OFFICIAL REVIEWER REPORT

for Zaland Faiz Muhammad's dissertation on the topic "Peace-Building Process in Afghanistan: Political Power Distribution and it's Future", submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Sciences (8D03104)

№	Criteria	Eligibility Criteria	Justification of the official reviewer's position
1.	The topic of the dissertation (as of the date of its approval) corresponds to the directions of science development and/or state programs	1.1 Correspondence to priority directions of science development or state programs: **2)** The dissertation was completed **within the framework of another state program**	The dissertation corresponds to **the main approaches** defined in **the Concept for the development of higher education and science in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029** (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 28, 2023 No. 248): - to **the development of higher and postgraduate education** in terms of **the internationalization of higher and postgraduate education**; - to **the development of science** in terms of **the development of university science**. The dissertation also corresponds to **the objectives of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2030** (Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 6, 2020 No. 280) in terms of increasing efforts to create a politically stable, economically sustainable and secure space around Kazakhstan and continuing the course towards strengthening international peace and cooperation, increasing the effectiveness of global and regional security and interaction systems as well as **to priorities** in the field of maintaining international peace and security, in the field of regional and multilateral diplomacy, incl. giving the UN Hub in Almaty the status of an interregional UN center in Kazakhstan for the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting its activities in the states of Central Asia and Afghanistan.
2.	Importance to science	The work **makes** a significant contribution to science, and its importance is **well disclosed**	The work makes a significant contribution to science from two points of view: - **First, from the point of view of the relevance of the research topic:** Since the early 21st century, Afghanistan has been one of the world's top three terrorism-affected states. While Afghanistan has been seen as a major source of terrorist threats, the country has also been a major victim of terrorism. Over a nearly two-decade period, the presence of foreign troops and a Western-backed government in Afghanistan has been unable to stabilize the country. The economic situation in Afghanistan remains difficult and is complicated by droughts, economic breakdown, the government's inability to fulfill economic projects and a lack of international aid. The situation in Afghanistan should also be considered in light of international factors. Afghanistan for a long time was a country under occupation, with limited national sovereignty. Its security, internal stability and economic development depended on the U.S., NATO and global economic aid. Thus, the question of peacebuilding

			in Afghanistan is extremely relevant both in terms of Afghanistan trajectory of sustainable development and a wider range of regional security issues. - **Second, from the point of view of massive work done by the Author to make differentiation of definitions related to the peace-building process**. The Author summarized a huge massive of the existing peacebuilding literature, made bibliometric analysis of **2,291 articles** using special instruments of analysis.
3.	Principle of independence	The level of independence: **1) High**	**The level of independence of research paper is high.** The dissertation is an **independent original** study, which results make a significant contribution to peacebuilding theory in general and peacebuilding process in Afghanistan in particular. Obviously, the research has been carried out without external interference or pressure, based on the Author's own scientific understanding and chosen methodology.
4.	Principle of internal unity	4.1 Justification of the dissertation relevance: **1) Justified**	**The topic of the dissertation is relevant and justified** taking into account scientific and practical significance. Dissertation work is demanded research for nowadays. As the Author underlines, globally, during the first ten years after the end of the conflict, 31% of them continued. The protracted conflict in Afghanistan is the embodiment of the unsuccessful efforts of the international peace-building community. Thus, the lessons learned from the situation in Afghanistan can help resolve regional and global disputes. The dissertation relevance is confirmed also by international publications, including journals, indexed in the Scopus database (Q1-Q2, percentile 66 in Sociology and Political Sciences).
		4.2 The content of the dissertation reflects the topic of the dissertation: **1) Reflects**	The content of the thesis **fully reflects** the research topic. Formulated research goal and objectives, all parts of the thesis are subordinated to the research topic "Peace-Building Process in Afghanistan: Political Power Distribution and it's Future". **The first section** demonstrates a huge methodological work conducted by the Author, a systematic literary review using a bibliometric analysis and other instruments. **The second section** defines theoretical frameworks and conceptual approaches to the study of the peace-building process in general and in Afghanistan in particular using the methodology, including protocols, inclusion-exclusion criteria,and the basic research profile of the literature. **The third section** focuses on the study of ontological and epistemological aspects of theories of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and demonstrates empirical results and main discussion. It provides descriptive statistics and results, includes a discussion of factors contributing to the success or failure of the peacebuilding process, followed by limitations, suggestions for future research. Each part contains relevant conclusions and results of the study. The content of the work corresponds to the declared structure and is structured in such a way as to achieve the assigned tasks.

		4.3. The purpose and objectives correspond to the topic of the dissertation: **1) Correspond**	The purpose and objectives **correspond** to the topic of research. Dissertation research **is aimed at** identification of the main factors,consequences of the peace-building process and the distribution of political forces (actors) in Afghanistan over the past two decades. **The object** of the study is the peace-building process in Afghanistan in the period from 2001 to 2022; the distribution of political power and the influence of external andinternal political actors in the peace-building process in Afghanistan. To achieve this goal, the following **tasks** have been identified: - identification of differentiation in the use of basic definitions in determining the complexity of the peace-building process in Afghanistan; - study of ontological and epistemological aspects of theories of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction; - consideration of the historical context of the problem of peacebuilding in Afghanistan; - identification of contradictions in the religious and ethnocultural identity of the Taliban movement; - determining the level of scientific sophistication of the problem of peacebuilding in general, and in Afghanistan, in particular, using the methodologies of bibliometric research analysis (Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) and content analysis; - analysis of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the strategy of the United States andthe international community to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan over the past two decades; - assessment of the influence of internal political actors on the post-conflict reconstruction process in Afghanistan; - conducting sociological and expert surveys to determine the attitudes ofrepresentatives of various social groups towards the prospects of peacebuilding and thedistribution of political power in Afghanistan. All tasks were completed in **full accordance** with the research topic.
		4.4 All sections and provisions of the dissertation are logically interconnected: **1) Fully interconnected**	All sections and provisions of the dissertation are completely logically **interconnected**, characterized by the unity and interdependence of the problem, purpose, tasks, methods, theoretical and practical research, obtained results. A consistent presentation of the dissertation is in accordance with the scientific and conceptual apparatus of research.
		4.5 The new solutions (principles, methods) proposed by the author are argued and evaluated in comparison with known solutions: **1) There is a critical analysis**	Based on a **critical analysis** of ontological and epistemological aspects of theories of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, the Author found the differentiation in the use of basic definitions in determining the complexity of the peace-building process in Afghanistan. In particular, this leads to four interrelated theoretical topics: "the complexities of peacebuilding" in Afghanistan, "counterinsurgency," "democratization of warlords," and the failure of intra-Afghan peace negotiations.

			Another critical aspects of the research are: the analysis of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the strategy of the United States and the international community to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan over the past two decades and the assessment of the influence of internal political actors on the post-conflict reconstruction process in Afghanistan.
5.	The principle of scientific novelty	5.1 Are the scientific results and provisions new? **1) Completely new**	**The first scientific result is new** as the dissertation is devoted to the failure of the efforts of the United States and the international community to build peace in Afghanistan after the transition of power to the Taliban movement in 2021. It should be noted that the Reviewer personally knows two research papers on topics "Challenges of the Afghanistan's peace process" and "Consequences of the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan", fulfilled after withdrawal by graduates from the Institute of Diplomacy (Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan), who received Master degree in Diplomacy and work now as university professors at home in Afghanistan. But considering that these research projects were submitted for the Master degree, not PhD, we evaluate this result as completely new. **The second scientific result is new** as it based on empirical data explaining the main factors that led to the failure of the U.S. government and the international community's peace-building efforts in Afghanistan. Based on interviewing 507 respondents, the main factors were defined, such as: improper balance of power in the region; stigmatization as a deterrent to peacebuilding; the role of hostility, international capacity, and local capacity; civil resistance; lack of effective mediation; poor governance that led to disruption and etc. **The third scientific result is new** as along with interviewing of 507 respondents the Author has conducted an expert survey (using the Delphi method) of 86 experts in Afghanistan's conflict, peacebuilding, socio-political, and military context. The analysis also used secondary sources of data collection from various documented sources, reports from non-governmental organizations on the development of the peace-building process in Afghanistan and failures in state-building from SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), the United Nations, etc., analysis of periodicals, mass media, and social networks. **The fourth scientific result is new** as the research provides specific recommendations for future peace-building efforts such as: strengthening the justice system, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, countering narcotics trade, countering narcotics trade, regional cooperation, learning from successful examples, flexibility and adaptability. **The fifth scientific result is new** as an extensive systematic analysis of scientific literature has been really conducted using a bibliometric analysis of 2,291 articles divided in seven blocks: Peace-building; Impact on Society & Geopolitics; Hybrid forms of peace; Politics Behind War & Gender; Strategies behind peacebuilding; Resisting wars and settlements; Psychology of war & human security.

		5.2 Are the conclusions of the dissertation new? **1) Completely new**	The conclusions of the dissertation are **completely new**. The Author made a significant attempt to provide a scientific explanation for why U.S. peacebuilding efforts failed in Afghanistan. This empirical research study provides a qualitative analysis of the US intervention in Afghanistan and explores the reasons behind the failure of the US efforts. The analyses of the research findings reveal the factors that directly or indirectly contributed to the US failure in Afghanistan and provides importantlessons for future interventions in post-conflict contexts.
		5.3 Technical, technological, economic or managerial solutions are new and justified: **1) Completely new**	The proposed solutions are **completely new and justified**. This scientific study provides specific recommendations for future peace-building efforts in Afghanistan in directions of strengthening the justice system, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, countering narcotics trade, supporting civil society and women's rights, regional cooperation. The Author also underlines the necessity of learning from successful examples, flexibility and adaptability.
6.	The validity of the main conclusions	All major conclusions **are based** on scientifically sound evidence or are reasonably well supported	All the main conclusions of the dissertation are sufficiently substantiated and convincing, **based on scientifically significant evidence**.
7.	The main assumptions submitted for thesis defense	The following questions need to be answered for each assumption individually: 7.1 Has the assumption been proven? 1) has been proven; 2) more likely proven; 3) more likely unproven; 4) unproven. 7.2 Is it trivial? 1) yes; 2) no. 7.3 Is it new? 1) yes; 2) no. 7.4 Application level: 1) narrow;	**All the main assumptions submitted for thesis defense have been proven.** **<u>The first assumption</u>:** 7.1.1) **has been proven** as it is based on peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peace-making concepts overview; 7.2.2) **is not trivial** as proves the importance of the "strategic peacebuilding" approach; 7.3.1) **is new** as shows the peacebuilding approaches to Afghanistan from the perspective of Islam as well as technocratic focus on Afghan peacebuilding and reconstruction processes; 7.4.3) the application level is **wide** as the Author emphasizes adopting an integrated, coordinated system for peacebuilding; 7.5.1) **is proven** in the articles. **<u>The second assumption</u>:** 7.1.1) **has been proven** as it is based on numerous studies of peacebuilding concepts, beginning from Dr. John Galtung, one of the founders of peace studies (1976) to Strategic Peacebuilding of John Paul Lederach and R. Scott Appleby (2010); 7.2.2) **is not trivial**; 7.3.1) **is new** in terms of its application area; 7.4.3) the application level is **wide** as the assumption refers to a wide scope of peacebuilding process issues; 7.5.1) **is proven** in the articles.

		2) average; 3) wide. 7.5 Is it proven in the article? 1) yes; 2) no.	**The third assumption:** 7.1.1) **has been proven** as it is based on numerous studies on Islam, fundamentalism and radicalization in Afghanistan; 7.2.2) **is not trivial** as considers the complexity of the Afghan religious and traditional status in dependence on its actors and their ideological inclination; 7.3.1) **is new** as it considers the empowerment of the extremists' ideological forces within the country as a side effect to foreign invasions; 7.4.3) the application level is **wide** as it refers to a wide dispute traditionalism Vs. Islamism; 7.5.1) **is proven** in the articles. **The forth assumption:** 7.1.1) **has been proven** by empirical data explaining the main factors that led to the failure of the U.S. government and the international community's peace-building efforts in Afghanistan; 7.2.2) **is not trivial** based on ontology and epistemology of the study; 7.3.1) **is new** as it was based on recently conducted interviews; 7.4.3) the application level is **wide** as it leads to a wide spectrum of research topics, including the US strategy to Afghanistan, regional security, etc.; 7.5.1) **is proven** in the articles. **The fifth assumption:** 7.1.1) **has been proven** by empirical data on the ground in Afghanistan, as well as conducted interviews with experts throughout the country and abroad; 7.2.2) **is not trivial** based on ontology and epistemology of the study; 7.3.1) **is new** as it was based on recently conducted interviews; 7.4.3) the application level is **wide** as it leads to a wide spectrum of research topics, including study of Afghanistan, regional security, peace process, etc.; 7.5.1) **is proven** in the articles. **The sixth assumption:** 7.1.1) **has been proven** by a whole methodology of the research; 7.2.2) **is not trivial** as it suggests a strategy of constructive interaction with Taliban; 7.3.1) **is new**; 7.4.3) the application level is **wide** as it includes recommendations for future peace-building efforts in Afghanistan and any other country facing attempts at external State-building through military invasion; 7.5.1) **is proven** in the articles.

			The main conclusions and results of the dissertation research are reflected in nine articles, two of them in the journal "Review of Faith and InternationalAffairs" (Q1-Q2, percentile 66 in Sociology and Political Sciences), indexed in the Scopus database, two articles – in journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and were reported at the international conferences.
8.	Principle of validity. Reliability of sources and information provided	8.1 The choice of methodology is justified or the methodology is described in sufficient detail: **1) Yes**	The choice of methodology **is justified** and the methodology **is described in sufficient detail**: - in 1.3 – Methodology of Literature Review; - in 3.1 – Research methods and Data Collection.
		8.2 The results of the dissertation work were obtained using modern methods of scientific research and techniques of data processing and interpretation with the use of computer technologies: **1) Yes**	The results of the dissertation work were obtained **using modern methods of scientific research and techniques of data processing and interpretation** with the use of computer technologies, in particular: - **Systematic literary review** using **Meta-Analyses** (PRISMA) method: 7,813 articles from the Scopus database with a cut-off date set at January 17, 2023 were identified with the keywords "Peacebuilding," "Peacekeeping," "Peace process," and "Peacemaking"; - **Bibliometric analysis** of 2,291 articles using **HistCite, Bib-Excel** and other software tools such as **VOS-viewer and Gephi**; - **Network and co-occurrence analysis**; - **Citation analysis**; - **Content Analysis** for Clustering; - **Expert survey**, using the **Delphi method**; - **Structured and unstructured methods of interview**.
		8.3 Theoretical conclusions, models, revealed interrelations and regularities are proved and confirmed by experimental research: **1) Yes**	Theoretical conclusions are proved and confirmed by the results of: - expert survey of 86 experts, including senior bureaucrats, ambassadors, political figures and international experts; - interview of 507 respondents, including educators, bureaucrats, journalists, politicians, and ordinary Afghans.
		8.4 Important assertions are supported by references to relevant and reliable scientific literature	Important assertions are supported by references to relevant and reliable scientific literature, as well as secondary sources of data collection from various documented sources, reports from non-governmental organizations on the development of the peace-building process in Afghanistan, SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), the United Nations, etc., analysis of periodicals, mass media, and social networks. The List of References contains 301 sources. References to them are given in dissertation in a full accordance with the requirements.

		8.5 The literature sources used are sufficient for the literature review	It should be once more noticed that for literature review the Author conducted a bibliometric analysis of **2,291** articles. And considering the List of References of **301** sources, we are fully confident that the literature sources used **are sufficient**.
9	Practical value principle	9.1 The thesis has theoretical significance: **1) Yes**	The thesis has **a real theoretical significance**: - first of all, due to a huge amount of work on the literature review that can be used in further studies of peacebuilding process; - secondly, it provides theoretical grounds on four interrelated theoretical topics: "the complexities of peacebuilding" in Afghanistan, "counterinsurgency", "democratization of warlords" and the failure of intra-Afghan peace negotiations; - finally, it would be helpful for future research in the fields: impact of technology on the peacebuilding process; cross-national studies of peacebuilding; "technological turn" – how it is influencing peacebuilding practices.
		9.2 The dissertation has the practical significance and there is a high probability of applying the results obtained in practice: **1) Yes**	The dissertation has **the practical significance**. The results and conclusions can be useful for policymakers and political leaders, providing the deeper understanding of peacebuilding process in general and in Afghanistan in particular.
		9.3 Are the proposals for practice new? **1) Completely new**	The proposals and recommendations **are completely new**, in particular: strengthening the justice system, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, countering narcotics trade, supporting civil society and women's rights, regional cooperation
10.	Quality of writing and design	The quality of academic writing: **1) High**	The dissertation is written at a **high** scientific and methodological level.

Concluding, the dissertation of Zaland Faiz Muhammad on the topic "Peace-Building Process in Afghanistan: Political Power Distribution and it's Future", submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Sciences (8D03104), fully complies with the requirements of the Rules for awarding degrees, and its Author deserves to be awarded the required degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Sciences.

Official Reviewer:

Professor of the National School of Public Policy,
Academy of Public Administration
under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan,
PhD in Political Sciences **M. Abisheva** **20.06.2024**

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