Forging a Unified Vision: An Analytical Synthesis of Roadmaps and Policies for Afghanistan's Political Transition

Prof Sayed Husain Eshraq and Zalmai Nishat
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Preface: The Crisis of Fragmentation and the Imperative for Unity

From Fragmentation to Convergence: An Analysis of Opposition Visions and the Comprehensive Composite Roadmap for Afghanistan

The fall of the Republic in 2021 caused significant upheaval in Afghanistan's political scene in two main aspects. First, the delicate balance among the country's ethnic, cultural, religious communities, and political factions was broken, allowing a terrorist group to seize power. Second, in just thirty years, a group leveraging religion for control has emerged once more—a rare event both globally and within the history of the Islamic world.

In the four years since, a diverse constellation of political currents, armed resistance fronts, women's movements, and civil society groups has emerged, demonstrating persistent political agency despite Taliban rule. This persistence is despite the unfortunate international community's insistence on "engaging" the Taliban. These forces are united in their rejection of the Taliban's totalitarian system, which is incompatible with human dignity, citizen rights, and political rationality, and because the Taliban was born as a geopolitical force rather than as a group representing the interests of any of Afghanistan's diverse communities.

Whilst many groups have formulated "roadmaps" or strategic proposals to break the deadlock, these plans have remained theoretical. Their strategic weakness lies not in a lack of ideas but in fragmentation. As independent analyst David Loyn concluded in his assessment of the major proposals, this disunity results in political "deadlock," preventing the emergence of a credible *alternative* that can inspire hope internally and gain leverage internationally.

This report outlines a strategic process to overcome *collective action paralysis*. It analyses the roadmaps and proposals of Afghanistan's democratic opposition, documents a profound underlying consensus, and presents a synthesis of that consensus: the Comprehensive Composite Roadmap (CCR). The CCR's core innovation is its operational mechanism, the Political Convergence Framework (PCF), designed to translate shared principles into coordinated action.

I.   Methodology: Mapping Consensus Through Structured Dialogue

To move from fragmentation to synthesis, the Mosaic Foundation convened the third **Cambridge Afghanistan Series (CAS-III-2024)** in September 2024. Representatives of

six principal political currents presented their roadmaps for independent experts' critical review.

The participating groups were:

- Vienna Process for a Democratic Afghanistan
- National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan (NRCSA)
- National Trust Movement (NTM)
- Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)
- Federalist Assembly of Afghanistan (FAA)
- Afghanistan Citizens' Party (ACP)

A dialogue about these roadmaps uncovered significant overlap among the plans. Mosaic sought an assessment from David Loyn, which revealed more than 90% agreement across the proposals. Consequently, Mosaic facilitated a dedicated Working Group, led by Prof Sayed Hossain Eshraq of the Assembly of Coexistence and Liberation (Mehr), to merge the existing roadmaps into a single comprehensive document and to gather additional plans and proposals from political and civil society groups. The review was broadened to include submissions from groups inside Afghanistan, which had to stay anonymous for security reasons. In total, twenty different roadmaps and strategic proposals were collected and analysed.

As mentioned, the objective was to identify **overlapping consensus** and areas of **strategic differences**.

II.   The Discovered Consensus: A 90% Foundation for a New Afghanistan

The analysis identified near-universal agreement on foundational pillars for a post-Taliban order. This consensus provides a ready-made platform for unified action:

Legitimacy through Self-Determination: The inalienable right of the people of Afghanistan to determine their political future through a nationwide referendum or free elections.

Constitutional, Pluralistic Democracy: Establishment of a legitimate government based on the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the rule of law, recognising the country's ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity.

Human Rights and Gender Equality: An unconditional commitment to universal human rights, with gender equality and women's empowerment as a central, non-negotiable priority.

Security and Sovereignty: The imperative to dismantle terrorist networks, end the Taliban's "praetorian" security state, and build professional national forces, underpinned by an independent, balanced foreign policy.

Justice and Development: A commitment to structural justice to address historical inequalities and to pursue equitable economic reconstruction and environmental stewardship.

This shared vision, emerging from groups ranging from armed resistors to civil society activists, demonstrates that the democratic opposition agrees on **what** to build. The critical challenge has been **how** to make it together.

III.   Managing Strategic Divergence: The 10% of "National Issues"

The remaining **10% of divergence** encompasses deep, historically rooted "national issues" that require structured dialogue. The analysis pinpointed these five key areas:

No	Area of Divergence	Spectrum of Views	Nature of the Challenge
1	Structural Justice & Historical Inequality	**Logical strategies for addressing inequality and guaranteeing structural justice in Afghanistan, by moving towards a paradigm shift in governance ←→ Continuation of the same historical structure of governance**	This divergence concerns the lack of a unified and rational strategy to address Afghanistan's long history of uneven power distribution, class conflict, and systemic discrimination, which are seen as root causes of instability. The challenge is formulating a fair, evidence-based solution that all groups can commit to.
2	Pathway to Change	**Armed Resistance ←→ Civil Disobedience & Negotiation**	Fundamental disagreement on the primary means of struggling against the Taliban.
3	Model of Governance	**Centralised State←→ Decentralised/Federal System**	Contested visions of the state's structure, touching on historic grievances about power distribution and ethnic autonomy.
4	Role of International Actors and problem of geopolitics	**Essential Facilitators ←→ Secondary Supporters Regional legitimate concerns ←→ geopolitical issues**	Differing levels of trust in foreign powers, based on divergent readings of recent history.
5	National Identity & Symbols, territoriality & boundaries	**Unifying Homogeneity, denying diversity to achieve unity ←→ Pluralistic Recognition and recognition of unity in diversity**	Contested narratives around national identity, symbols of the state, national anthem, issue related to border — recognition of Durand Line as a border vs non-recognition of it

The CCR process does not hide these differences. Instead, it suggests forming the Political Convergence Framework (PCF)—a structured, principled forum where authorised representatives can debate these issues to reach practical compromises. Until the PCF is established, the Cambridge Afghanistan Series (CAS) has fostered an open dialogue environment to discuss these topics. In CAS-IV-2025, five panels addressed the five key areas of "national differences." Plans are already in place to continue this dialogue at the upcoming CAS-V-2026 in September 2026.

IV.   The Strategic Synthesis: The CCR's *Theory of Change*

The CCR is the direct product of the analytical synthesis of the 90% overlap in consensus across twenty roadmaps and proposals considered. In addition, the CCR seeks to build on a clear *strategy of change* based on the concept of "totalitarian fragility," which holds that the Taliban regime is inherently vulnerable due to its lack of legitimacy, managerial incompetence, alienation from society and international system.

Therefore, lasting change will not come from a single victory but from synchronised, multi-dimensional pressure that compounds these weaknesses while a credible alternative is built. This theory is operationalised through five interconnected Strategic Pillars:

1. **Convergence**: Forging a ***unified political alternative*** through the CAS and later the PCF.
2. **Pressure from Within**: Strategically supporting and amplifying civil and armed resistance inside Afghanistan.
3. **Pressure from Without**: Wielding coordinated international legal, diplomatic, and economic pressure to isolate the regime, including by doubling the campaign of criminalisation of the "gender apartheid"[1] in international law.
4. **The Diplomatic Track**: Mobilising a regional and global consensus, culminating in an UN-mandated process that recognises the PCF as the legitimate representative of Afghanistan's alternative future.
5. **Regional Dialogue for Peace:** As the Taliban maintains a symbiotic relationship with over 20 terrorist groups inside Afghanistan, and as the security of countries such as Pakistan in South Asia and Tajikistan in Central Asia is systematically threatened by these groups, there is a need to start a track 2.0 and track 1.5 dialogue on sustainable peace in Afghanistan and regional economic integration.

V.   The Operational Engine: The Political Convergence Framework

The Political Convergence Framework (PCF) serves as the core of the CCR strategy. It is designed as an inclusive, representative body that includes resistance groups, political parties, civil society, women's leaders, religious scholars (ulema), and diaspora representatives.

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[1] A systematic and institutionalised regime of gender-based oppression and domination, as applied to Taliban policies against women and girls.

- **Mandate & Principles:** Its goal is to turn consensus into coordinated action—aligning messaging, supporting internal resistance, and guiding diplomatic efforts as one credible entity. Membership requires public commitment to the CCR's three core principles: self-determination, human rights, and gender equality.
- **Pathway to Transition:** The PCF's work is phased: from internal consolidation and the creation of a unified charter, to securing an international mandate via the UN, convening a transition conference, and overseeing the formation of a legitimate, inclusive government.

VI.   Conclusion: From Parallel Roadmaps to a Convergent Path

An examination of twenty roadmaps uncovers a key insight: Afghanistan's democratic opposition is united in its goals but split over strategies and past grievances. With a 90% consensus, there is a solid basis for collective action.

The Comprehensive Composite Roadmap and its Political Convergence Framework serve as the missing link: a legitimate, people-owned mechanism in Afghanistan to turn latent unity into political influence. By serving as the "vehicle for change" identified in independent analyses, the CCR strengthens the opposition, offers hope within Afghanistan, and provides the international community with a clear partner for a stable, inclusive future. Moving forward, the focus shifts from separate roadmaps to the collective desire to come together and create a unified path.

Introduction: Forging a Unified Vision

More than four years have elapsed since Afghanistan's Republic fell in 2021. This event was not merely a regime change; it profoundly disrupted the country's power structures, legitimacy, and social order, reshaping fundamental societal norms and relationships. Over this period, social, political, and civil forces have developed both within Afghanistan and among exile and diaspora communities, demonstrating continued political agency despite structural challenges. A range of political movements, armed resistance groups, protests, women's initiatives, and civil society organisations have emerged, each responding in its own way to the collapse of institutions and social legitimacy. Despite their differences, these groups share a common position: they oppose the Taliban and other violence-driven extremism, considering them incompatible with human dignity, citizens' rights, and political rationality, and condemning their totalitarian ambitions.

While some currents reject the status quo, others aim to find positive paths forward. They develop roadmaps, strategic plans, and policies to address the political and social deadlock. These initiatives seek to reimagine state-building, reconnect social capital, and strengthen institutional capacities. Yet many of these plans remain just documents due to a lack of direct links between structural analysis, social realities, and power dynamics. Simultaneously, efforts are underway to promote solidarity and coordination among forces opposing the Taliban. In this context, structures have emerged as umbrella organisations that unite diverse groups.

While the "Vienna Process" brings diverse opposition groups under one umbrella and "Women for Afghanistan" aims to unify various women's struggles, the Mosaic Foundation initiative strives to create a "shared vision" and a roadmap by synthesising diverse political and civil society proposals for Afghanistan's future. From the perspective of collective action, these umbrella initiatives seek to overcome fragmentation, reduce the costs of political action, and formulate collective demands, thereby enabling scattered opposition to coalesce around meaningful political action or a vision. Indeed, these initiatives complement one another. However, history indicates that formal solidarity—uniting against a common enemy—without a basic agreement on key theoretical issues such as the process of achieving sustainable peace, the nature of power, the model of the state, and the connection between religion and politics—hardly results in effective political action.

The Mosaic Foundation's initiative, through the platform of the Cambridge Afghanistan Series (CAS), an annual conference at the University of Cambridge, to create a "shared vision" is therefore of significant consequence.

Within this framework, Mosaic adopted a distinct approach, becoming the first organisation to move beyond adding yet another "roadmap" to conducting a comparative analysis and synthesis of the roadmaps and policies of political and civil currents. As a charitable foundation, Mosaic's role is to convene rather than prescribe political plans. This "convening" is key, as the initiative goes beyond building a "shared

vision" for Afghanistan's future. Equally importantly, the series at Cambridge provides a neutral platform for dialogue and open discussion among political and civic groups with divergent views, helping to find common ground and reach compromises.

The Strategic Significance of the Initiative

This initiative can aid policies from opposition parties, regional, national, and global governments, and international bodies like the United Nations. It aims to build a *common vision via dialogue* among political and civil actors, avoiding discursive rivalry or dominance of agendas. This strategy has created a *shared consensus*. Here, *political rationality* is regarded not as a tool for gaining power but as a process to navigate social diversity, conflicting interests, and political coexistence through *rational conversation*.

This initiative aimed to establish a "Comprehensive and Composite Roadmap" (CCR), a plan that goes beyond mere opposition to the Taliban. It seeks to address vital questions about the future political framework, power distribution, legitimacy, social engagement, and fundamental rights like equality and freedom. The success of such a roadmap relies on integrating institutional rebuilding, renewing social capital, and empowering social actors in a coordinated, phased manner that mirrors society's realities. The roadmap should **avoid reducing development to just redistributing political power or establishing a quota system for elite changes**—issues that previously challenged the Bonn Agreement.

The various efforts of political and civil society currents are commendable. However, many of these structures still lack a clear vision for a **paradigm shift in reimagining the state in Afghanistan**, a fundamental transformation of the underlying assumptions and practices of politics, and of the understanding of politics and power, all of which are necessary for **sustainable peace and a historical political settlement** in Afghanistan.

The core issue is not just swapping one governance model for another. Instead, it is about **shifting from a system rooted in domination, power concentration, and the marginalisation or elimination of the "other"** towards **an order grounded in pluralism, the rule of law, and intercultural understanding of social realities**. This profound change demands a new view of politics—moving from a focus on acquiring and holding power to one that fosters the rational integration of diversity, resolves social conflicts through dialogue and consensus, and encourages meaningful citizen participation. Without this **paradigm shift**, many reform efforts, despite good intentions and potential, have remained reactive and short-term, unable to produce lasting, transformative change in social and political structures. Therefore, without fundamentally **rethinking politics and power**, no strategy can effectively connect political actions, social realities, and the needs of sustainable development, or facilitate a transition to a just, legitimate, and participatory social order.

Beginning of the Process: Cambridge Afghanistan Series and Roadmaps

In response to this need, Mosaic Foundation, during its annual conference at the University of Cambridge, invited six political groups of Afghanistan to submit and

present their plans for Afghanistan's future at the third Cambridge Afghanistan Series (CAS-III-2024) in September 2024. These submissions underwent critical evaluation by independent experts. The importance of this initiative lies not only **in uniting political and civil actors but also in providing a platform for critical reflection, scholarly analysis, and theoretical reconsideration**. This environment can shift the focus from emergency responses to responsible discussions about Afghanistan's future.

Political group representatives were invited—given diversity, ethnic and religious inclusivity, and strong local support—to share their visions for Afghanistan's future. They are listed below:

- The Vienna Process for a Democratic Afghanistan
- The National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan
- The National Trust Movement of Afghanistan
- The Federalists Assembly of Afghanistan
- The Freedom Front of Afghanistan
- The Citizens' Party of Afghanistan

These roadmaps or proposals represented various political perspectives, each proposing distinct strategies to address the current crisis. During the conference's dialogue session, experts observed considerable overlap among the presented roadmaps. It was suggested that the Mosaic Foundation commission a report highlighting the shared elements across these proposals. The conference ended with a collective sense of responsibility, highlighting the potential for innovative, participatory solutions rooted in intercultural values. This exchange created a valuable platform for ongoing dialogue and future actions.

Expert analysis showed that over 90% of these roadmaps share common core points, including: the right to self-determination; Afghanistan's legitimate, democratic transition; commitment to human rights such as freedom, equality, and development; guarantees for human security; recognition of social diversity; gender equality promotion; fundamental transformation in education and culture; eradicating international terrorism; just economic rebuilding; environmental preservation and climate change management; and a balanced foreign policy rooted in intercultural values.

This finding was later confirmed by the independent assessment commissioned by Mosaic and conducted by David Loyn, which was published on Mosaic's website. These commonalities clearly highlight the need to formulate a "comprehensive composite roadmap" (CCR) and demonstrate that utilising these shared points can create a coordinated and operational model for crisis management and for advancing the country's transformation process.

Working Group for Drafting the "Comprehensive Composite Roadmap"

Following the 2024 conference, a dedicated working group was formed, bringing together representatives from several of the six political groups presenting their

roadmaps, as well as civil society organisations (including women and journalists), independent experts, *ulema*, and academics. The Chair and Secretariat of the CCR Working Group also maintain contact with additional ulema outside the group.

The Working Group's primary task—beyond reviewing existing roadmaps—was to gather additional proposals, identify commonalities, and agree on mechanisms for determining areas of convergence. This process was managed and facilitated by the Mosaic Foundation, which leads the Secretariat of the CCR Working Group under the direction of Mr Zalmai Nishat and Ms Shaira Karimi.

Participants comprised the Afghanistan National Trust Movement, headed by Professor Nazif Shahrani; Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, who facilitates the Vienna Process for a Democratic Afghanistan; and members from the Federalists Assembly of Afghanistan. The Chair and Secretariat are still engaging with the other three groups, submitting their plans. Also, the Chair and the Secretariat consult a number of distinguished *ulema* figures. The Working Group, led by Professor Sayed Hussain Eshraq, President of the Assembly of Coexistence and Liberation (Mehr), is committed to uniting forces against the Taliban.

To strengthen civil society representation—particularly for women and journalists—the New Afghanistan Democratic Forum (NAD-Forum) was invited to participate. NAD-Forum is an inclusive, democratic platform that brings together several dozen CSOs and independent figures from Afghanistan, the region, and beyond.

Several independent academics and experts have also contributed to improving the analytical and comparative evaluation of the roadmaps. These include Professor Zuzanna Olszewska of St John's College, University of Oxford; Professor Magnus Marsden of the University of Sussex; Dr Nasir Andisha, Afghanistan's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva; Mr David Lyon, a journalist and Afghanistan specialist; Professor Michael Semple, an Afghanistan expert and former UN official; Ms Shahira Karimi of the Federalists Assembly of Afghanistan; Ms Sajia Baigham, a former professor at Kabul University; and Dr Munazza Ebtikar of Stanford University.

The formation of this multifaceted working group enabled the integration of political, civil, and academic perspectives, laying a solid foundation for developing the CCR. This roadmap offers a practical strategy for solidarity and coordination among democratic forces working towards a free Afghanistan.

Building on Convergence: Common Points in the Plans

The Working Group examined and combined twenty roadmaps and proposals from different political and civil society organisations, including resistance groups and six active factions in Afghanistan that continue their fight despite repression.

The review indicates that over 90% of these plans share similar visions and goals. Aside from these commonalities, all emphasise a core trait: an intense dissatisfaction with the current situation and a clear desire for change. This drive goes beyond mere

reaction; it aims to fundamentally reshape the country's political, social, and institutional structures, focusing on participation, legitimacy, and social justice. Such shared vision and values facilitate the creation of a unified roadmap that guides collective efforts.

Most of these groups believe that Afghanistan's future political system should be based on the people's right to self-determination, established through a nationwide referendum or other democratic mechanisms, and that human rights and equality, including gender equality, should be among its top priorities.

In short, these twenty roadmaps and proposals are founded on shared principles and values that should guide the future of governance in Afghanistan.

Points of Difference in the Plans

Despite extensive commonalities, differences among the roadmaps and viewpoints are evident. Expert analysis indicates that these differences manifest in practical domains. These divergences account for approximately 10% of the content and encompass five deep, historically rooted "national issues" that require structured dialogue to bridge the gap. They include the following:

1. **Structural Justice and Historical Inequality:** Logical strategies for addressing inequality and ensuring structural and social justice in Afghanistan.
2. **Pathway to Change**: Methods of struggle for creating *change* and how to realise it: engagement with the Taliban versus struggle against the Taliban.
3. **Localisation vs. International Engagement:** Differences in views on the role of international actors and the necessity of localising transformations.
4. **Model of Governance:** Differences in views concerning the desired type of political system for the country: centralised vs decentralised political systems, ranging from unitary to federal systems.
5. **Territorial Integrity and National Identity:** Interpretation of the concept of territorial integrity, the issue of border disputes, and contested narratives concerning national symbols and identity.

These five points of divergence were discussed at the Cambridge Afghanistan Series IV (CAS-IV-2025) conference in September at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, and are scheduled for further structured dialogue at CAS-V-2026.

Agreeing on Rigorous Methodology: Production of Preliminary Documents

Considering the differences mentioned earlier, the Working Group members prepared four initial documents before combining the roadmaps and strategic perspectives. Using these documents and following the suggested methodological guidelines and clarifications, the CCR could be developed. These documents comprised:

1. The completed 2024 report on the six roadmaps (refer to the Mosaic website).

2. The **analytical report on the twenty roadmaps and proposals** (this report, now updated).
3. A list of criteria for roadmap analysis; and
4. A guiding framework for formulating the CCR for political transition in Afghanistan.

The CCR draft, based on these documents, seeks to outline the shared elements of the roadmaps and viewpoints of political and civic groups, highlighting their key ideas, values, and visions. Furthermore, various approaches, mechanisms, and practical steps have been integrated at various stages to enhance its feasibility.

Before the Cambridge Series, a version of the CCR was produced and submitted to the Working Group. A revised version (Second Edition) was launched at the conference on 19–20 September 2025, as part of the fourth round of the Cambridge Afghanistan Series (CAS-IV-2025) at Jesus College, Cambridge. Based on feedback collected during and after the conference, the CCR was revised, and the Third Edition was produced, which is now available on Mosaic's website.

The Working Group's role has been to find common ground and address differences. As a result, the CCR was established, and five specialised panels were organised to explore differing views and foster open discussion of these five "national issues." Consequently, ongoing dialogue among groups on these topics is highly valued, and Mosaic is dedicated to offering the platform needed to support these conversations.

Revision of Roadmaps and Strategic Plans'

The documents reviewed, in summary, are as follows:

1. **The Vienna Process for a Democratic Afghanistan**

The Vienna Process's plan highlights that resolving Afghanistan's political and social crisis requires creating an inclusive political structure that involves all ethnic, political, social, and cultural groups, both women and men. Public participation is seen as a key requirement for establishing stability and lasting peace.

2. **The National Resistance Front of Afghanistan**

The NRF charter outlines a comprehensive, multidimensional framework encompassing the military, political, social, and cultural dimensions. Relying on Afghanistan's history and civilisational heritage, this charter pursues a national, democratic, and modern approach.

3. **The Afghanistan Freedom Front**

The charter of the AFF is based on the principle of national sovereignty and a united Afghanistan, emphasising freedom, social justice, human rights, and universal

participation. With a moderate approach to the religion of Islam and advocating peaceful coexistence among ethnicities and faiths, AFF confronts discrimination and inequality.

4. The National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan

The NRC has presented a phased plan in response to the current crisis, pursued at both national and international levels, focusing on creating a unified opposition umbrella and engaging the international community to facilitate dialogue.

5. The National Trust Movement

The *Nahzat Etimade Milli* (NTM) supports a decentralised, citizen-centric, and value-based political system. She has presented her plan for overcoming Afghanistan's current crisis in three stages, focusing on international and national peace commissions that will lead to a transitional government.

6. The Assembly of Coexistence and Liberation or "Mehr"

The "Mehr" Assembly, relying on principles of peaceful coexistence, social justice, and human dignity, presents a roadmap for overcoming the current crisis, managing the transition period, and rebuilding national institutions.

7. The Citizens' Party of Afghanistan

The CPA sees the root of the country's crises in the continuation of ethnic inequalities and the historical domination of minorities. This party supports a federal parliamentary system and emphasises the need to transition from authoritarianism to democracy through internal coordination and international engagement.

8. The Federalists Assembly of Afghanistan

The FAA attributes the roots of political instability and the failure of governance structures in Afghanistan to the incompatibility of past systems with the country's social and historical realities. This current explicitly emphasises fundamental change in the power structure and supports a transition leading to a federal constitution.

9. The Afghanistan Third Way Movement

ATWP introduces itself as a "global network of independent intellectuals of Afghanistan" whose members consist of university professors, researchers, politicians, professionals, youth, and activists. ATWP emphasises modernising power structures and establishing national stability based on principles of balance.

10. The National Axis Party

The NAP's political discourse focuses on concepts such as "Afghan-ness" (*Afghaniyet*) "Islam-ness" (*Islamiyet*), Civility" (*madanyet*) and "Legality" (*qanoonyet*). It proposes "civil struggle" as its primary strategy, aiming to change Taliban behaviour through dialogue and civil pressure.

11. The Islamic Party – Led by Hekmatyar

The Islamic Party's strategic viewpoint proposes forming a "Competent and Elected Council" tasked with drafting and approving a new constitution, after which negotiations among internal factions are recommended. It emphasises entrusting political leadership as a "Divine Trust."

12. The Republican Party

In its statement, the Republican Party emphasises certain identity elements as red lines, including the Afghan identity, while also reflecting tendencies towards democratic principles, including drafting a new constitution and holding nationwide elections with the participation of all political factions.

13. The National Congress of Afghanistan

The NCA's roadmap is formulated at a general level, with its core grounded in a serious commitment to the principle of "non-violence" and the rejection of any policy or action that leads to bloodshed. It does not recognise the Durand Line.

14. The National Movement for Peace and Justice

The NMPJ adopts a cautious approach, emphasising the implementation of the "intra-Afghan understanding" section of the Doha Agreement and calling for the revival of the High Council for National Reconciliation.

15. The New Afghanistan Democratic Forum (NAD-Forum)

NAD-Forum serves as an inclusive, diverse, and democratic civil society platform for fostering collaboration among over 40 CSOs and hundreds of independent figures. It operates through five Thematic Working Groups focusing on counterterrorism, human rights, pluralism, humanitarian aid, education, and dialogue facilitation. NAD-Forum has adopted CCR.

16. (16-20) Currents Inside the Country

Six active political and civic groups within Afghanistan, whose identities are kept confidential for security reasons, have shared their strategic perspectives. They all emphasise the need for fundamental and structural reforms and view the Taliban as an ineffective organisation lacking both political and social legitimacy.

The Logic of Producing the CCR

Creating the CCR for Afghanistan requires aligning diverse political, cultural, and social interests—focusing on rational political approaches, dialogue-driven ethics, and the country's shared historical background. The strategy should be built on shared civilizational values, social ethics, and development-focused justice principles, forming a foundation for mutual respect and recognition among Afghanistan's diverse cultural and religious groups.

Democratic mechanisms—such as citizen participation, openness to diverse viewpoints, and inclusive decision-making—should be considered alongside our justice-focused civilisational traditions, notably the ancient principle of *Daad-o-Wedaad* (Justice and Reciprocity). Shared memory, intercultural dialogue, and historical experience underpin an order grounded in social justice, ethical legitimacy, and institutional accountability.

Afghanistan's history demonstrates that hegemonic and exclusionary approaches weaken social bonds, increase structural problems, and heighten cultural divides. Conversely, an inclusive political system focused on human development and citizenship is the only sustainable route toward a fair and stable future, where justice is reflected in social interactions and institutional practices.

This governance model relies on embracing differences and maintaining ongoing, critical dialogue. It provides a foundation for ethical solidarity and long-term coexistence to flourish. Unlike strategies that seek to homogenise or simplify, this approach emphasises the need for institutional flexibility to navigate Afghanistan's complex social landscape, thereby creating conditions favourable to sustainable development, political stability, and social justice through pluralism. Within this framework, there is hope for a gradual shift from Afghanistan's ongoing crises toward a future rooted in justice, human development, and intercultural dialogue. Crafting a clear, shared roadmap is essential, along with offering an alternative to the current situation—one that respects diverse opinions through careful, balanced, and future-focused engagement.

Two Visions of Politics

An analysis of twenty roadmaps and proposals reveals two main visions of politics. One focuses on maintaining a traditional view of governance, while the other recognises and seeks to accommodate pluralism. The first approach is derived from the Turkish model of "nationalism," which is grounded in a specific conception of the nation-state. In this framework, sovereignty and national identity are tied to a particular race, language, and religion—namely, Turkic ethnicity, the Turkish language, and Sunni Islam in the context of Türkiye. This perspective tends to promote policies of assimilation, envisioning the ideal citizen as ethnically Turkic, linguistically Turkish, and religiously aligned with state-endorsed Sunni Islam.

The roots of this model are deeply embedded in the late Ottoman era, especially the ideas of the Young Turks. Mustafa Kemal's Turkey later formalised it in the 1920s, downplaying the Islamic element in favour of secularism, yet state institutions played a key role in provision of the "right" interpretation of Sunni Islam. Since then, many political elites in Muslim-majority nations—spanning the Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—have adopted this ideology, often without critical scrutiny. In such regions, the nation-state is usually seen as the political manifestation of a dominant ethnolinguistic or religious group. Minorities—such as majorities in Afghanistan—are expected to assimilate into a single national identity, or they may face second-class treatment.

This presents a sharp contrast to an *alternative* political vision that champions pluralism, diversity, and coexistence. In this approach, the sovereignty and identity of the state are not tied to any specific race, language, or religion. Citizenship here emphasises accommodation, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence rather than assimilation. Secularism is seen not as hostility towards religion but as the institutional embodiment of religious pluralism. Core principles such as self-determination, gender equality, ethnic and cultural equality, and fundamental human rights underpin this model of political life.

This is the vision of politics that upholds "unity in diversity," reflecting a commitment to a civic order in which diverse communities can live together with dignity and mutual recognition.

This approach aligns with the *modus vivendi* tradition in modern political philosophy, a rising realist school and a field of intellectual history linked to Cambridge and its intellectual history tradition. However, its origins extend much further back. For over two millennia before colonial modernity upheavals, Persianate political culture fostered practices of managing multiple authorities from the Balkans to Bengal. This extensive history shows that pluralism is not a foreign concept but a native political heritage—one that continues to be crucial in shaping inclusive futures throughout the region today.

Conclusion

Discussions within the *Cambridge Afghanistan Series* (CAS) show that politics in Afghanistan—much like the wider Persianate tradition—is fundamentally the art of engaging with the **other** and managing differences with respect to ensure peaceful coexistence. Meaningful **paradigmatic change** and legitimate governance can only emerge through the integration of scholarly insight, indigenous capacities, and practical governance principles, creating a foundation for social legitimacy, stability, and sustainable development.

Historical experiences rooted in ethics-focused traditions show that justice, beyond just individual virtue, remains the central criterion for political legitimacy. This approach appreciates diverse viewpoints, emphasises dialogue and rational decision-making, and aims to avoid forcing a single perspective on society. Ethics-centred governance combines practical wisdom, political legitimacy, and distributive and procedural

justice, creating a unified framework in which ethics, wisdom, and justice guide fair political practices.

In this vision, justice serves as the foundational principle guiding institutions and political frameworks, fostering harmonious coexistence among Afghanistan's diverse groups, including various ethnicities, religions, sects, and languages. This approach—integrating ethics, political philosophy, practical wisdom, and legitimacy, with a strong fidelity to historical political culture of the Persianate world—was a key focus at CAS and provides a framework for reimagining modern governance.

The CCR provides the essential *theory of change* to translate this vision into practice. Through mechanisms such as the Political Convergence Framework, the CCR moves from abstract agreement to a strategic plan for building a legitimate, pluralistic, and stable political order. Afghanistan's path forward requires collective wisdom, respect for cultural and social diversity, drawing on historical experience and indigenous capacities, and adopting innovative and transformative approaches. In this sense, politics is the art of coexistence—an art that enables political order, social justice, and civilisational will, and breaks the country's recurring cycles of injustice and conflict.

By connecting ethics-focused intellectual traditions with contemporary experience and fostering open dialogue, the CAS plays a strategic role in transforming political discourse, promoting paradigm shifts, and offering a viable alternative for Afghanistan's future. This methodology guides the CCR in pinpointing shared interests among diverse groups and encouraging critical conversations to reach a broad political consensus based on common ground.