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## International Task Force on Afghanistan Calls for Opening Talks on a Regional Peace Settlement

### Century Foundation Report Proposes International Facilitator to Start the Process

**March 23, 2011**—The co-chairs of The Century Foundation’s International Task Force on Afghanistan in Its Regional and Multilateral Dimensions, Lakhdar Brahimi and Thomas R. Pickering, today released *Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace*, a report by a high-level international task force calling for a prompt start to talks using an international facilitator to explore the possibilities for negotiations to end the Afghanistan conflict.

Task force co-chair Pickering, former U.S. undersecretary of state and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, India, and Russia, noted the task force members’ shared conviction that the Afghanistan war is settling into a stalemate. “The growing recognition of stalemate sets the stage for a political phase to negotiate a settlement that concludes the conflict—and the time to start that political process is now.”

“The military and economic surge needs to be complemented with a diplomatic surge,” Pickering added.

Co-chair Brahimi, who served as United Nations special envoy in Afghanistan from 1997–99 and 2001–04 and was primary architect of the 2001 Bonn conference agreement on a post-Taliban Afghan government, said, “There is no victory to be had, for any side, in Afghanistan’s thirty-two-year-long war. Every ‘victor’ in this long war has found its victory to be ephemeral—simply a pause before another renewal of war.”

Among the task force conclusions:

- An international facilitator is needed now to talk to all the potential parties to a negotiation in an exploration of whether they are prepared to make the compromises needed to achieve a settlement.
- While the United States will be central to a negotiation, it can hardly mediate a conflict in which it is a principal combatant.

The Century Foundation conducts public policy research and analyses of economic, social, and foreign policy issues, including inequality, retirement security, election reform, media studies, homeland security, and international affairs. The foundation produces books, reports, and other publications, and convenes task forces and working groups. With offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., The Century Foundation is nonprofit and nonpartisan and was founded in 1919 by Edward A. Filene.

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- The exploration would evolve into a process leading to agreement among the parties on the future governance of Afghanistan and their roles and participation.
- It will be up to the Afghans, not the foreigners, to decide how to structure their internal governance for the future. The international community's stake is in suppressing terrorist networks and drug trafficking and in supporting peace through aid for development and human rights.
- A negotiating process will be unusually complex, with many layers and parties both inside Afghanistan and throughout the region, including the Central Asian states, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Russia as well as the principal donor and troop-contributor countries.

“The facilitator could be an international organization, a neutral state, or a group of states,” Brahimi stated. “The Afghan government has already indicated clearly its desire for a negotiated peace. It is important now to initiate a process to determine whether all parties see a realistic hope of achieving their most important goals through a negotiated settlement.”

“The road to stability and peace in Afghanistan is steep and difficult. We are fortunate to have these two outstanding individuals lead a comprehensive and important international inquiry into how best to move forward,” said Richard C. Leone, president of The Century Foundation. “They know how the U.S. government works, how the United Nations works, and most importantly, how Afghanistan works. There are not many people who have talked to all sides in this conflict over all these years.

“In fact, the entire membership of the task force is remarkable for its service, to their individual nations and to the international community, in diplomacy and defense, statecraft and politics, war-fighting and peace-keeping, refugee survival and in-depth reporting,” Leone added.

The task force on Afghanistan, assembled and supported by The Century Foundation, included former senior officials of major governments and international organizations coming from Algeria, Russia, Turkey, China, Japan, Germany, France, and Spain. Various American members held policymaking positions in the defense or state departments in the Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and second Bush administrations. The task force was unanimous in endorsing the report's analysis and recommendations.

The Century Foundation received major support for the project from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and additional support from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of Germany and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Century senior fellow Jeffrey Laurenti coordinated the work of the task force with fellow Michael Hanna. The roster of task force members is attached. The full *Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace* report, including an Executive Summary and Summary of Recommendations, may be downloaded at no charge at <http://www.tcf.org>.

For further information on The Century Foundation, please visit the website [www.tcf.org](http://www.tcf.org) <<http://www.tcf.org>> . The Century Foundation is also on Twitter at [@TCF\\_Century](https://twitter.com/TCF_Century).

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