

Kyoto Peacebuilding Center (KPC)  
in Association with Academic Council on the United Nations System Tokyo Liaison Office (ACANS-  
Tokyo) and Global Peacebuilding Center of Japan (GPAJ)

## ***Afghanistan at a crossroad: Whither will it go?***

**Saturday, August 28, 2021**

The seminar was conducted by online zoom. Mr. Masakuni Tanimoto, Secretary General of Global Peacebuilding Association of Japan (GPAJ) opened the seminar. He then gave the floor to Ms. Sopaj who invited Mr. Yasushi, Honorary Chair of the Kyoto Peacebuilding Center to make opening remarks.

### **Mr. Yasushi Akashi**



Mr. Akashi stated in his introductory remarks that Afghanistan was developing into a major tragedy, due partly to the fact that the situation is itself deteriorating, and due partly to the decision by U.S. President Biden himself to withdraw American troops. They set a deadline which has provoked accelerated attacks upon the United States by the Taliban. Taliban has been engaged in a very effective assault all over Afghanistan, and in the last two or three days, there was a tragic attack near the Kabul Airport. There were many casualties among American soldiers as well as Afghan civilians. This has brought about a major turmoil in Washington, while President Biden seems to be sticking to his original decision to withdraw by a set date. There are all kinds of discussions, speculations, accusations, and at this point, nobody foresees full implications of this major deterioration of the situation in and around Afghanistan. We are, therefore, delighted to have two major speakers, Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto, who was UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan until about a year ago. He has been stationed there for about six and half years. He is therefore a major authority on the situation and will be helpful to elucidate the significance of these events. We also have Ambassador Shaida Mohammad Abdali, who was very close to President Karzai. He was his Special Assistant and occupied many vital positions in the center of Kabul, so he will speak from his great experience. We have these two major speakers to elucidate the complicated situation in Afghanistan for our benefit. I imagine they are available to answer questions from the floor when they finish. Like all of us, I am very eager to listen to these outstanding speakers.

## **Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto**



Ambassador Yamamoto his presentation from the title of the seminar itself and stated that there wer two crossroads that Afghanistan was facing: the first one is the economic growth and the other is the total chaos. The collapse of the government had not been predicted by anyone including even President Biden. The rapid fall has led to confusing situations that no one knew which way the situation was going. As a result, that people including the Taliban weren't prepared to take the lead in the situation. Some of the confusing results were the departure of Afghanistan people to the hosting countries, secondly the security situation where the government was no longer in control of the country and the third confusion was the economic situation including the closure of the banks, shortage of the food, etc. Further Ambassador Yamamoto said that one of the announcements that the Taliban did was the restrictions of women's freedom, and this came as a result that the Taliban weren't well trained to respect them. Some of the confusion needed to be addressed immediately and the other at the point when the situation was a bit more settled. If the Taliban wanted people to stay, they should provide civilians with basic freedom. Another great concern was the humanitarian crisis including displaced people. The receiving states of Afghans need to be assisted by the international community so that process could go smoother. How can the international community help? Given the current situation, the international community should give a clear message that there should be an inclusive dialogue. Ambassador Yamamoto concluded his remarks by stating that the role of the countries in the region was very important as they could make an impact on negotiations with the Taliban. The UN has played different roles in Afghanistan and can provide human rights and humanitarian assistance. This will enable the international community to take the right decision on the current situation.

## **Ambassador Shaida Abdali**



Ambassador Abdali started his presentation by stating that Afghanistan had gone thru a lot of ups and downs since the great game. Afghanistan has gone thru a lot of ups and downs since the great game.

The historical context of abandoning Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal led to the consequence of the 9/11 incident by allowing the global alliance to intervene in Afghanistan. Witnessing all the major events, Ambassador Abdali touched on the most important aspects that are relevant to the situation happening then. There were a lot of achievements at the same time in Afghanistan that purposely makes us believe that there is still hope to save Afghanistan. Since the transition process began in 2010 the mission in Afghanistan kept changing that in one word was mostly focused on passing the power and responsibility to the Afghan people. There wasn't a consistent peace-building effort in Afghanistan while the transition process was taking place. Ambassador Abdali believe that it was important to be consistent during the mentioned period that unfortunately led to a lot of breakdowns. The major change regarding peacebuilding in Afghanistan was the ambitious goal of President Trump by setting a deadline to wrap up the peace process. This was launched at a very critical period, a period that both peace and elections were taking place at the same time in Afghanistan. All of this contributed to the contradiction and confusion among the international community, as well as Afghans whether peace should be completed or elections to be held. This had a major impact on the situation in Afghanistan that contributed to a deadlock in the country. A significant turnaround regarding the deadlock occurred when the major peace conference took place in Moscow. Since then, the world started to pay more attention to the Taliban than the legitimate Afghan government.

As far as the achievements of the last 20 years are concerned, among the major contributing countries is Japan - being the first country to arrive in Afghanistan after the incident of 9/11 to hold the major international donor conference on Afghanistan. How was the long chapter of peacebuilding in Afghanistan supposed to end? This can be examined by highlighting two phases: First, the US-Taliban peace talks and second is Intra-Afghan peace talks. It's important to mention that during the US-Taliban deal the Afghan government wasn't accepted to be part of the negotiation table, which created a lot of gaps between the Afghan government and the international community led by the US. The intra-Afghan dialogue never happened because the Taliban already reached the point that was decided with the US. The key challenges were the demoralization of Afghan national security forces due to the US force's withdrawal without any condition. The withdrawal of the US troops was in a manner that even the Afghan government wasn't informed in advance. All of these led to a total collapse of Afghanistan that is considered to be more a political failure rather than a military. Ambassador Abdali concluded his presentation by stating that the international community is to be blamed for the catastrophic situation in Afghanistan, yet he stated that it was still possible to save Afghanistan, and that can be possible with urgent humanitarian assistance of the international community, followed by a unanimous call and support for an inclusive Afghan government - acceptable to both Afghans and the international community.

**Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**



Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari said that Afghanistan's economy has been going thru gradual but rapid deterioration or certainty and fragmentation that is causing on a microlevel the absence of national institution that can run fiscal power. At the institutional level, I'm not sure who has the capacity to lead. Mr. Dardari further examined the largest number of poverty where 90% of the population lives in the poverty. The country cannot continue like this for too long and it's in the interest of the international community and Afghan people to resume microeconomic institutions, public service, and economical cycle. UNDP is trying to represent an immediate solution by providing funds for a quick recovery of Afghanistan and to provide support to Afghan women because they make 65% of enterprise. Our focus as UNDP is women on enterprise and create basic income. Mr. Dardari concluded his remarks with UNDP moto 'saving livelihoods at the stage is as important as saving lives'.

## Panel Discussants

### **Ambassador Takahiro Shinyo**



Ambassador Shinyo addressed two questions to Ambassador Abdali as follows; would it be possible for a person from the Islamic world like Brahimi to help the Afghan process? What kind of ability and willingness must be shown by the new government? Ambassador Shinyo concluded his remarks by stating that if the process wouldn't be done thru the old Afghan process probably some neighboring countries like Russia and China might intervene.

### **Ambassador Tadanori Inomata**



Ambassador Inomata addressed a question to Ambassador Abdali as follows: Is there any way to establish transparency as to the validity of the external assistance offered by all donors to the Afghan over the two decades; the latest lessons learned report issued by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is indicative of such direction, which helps forge future short-term and long-term recovery assistance. Ambassador Inomata emphasized the importance of (i) urgently launching a new UN humanitarian flash appeal in favor of Afghan refugees, internally displaced persons, and most vulnerable people in need; and (ii) monitoring the response of the Taliban for fulfilling in good faith obligations assumed as a responsible member of the United Nations.

**Mr. Elizabeth Gamarra**



Mr. Elizabeth Gamarra addressed a question to Ambassador Yamamoto pointed out that although trying to implement a modern political system, it was difficult to instill a centralized government system. Additionally, you said that it takes time for the rule of law system (the constitutional state system) to take root in traditional tribal societies, such as Afghanistan. Considering what has happened during the last few weeks, do you think that it was worth the efforts to concentrate on constitutional state institution-building or UNAMA should have played other roles that could have influenced the Afghan national leaders including the Taliban and ISIS leaders?"

**Mr. Takaaki Mizuno**



Mr. Mizuno addressed a question to Ambassador Abdali on what kind of leverage, if any, do we have to persuade the Taliban to follow international norms given the fact that even the US military power could not convince them to follow the diplomatic agreement at Doha?

**Mr. Ken Inoue**



Mr. Ken Inoue addressed a question to Ambassador Abdali as follows: how can we overcome problems of corruption and tribalism?

### **Mr. Sam Onapa**



Mr. Sam Onapa addressed a question to Ambassador Abdali as follow: you mentioned the formation of an inclusive government to salvage the gains of the last twenty years. What kind of inclusive government should we expect given the theocratic ideology of the Taliban?

### **Dr. Sukehiro Hasegawa**



In his concluding remarks, Dr. Hasegawa stated that the situation in Afghanistan was an unexpected outcome of the US President's decision to withdraw US forces completely by September 1. With the unexpected development, he found it positive that the participants agreed that we should help the Afghan people. To do so well, he thought it desirable to bring about a paradigm shift and come up with a new paradigm of peacebuilding. Dr. Hasegawa thought that the recent development in Afghanistan brought an opportunity for the UN to engage more closely in Afghanistan by embarking on a new peacebuilding vision.

**Mr. Masakuni Tanimoto**



Secretary-General of the Global Peacebuilding Association of Japan (2018-), Executive Director of World Federalist Movement of Japan, Secretariat of Japanese Parliamentary Committee for the World federation.

**Mrs. Arbenita Sopaj**



Arbenita Sopaj is a Ph.D. candidate at Kobe University, Japan, and Teaching Assistant at Kolegji Dardania and Kobe University. She is researcher at RIPA (Research Institute for Indo- Pacific Affairs). Her experience involves projects focused on educational improvement, chair of various conferences focused on UN and EU work and decision-making process, business development manager, diplomatic intern, teaching assistant. She has completed double Bachelor on American Studies and European Studies. Double degree on master's focused on International Relations and Political Science. Recently she has joined Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Tokyo Liaison Office as an assistant. She is a regular GPAJ-member. She has participated on the book review entitled ''Primordial Leadership'' by Dr. Sukehiro Hasegawa where she compared ''State Legitimacy between Timor-Leste and Kosovo after their independence. Her latest contribution on Japan's Approach to Myanmar: Diplomatic Leadership or Business as Usual?

Report by  
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