

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind

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## Why Afghanistan Must Have Good Relations With US

Historically, relations between Afghanistan and the US can be dated back to 1919, when King Amanullah, the reformist monarch of Afghanistan, dispatched the first Afghan envoy to Washington following independence from Britain. However, full diplomatic relations were only established in 1934 and 1935, when the two countries designated ambassadors to the respective diplomatic missions. If we politically analysis the bilateral relations between the two nations, we would find that relations between the US and Afghanistan, since the establishment of diplomatic exchanges, have been characterized by inconsistent patterns of tension and collaboration.

The US supported Afghanistan After the fall of the Taliban, to have a broad-based government, representative of all Afghans, and actively encouraged a UN role in the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan. The U.S. has made a long-term commitment to help Afghanistan rebuild itself after years of war.

### BSA the road Map of the Afghan and US strategic partnership

Building on the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America, signed 2 May 2012, the two countries signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) on 30 September 2014. The BSA reaffirms that Afghanistan and the United States are committed to strengthen long-term strategic cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including: advancing peace, security, and stability, strengthening state institutions, supporting Afghanistan's long-term economic and social development, and encouraging regional cooperation. The strategic goal of the BSA was enabling that Afghanistan can independently secure and defend itself against internal and external threats, and help ensure that terrorists never again encroach on Afghan soil and threaten Afghanistan, the region, and the world.

### How the Strategic Partnership Shall Continue After the Peace Deal

The US and Taliban have constantly negotiated on a US Troops withdrawal framework during the six rounds of peace talks in Doha of Qatar. First, Taliban are not the sole decision makers about Afghanistan; it is a fact that Taliban only represent some hardline Pashtuns and not all Pashtuns of Afghanistan. As a result, they even do not represent Pashtuns, and they cannot represent the other ethnic groups of Afghanistan. While Taliban insist on the withdrawal of the US forces, the majority of Afghans supports the military presence of the US in the country and appreciates the great role the US and its allies have played in Afghanistan to develop security infrastructure and support Afghanistan Security and Defense forces. Further, Afghanistan remains an important partner of the United States in the fight against terrorism, working with US to eliminate al-Qaeda, IS-Khorasan (IS-K) and their affiliates in Afghanistan. In order to strengthen Afghanistan's capabilities as a partner, and to improve the lives of the Afghan people, the US shall continue to invest U.S. resources to help Afghanistan improve its security, governance, institutions and economy. As ISK is just gaining power in Afghanistan and strengthening its stronghold in the country, the US shall maintain a counterterrorism presence as long as an insurgency continues in Afghanistan if it wants Afghanistan not to change to a safe haven for the terrorist groups to threaten the regional and international community. In addition to ISK, there are more than 20 international terrorist groups in the country with factories producing suicide bombers. As a result, without the US Support, any government in Afghanistan will collapse in 6 months.

### Bilateral Economic Relations

If there is a peace deal between the US and Taliban, the US shall commit sustainable economic and development to Afghanistan. In fact, there shall be a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the two countries on sustainable economic and development support. Such an agreement shall be the primary forum for bilateral trade and investment discussions between the two countries.

Sustainable U.S. and other international community support to Afghanistan in a variety of areas, including humanitarian relief and assistance, capacity-building, security needs, counter-narcotic programs, and infrastructure projects can ensure a sustainable peace deal in Afghanistan. The only way to ensure that Afghanistan, never-again, becomes a staging-ground for international terrorist attacks against the US and allies is supporting the installation of an elected government based on the current Afghan constitution. No theocracy government will ensure peace in the country and it only will act as the primary cause of the new round of civil war in Afghanistan that can ultimately change it once more to the safe haven of the terrorist groups.

## Threat of IS Group Looms Large

By: Hujjatullah Zia

The Afghan affiliate of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), known as Islamic State Khorasan (ISK), has consolidated its foothold in Afghanistan despite the fact that the IS group lost its ground in Iraq and Syria.

A number of the Taliban's discontented rank-and-file, split from the Taliban's leadership, are believed to form the ISK and accommodated the IS fighters in Afghanistan. Members of the Taliban, who pledged allegiance to the IS, will be playing more active role in the ISK since they are aware of Afghanistan's geopolitical structure.

Within the last two years, the ISK carried out deadly attacks against soldiers and civilians. The ISK's brazen attacks in the heart of Kabul clearly indicates that the group is able to organize offensive in large cities. Targeting Shiite ethnic group across Afghanistan, the ISK is continuing its policy of stoking sectarian violence to attract supporters from potentially radical individuals. The ISK is also seeking to spread its ideology in one way or another for recruitment.

Referring to the background of a video released by the IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, some political pundits tend to believe that al-Baghdadi is stationed in Afghanistan. However, the ISK, which according to the US military estimate has 2,000 fighters in Afghanistan, is unlikely to be able to save Baghdadi's life in Afghanistan, at least from the US drone attack. For example, when the US forces attacked Afghanistan, al-Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden crossed the border to escape death, how dare IS leader come to Afghanistan where he will be at the mercy of greater threat. The background in the video provides no clue to Baghdadi's whereabouts. He may have been shifted to any caves or villa in remote areas in Syria similar to that of Saddam Hussein, Iraq's ruler before the US attack.

Generally speaking, the global counter-terrorism strategy has been proved abortive since some terrorist groups are carrying out proxy war in the region. It is believed that as the turbulence in Syrian and Iraq led to the emergence of the IS group, the conflict in Yemen is also most likely to pave the ground for accommodation and emergence of new terrorist group. That is, a number of fighters will, as the last resort, engage in terrorist activities as individual or group, which will jeopardize regional and global stability. Thus, global

powers have to put an end to the war and conflicts ongoing in the region so as to stop the accommodation and emergence of terrorist groups.

Since the ISK is more radical than the Taliban and al-Qaeda and practices harsher, its presence in Afghanistan is a matter of great concern for the public. In addition to being fearful of the Taliban and al-Qaeda's radical ideology and cruel acts, Afghans are terribly frightened of ISK's presence and its terrorist activities as it shows no mercy to civilians, including women and children. Paying no heed to national and international condemn, the ISK has declared responsibility for many terrorist attacks leading to the death of civilians and ethnic minorities across the country.

The danger of the ISK's presence in Afghanistan should not be underestimated by Kabul government. The government has to intensify its attacks against the ISK, whose fighters must be shot on the head. Meanwhile, the US has to target the ISK, mainly its leading figures, more than ever before.

In a commentary titled "The Global War on Terrorism Has Failed. Here's How to Win", Brahma Chellaney, a professor of strategic studies at the Center for Policy Research in New Delhi, said, "The politicization of the global war on terrorism must end so that a concerted and sustained international onslaught on the perverted ideology of radical Islam can begin". The author added, "The focus of the global war on terrorism must shift to crushing this ideological movement. One way to do this is to deploy a sustained information campaign to discredit the ideology of radical Islam. For example, it would not be difficult to mock and run down the jihadi notion that a martyr in heaven will enjoy the company of 72 virgins".

It is believe that the IS fighters are seeking to network with terrorist groups around the world. Now as the IS leadership could not survive, its fighters will seek to either operate under the same name or join other terrorist group in troubled countries. Hence, the IS fighters still pose threat to regional and global stability. In such a case, the regional and global powers and international community should back countries, especially Afghanistan, in their fight against terrorism and root out the funding sources of terrorist networks.

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## Going the Distance with Family Planning

By: Jenna Dodson

Indonesia, home to 264 million people, is the world's fourth-most populous country. Its capital, Jakarta, is the second-most populous urban area on Earth. For the sake of its long-term economic and social health, ending population growth should be a priority. As Indonesian President Joko Widodo (widely known as Jokowi) acknowledged in 2016, "Family planning is key for the success of future generations."

And not just in Indonesia. Lower population growth translates into higher per capita GDP, leading to higher incomes, savings, and investment. By contrast, high population growth can reinforce an intergenerational cycle of poverty, with young people in large families often lacking access to the skills, tools, and opportunities they need to improve their future.

In 1970, Indonesia's National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) was launched to address the problem. It had two specific goals: to establish a "small, prosperous family" as the norm in Indonesia and to reduce fertility through the promotion of contraceptives.

At first, the BKKBN's family-planning efforts achieved extraordinary results. By 2000, after 30 years of focused action, total fertility dropped by 54%, from 5.6 births per woman to 2.6, making Indonesia's family-planning program one of the most effective in history.

But progress stalled before Indonesia achieved its objective of achieving replacement-level fertility (2.1) by 2010-2015. According to the United Nations, Indonesia's total fertility rate in 2015 was 2.45.

[Chart]

The BKKBN is now targeting replacement-level fertility by 2025. This is feasible and could enable Indonesia to achieve its second key quantitative target - stabilizing population growth by 2050 - on schedule. But that means identifying the major barriers to success and designing a strategy to overcome them, using past successes as a guide.

One such barrier is erected by regional governments, most of which still do not regard family planning as a priority. The central government's efforts to reduce fertility to replacement level will have little impact without the committed engagement of Indonesia's 511 autonomous regions.

While efforts are already underway to increase awareness of family planning's paramount importance and move it higher on subnational authorities' agenda, that is just the first step. Governments at all levels must also collaborate more effectively with local communities. In fact, widespread outreach and community participation at the village level was a key reason for the success of past family-planning efforts in Indonesia.

At its peak, Indonesia's rural family-planning program included nearly 40,000 field workers and more than 100,000 volunteers, serving even the most remote communities. These personnel conducted home visits to discuss family-planning methods, provided counseling, and made referrals to community health centers.

Widodo has attempted to revitalize this outreach effort by in-

vesting in Kampung KB, a program intended to improve village communities' welfare and quality of life by expanding access to long-acting contraceptives, providing free services, and offering peer education programs. As part of this initiative, intra-uterine devices (IUDs), condoms, and implants are now offered free of charge to all couples that need them.

But such initiatives run up against another major barrier to progress: the stigma against women - particularly unmarried women - who seek family-planning services. Past family-planning programs partly overcame this obstacle by focusing on their efforts' compatibility with cultural, religious, and social norms. Because of this sensitivity, religious leaders not only accepted the need for improved family planning; they actually preached about it, providing relevant information to their congregations. Moreover, schools included population-related issues in their curricula. The slogan "Dua Anak Cukup" ("Two Children are Enough") became ubiquitous.

The same should happen today. Family-planning advocates should adopt a culturally and religiously sensitive approach that convinces community leaders to embrace the cause and, in particular, support birth control methods for unmarried individuals. Health-care services, as well as community- and school-based programs, should provide relevant information and sexuality education, in addition to counseling.

Designing such a comprehensive approach will require, among other things, a clear picture of public needs and perceptions. The BKKBN recently announced that it will be conducting studies on that and another key issue: teenagers' reproductive health.

Progress on reducing the adolescent fertility rate, like progress on lowering overall fertility in Indonesia, has plateaued in recent decades. Changing this will require closer collaboration between youth programs and organizations that advocate for adolescent sexual and reproductive rights.

But no policy will work without greater engagement by men. According to Nofrijal, the BKKBN's principal secretary, the organization wants to understand better "what types of contraceptives are needed and are favored by the public, both men and women."

In the past, official policies reinforced the view that women are solely responsible for family planning. While there was once some interest in male contraceptive methods, a few conservative community leaders expressed alarm, disinformation proliferated, and these approaches were widely rejected. To reduce stigma and distribute responsibility fairly, however, men must participate more fully in family-planning processes.

Effective family planning is critical to a healthy, stable, and prosperous future. Indonesia has made remarkable progress toward replacement-level fertility. But to achieve that goal, everyone - married and unmarried men, women, and young people - must be included.

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