan national democratic forces and civil society to deliberate and work on the future of the country, thus preparing for a return to pluralism.

The international community must also confer legitimacy upon the Afghan people's resistance struggle. Ms. Koofi agreed, emphasizing the need for an organic, cohesive agreement among all diverse Afghan political and civic groups. She noted that the political opposition and civic groups must exploit the new geopolitical challenges by collaborating with regional countries to sustain democracy. Ambassador Mirwais Nab concluded by stating that alternatives must be supported. He and Ms. Koofi stressed that while they do not ask for military intervention or B-52 bombers, they urgently require space and support to re-establish a democratic Afghanistan before another devastating international crisis, like 9/11, occurs.

Amb. Andisha, in his wrap-up remarks, hoped that a regional diplomacy, as the conference in Pakistan, is important because the regional countries have taken on the peacebuilding agenda. The region has felt the outcome of sponsoring extremist groups as proxies, exemplified in the case of Pakistan. Afghanistan, even if not in the media, has always been the epicenter of geopolitics; therefore, the world, hopefully, after achieving some peace in Gaza, focuses on this.

Summarising the event, the panelists underscored that Afghanistan, regardless of lack of media attention, remains at the epicenter of geopolitical competition. The combination of a failed Doha process, the weaponization of human rights, the alarming proliferation of radicalization, and the new geopolitical maneuvering—including dangerous nuclear security implications—creates an urgent crisis. The path forward requires abandoning the failed strategy of seeking compromise with the Taliban and shifting focus toward empowering the diverse Afghan national democratic forces. Geneva, as a traditional center for peace and human rights, has a crucial role to play in reviving the peace-building agenda and providing the essential space needed to prevent Afghanistan from falling into another geopolitical abyss.