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## Infrastructure as the Basic Need for Afghanistan Development

Afghanistan has come a long way over the past one decade. Much has been accomplished since then in the areas of reconstruction, state-building, poverty alleviation and relief and assistance delivery to impoverished masses with the help of the International community. Although fraught with many shortcomings, significant strides have been made in the area of political development. The National Assembly or the Parliament has been established and empowered to include the representatives of the people in the governing process. The separation of powers - the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary - as the foremost principle of democracy has been upheld in the constitution. Elections, universal franchise and elected office are guaranteed as rights of every citizen of our country. In the area of economic development, the performance of our country has been dismal and the past years are annals of wasted opportunities with rising anger and frustration among the people. Our country, despite being on the receiving end of 18 years of generous assistance of the international community is still not able to feed its own people and provide decent livelihoods to the bulk of its population. Chronic poverty leaves millions of our countrymen destitute and drives many of our youth to embrace the forces of darkness bent on distorting our democracy and enslaving our people.

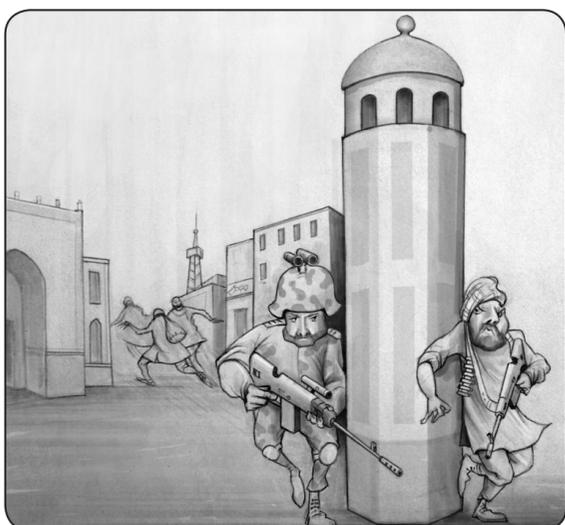
In the initial years of the post-Taliban political dispensation, a grand and ambitious program of reforming the economy of our country involving a shift to a market economy has been initiated. The economic growth and development is designed to be private-sector led and the government is, over the long run, slated to assume the role of a facilitator rather than the main economic actor. In the initial years, the participation and zeal of the private sector in investing in many sectors of our economy from manufacturing to services showed encouraging signs. Various telecommunication companies and banking institutions started operations and within a relatively short period, millions across the country had access to mobile telephones, internet connections, digital communication channels as well as banking services. However, the economic development of the country, despite the promising initial years has become slow in recent years and the prospects for the economy to return to the high-growth trajectory of recent past is bleak.

### Infrastructure Constraints

Infrastructure is one of the crucial areas in the present state of affairs in the country. Lack of sufficient infrastructure in the form of roads, bridges, tunnels, power generation facilities and transmission grids, hospitals, sufficient urban housing, sewerage and solid waste management systems, railways and water supply systems in both rural and urban sectors have significantly slowed down and hampered the process of economic development and has led to denial of income and means of livelihood to our impoverished people. Infrastructure constraints or lack of it hamper the process of development and make it virtually impossible. It is high time our policy makers and planners devise and announce ambitious programs of infrastructure development in the country. Adoption of a National Infrastructure Policy by the government of Afghanistan as part of the existing Afghanistan's National Development Strategy seems to be an ideal vehicle for prioritizing the infrastructure needs of the country and placing infrastructure development on fast track as well as mobilizing sources of finance from both the public and private sectors. The experience from other developing countries also point to the paramount importance of infrastructure in the economic development and modernization of the traditional structures of national economies. In a developing economy, the infrastructure is the key to sustainable development of the country.

### Roadmap for the future

The cost and the technical know-how of developing the infrastructure needs of the country are, no doubt, massive. As the government of Afghanistan cannot accomplish the task single-handedly, it requires active participation of the Afghan private sector and international donors as well as private sector players from other countries in order to procure the huge financial resources needed for the purpose. Over the long term and after the semblance of a functioning infrastructure propels our economy into higher growth and development, developing and improving our infrastructure base further will be less of a difficult task. The Government then can leave many areas to the private sector and in other sectors join hands with the private sector in Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). The Public Private Partnerships have proved to be effective models for reducing the huge financial burden of infrastructure development on the government and mobilizing the financial resources readily available with the private sector. Before all this can materialize, we need to enhance and improve the capacities and capabilities of our government. Nurturing and fostering a vision for growth, plans for the long term, commitment and political will on the part of the government and international community, removing the bureaucratic bottlenecks and red tape from the corridors of Afghan government and providing security all are pre-requisites for implementing a grand, national infrastructure policy that can revive the moribund economy of our country. The onus is on the government to rise to the occasion.



## The Present Situation and Prospect of Anti-drug Cooperation between China and Afghanistan

By: Huang Dekai, Zhu Like &amp; Jiang Maoxia

In order to effectively avoid the serious harm caused by drugs to the country and the region, China and Afghanistan have continuously strengthened international anti-drug cooperation and made positive progress in the comprehensive prevention, combating and control of drug crimes, but at the same time, there are also some difficulties and problems. From the development trend, on the one hand, the anti-drug cooperation between the two sides will continue to develop in a pragmatic direction; on the other hand, it will form a non-traditional security cooperation centered on drug control.

We know that the proliferation of drugs makes all countries in the world face a common destiny and choice, and drug control is the common cause of all mankind. On this issue, all countries in the world have reached a consensus that promoting anti-drug cooperation is based on an equal treatment, mutual benefit and win-win partnership, and seeks to jointly build, share, and advance the development prospects as a whole.

Counter-narcotics cooperation between China and Afghanistan is the result of mutual needs. From the point of view of China, first, drugs are the common enemy of mankind, and drug crimes have the characteristics of transnational and cross-region. Under the background of globalization, the Chinese Government has always attached importance to international cooperation in drug control and adopted the attitude of a responsible big country. We will conscientiously fulfill our international drug control obligations, adhere to the principle of broad participation and shared responsibility, and promote the continuous development of the international drug control cause. Second, with the deepening of the "Belt and Road" construction, the ties between China and the countries along the "Belt and Road" have become increasingly close, and Afghan drug producers have also targeted the infrastructure construction in the region, making it a drug trafficking route. According to an analysis of China's national drug control data, 15 to 20 percent of heroin in China's drug market comes from Afghanistan, most of which enter China through this route. In this regard, whether from the responsibility of China's major powers or the objective fact of reducing the impact of the expansion of Afghan drugs on China, the development of anti-drug cooperation with Afghanistan is one of the important diplomatic measures facing China at present. From the point of view of Afghanistan, the drug situation in Afghanistan is becoming more and more serious, and the Afghan government hopes that China will provide help and support to its anti-drug cause. War and unemployment are the two main causes of the spread of drugs. The "Golden Crescent" region, centered on Afghanistan, is the "cancer of the world" and the "source of infiltration". The war has led to the continued deterioration of the economic environment in Afghanistan, and many Afghans who have lost their jobs have had to resort to opium production and other drug crimes in order to earn a living. The sharp increase in opium poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the security, stability and development of the country and other countries. The drug trade has become an important economic source for armed groups such as the Taliban, and the problems of opium production and the drug trade, if left uncontrolled, would fuel the development of terrorism in the country and further affect social stability.

Despite the high-pressure stance of the Afghan counter-narcotics sector, a series of counter-narcotics measures have been developed with the help of the international community. In the past 11 months, 2468 anti-drug operations have been carried out, resulting in the seizure of 231 tons of all kinds of drugs and chemicals, and the arrest of more than 2800 drug trafficking suspects, with little effect. The drug problem has not been effectively

curbed with the development of anti-drug work, on the contrary, it has further deteriorated. According to a survey conducted jointly by the United Nations Office on drugs and Crime and the Government of Afghanistan, opium production in Afghanistan increased by 87 per cent to 9000 tons in 2017 compared with 2016, the official United Nations website reported in November 2017, set a new record. In addition, opium cultivation increased by 63 per cent compared with 2016 to a record 328000 hectares. Therefore, Afghanistan needs the broad participation and support of the international community, including China.

On December 11, 2018, Min Tianshi, deputy director of the Chinese National Office on drugs and Crime, led a delegation to Kabul, Afghanistan, where he met with General Bakhtiya, vice minister of the Interior of Afghanistan, and Azmi, minister of counter-narcotics of Afghanistan. In accordance with Afghanistan's development plan and specific needs, China will provide assistance to Afghanistan in the areas of personnel training and equipment assistance to the best of its ability. At the same time, the Albanian side is carrying out anti-drug prevention propaganda, drug treatment and alternative development work and the difficulties it faces, and hopes that China will continue to strengthen its assistance and support to the drug control cause in Afghanistan.

In fact, China and Afghanistan have long cooperated in drug control. In 2006, the competent authorities of China and Afghanistan signed a bilateral anti-drug cooperation agreement, and the two sides maintained good cooperation in the exchange of drug-related information, cooperation in case investigation, personnel training and equipment assistance. The two countries also jointly cracked a number of drug trafficking cases, relying on police colleges and universities, held 10 training courses for Afghan drug control officials, and trained more than 200 drug law enforcement officers for Afghanistan. At present, the drug control departments of the two countries are negotiating a proposal to strengthen drug control cooperation, and there are great prospects for cooperation in the future. China and Argentina have also carried out anti-drug projects and operations under the cooperation mechanism of the United Nations, the SCO and the Paris process.

At present, there are difficulties and challenges in drug control cooperation between China and Afghanistan. The drug situation in Afghanistan is still very serious, the drug source is becoming increasingly poor, and it has become a marginal zone for economic development. The anti-drug cooperation mechanism between China and Afghanistan is still imperfect and perfect, the specialized cooperation institutions have not been established, and the laws, regulations, and agreements are incomplete. The investment is slightly inadequate and the interdiction and crackdown is weak; the regional and global drug situation has changed, and the first generation of drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, are still spreading. The abuse of the second generation of drugs represented by methamphetamine and ketamine and the abuse of the third generation of drugs represented by new psychoactive substances are becoming more and more prominent. The increasing globalization of drug manufacturing and trafficking, the aggravation of the harm of smuggling and trafficking in new psychoactive substances, and the prominent use of information and communication technologies in drug trafficking means are facing challenges. In this regard, the anti-drug cooperation between China and Afghanistan will not only further develop in a pragmatic direction, but also make efforts in specific anti-drug fields, cooperation methods, and paths to ensure human health, security, and common well-being.

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## Controversial Criticism over the US - Taliban Peace Process

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

According to multiple sources, the National Security Advisor, Hamdullah Mohib, used extraordinary words against the US - Taliban peace process. He described the US's talks with the Taliban as surrender discussion at various public forums in Washington DC and in interaction with reporters. He blamed Khalilzad for trying to legitimize Taliban but delegitimize the government of Afghanistan. Mohib also accused Khalilzad of deliberately withholding information about the talks from the Afghan government. "We think either - Ambassador Khalilzad - doesn't know how to negotiate or in fact there may be other reasons behind what he is doing. What he is doing is not getting a deal that will result in peace in Afghanistan," as quoted by CBS News. "The Taliban are not in a mood to negotiate with the Afghan government and there is no reason for them to do so. They're gaining. Their sole aim, expectation and reasons in wanting to talk directly with the United States are to give themselves legitimacy." "We don't know what's going on. We don't have the kind of transparency that we should have," Mohib told reporters at a news conference on Thursday. The Afghan government is not consulted and got the information in bits and pieces," Mohib added.

He asked the United States to provide clarification on its long-term strategy and interests in Afghanistan. "It would be a shame if a deal was made with the terrorists who killed more than 5,400 Americans, and if they were given control of the lives of the Afghan people. That would be a win for those terrorists," Mohib said. "It would also dishonor the one million Americans who have served in Afghanistan. In Mohib's view, the Taliban can "absolutely not" be trusted to live up to any promises from its side of the bargain should a final agreement be inked. "How can you trust a terrorist group? The Taliban have been given everything they have asked for and have not delivered on anything since. Their demand was that they wanted to talk to the U.S. directly, one discussion and then they would switch to an inter-Afghan dialogue so that a deal could be reached," he said. "They are still standing on what they want."

It seems that Mohib's travel was aimed to present Kabul's concerns over the unclear peace process but he could not succeed to meet US NSA, John Bolton, owing to having busy schedule. He said that the Afghan people have serious concerns and fears about a process in pursuit of peace. "Now we would ask the United States to provide clarification on what its long-term strategy and interests are in our country," he said. "I think what no one is prepared for any sudden changes to our partnerships that fall outside the boundaries of our guiding documents or that betray all both countries have invested to build over the past two decades."

These expressions followed with various serious reactions both in Afghanistan and United States. The US State Department official denied Mohib's ac-

cusation Thursday. "Mr. Mohib's comments are inaccurate and unhelpful, and we will be responding to them privately today," the official said. "His comments do not in any way reflect the high level of U.S.-Afghan coordination on all matters involving peace in Afghanistan." There were also reports about Mohib's summons by the US State Department but has been denied by Afghan government officials. The reports about Mohib's summons came after he had accused US special envoy for Afghanistan peace, Zalmay Khalilzad at a UN Security Council meeting of marginalizing Afghan government in the peace talks with Taliban for his personal interests. Tariq Arian, spokesman for the National Security Council said Friday that Mohib's with officials at the US state department was already arranged as part of his US visit, adding that he was not summoned by the US State department.

On contrary, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah criticized National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib for questioning the efforts of the US Special Representative for Afghan Peace Ambassador for a peaceful settlement in the country. Abdullah said the United States is a good strategic partner of Afghanistan and making remarks that would affect the partnership should be made cautiously. "Our relations with our international partners require more caution and concentration while making remarks. Because it is clear that United States is one of our best international partners," said Abdullah. Din Mohammad Jurat, the former advisor to the National Security Council, as quoted the remarks is "irresponsible". "You see such a mess. Recently Deputy State Secretary has summoned our National Security Advisor and asked him to take back his irresponsible remarks because it is insuring our (US) nation," Jurat said. The US will likely choose another option after this, or maybe our neighbors misuse the situation and change Washington's opinion regarding Afghanistan," Erfan said.

Finally, he said in a twitter post that he concluded an eventful trip to Washington, DC. "I met with many friends of Afghanistan, including in the government, Congress, think tanks, and the media. I voiced our people's legitimate concerns and made Afghanistan's principled position clear," he said. He said the Afghan people and government value our partnership with the United States and are especially grateful for America's generous support to our armed forces. Mohib added that as foundational partners, Afghans will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States to fight terrorism in order to ensure our joint security interests, as well as in pursuit of an honest, transparent, and just peace. "In that regard, I would particularly caution the Afghan presidential hopefuls to exercise restraint and not end up on the wrong side of history. The country will judge you on how you treat your own, not what you do for others. Patriotism above all," he concluded.

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