

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

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## Inclusive Team Crucial to Afghan-Taliban Peace Talks

The ninth round of talks between the Taliban and US representatives have been wrapped up in Doha, Qatar's capital, but the Taliban militants have intensified their attacks against the Afghan government, which raises the public doubt about their bona fide intention for peace.

After an agreement signed between the two sides, the Afghan government will enter the peace talks with the Taliban, who have still held out against negotiations with the Ghani administration. US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said in his latest tweet, "We are at the threshold of an agreement that will reduce violence and open the door for Afghans to sit together to negotiate an honorable and sustainable peace and unified, sovereign Afghanistan that does not threaten the United States, its allies, or any other country." He added, "Ultimately, war will only end when all sides agree it must end. All Afghans must come together in intra-Afghan negotiations to achieve a political settlement and comprehensive ceasefire. I am confident we are on the only practical path to reducing violence and achieving peace."

Concerning Taliban's massive attacks on Kunduz province, Khalilzad said he had discussed the issue at the table and called on the Taliban not to carry out such large-scale attacks. Considering Khalilzad's statements, he urges an inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue as he says that all Afghans had to come together at the table with the Taliban. It is believed that he constantly paid heed to the concern aired by Afghan women and urged the presence of their representatives in Afghan negotiating team as he met with women activists and officials in Kabul. Khalilzad is taking a trip to Kabul to report the talks with Afghan officials.

Indeed, the Afghan negotiating team should not be selective but inclusive. The women representatives and those of civil society and minority groups should be included in the team.

Peace talks, which have been a pyrrhic victory for Afghans, are still a controversial issue with many ifs, ands, and buts. The Taliban still have not been persuaded to stop their escalated militancy or reduce violence. However, with the agreement reached between the US-Taliban officials, Afghans view the peace process with optimism since they are sure of the US' seriousness about talks. The main concern is that the content of the agreement is not clear to Afghan people and they fear if the agreement will only focus on the US' interests.

It is believed that the talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government will be also time-consuming. Perhaps, the presence of international observers in the talks between the Kabul government and the Taliban will catalyze the process. Thus, regional and global stakeholders should continue their support in the talks.

Khalilzad pointed out that intra-Afghan dialogue should lead to "comprehensive ceasefire", which suggests that the agreement between the US and the Taliban will not put an end to the Taliban militancy although he said that it would "reduce violence". Nevertheless, one will view the Taliban's commitment for reducing violence with doubt and mistrust. That is, the Taliban vowed with an Afghan unofficial negotiating team that they would reduce violence and seek not to target civilians, but they did not fulfill their commitment.

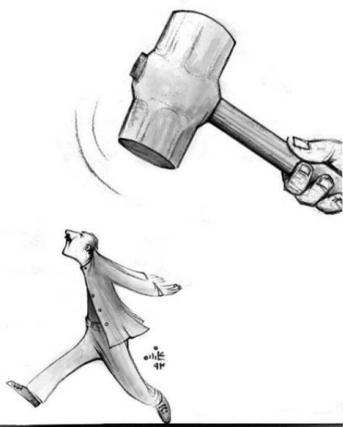
With this in mind, regional and global stakeholders have to pressure the Taliban to reduce violence so that they could prove their sincerity in the talks.

It is self-explanatory that Afghans generally view the Taliban with fear and mistrust. On the other hand, the Taliban have shown neither their goodwill nor their moderated ideology. Perhaps the Taliban's mindset may have been moderated, but their rank and file militants still practice upon harsh ideology and treat Afghan civilians with cruelty.

To start negotiations with the Taliban representatives, Afghan officials should bury their differences and form an inclusive negotiating team agreed by all high-level officials and political parties.

But it is a bit disappointing for Afghans since the US-Taliban agreement could not lead to ceasefire. The US failed to pressure the Taliban to stop violence. It is believed that if the US included the Kabul government in the talks, ceasefire would have been declared by reaching an agreement. In short, a trilateral agreement - consists of the US, Afghanistan and the Taliban - would have been more productive.

Now as the talks between the Taliban and the Kabul government are likely to take place, Afghan officials, heads of political factions, tribal elders, and civil society activists have to put all their weight behind the talks so as to end the 18-year conflict. In short, forming an inclusive negotiating team will be crucial to the talks.



## Chinese Commitment Facilitates Afghan Woman's Capacity-Building

By: Wang Daxue

In September, 2015, in his speech at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Woman's Empowerment held at UN Headquarters, Chinese President Xi Jinping initiated a four-point proposal on promoting gender equality and woman's comprehensive development, announced some important initiatives including inviting 30,000 women from other developing countries to participate training programs in China in the coming five years. The speech demonstrated the awareness and readiness of China to promote global woman's undertakings and won extensive appreciation among participants of the summit.

The Chinese commitment has contributed to empowerment of knowledge and skills of women in developing countries, as well as the sustainable development of women around the world. In the past 4 years, China has invited more than 20,000 women from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Pacific to various types of training such as diploma education, short-term skills training and exchanges at the local level in the fields of public administration and social organizations, economy and trade, education, health, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, etc. The Chinese side has actively organized workshops on implementation of the 2030 sustainable development agenda by developing countries with a special focus on the development of women and children to share its experience and lessons learnt in this regard. The All-China Woman's Federation has held training courses for women cadres and trained heads of political parties and woman's organizations from 84 developing countries. Woman's federations in Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Shaanxi and other provinces have developed training programs with neighboring countries, organized trainees to Beijing, Zhejiang and other places for field visits and promoted exchanges between Chinese and foreign women at the local level. For 3 consecutive years, China Woman's University has been offering international master's degree program on woman's leadership and social development. Azga from Afghanistan was admitted by the university last year and her major is social work. She is very active, performs well and has won very positive comments from her teachers and fellow students from many other countries.

As a matter of fact, there are many Afghan participants in the woman's training program organized by China. This is because cooperation in woman's affairs is an important part of China-Afghanistan strategic partnership and a major area of support from the Chinese government and Embassy for the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan. Over the past 4 years, 290 Afghan female professionals have been invited to China for training. Special training program such as those for protocol, statistics and economic officers have been very popular. According to the Afghan trainees, the training programs are rich in contents and formats and they have been inspired. China has funded 15 Afghan girls to study in China with full Chinese Government Scholarship, success-

fully cured 36 Afghan girls with congenital heart diseases, invited Kabul woman's martial arts team to visit China, donated a girls' primary school in Mazar-e-Sharif, supported the construction of a woman's training school in Zebak, provided fitness facilities for the Ministry of Woman's Affairs, and invited lady deputy ministers and heads of Afghan woman's associations and promotion organizations to attend the SCO Woman's Forum and other international conferences in China. The Kandahar Chinese Hospital, Kabul Republic Hospital, facilities in Kabul University, low-cost housing and national vocational training center, built with Chinese donations, have benefited and will continue benefiting thousands of Afghan women.

China actively supports Afghan women in learning and displaying their talents. From 2016 onwards, outstanding students from the Confucius Institute of Kabul University have for 4 consecutive years demonstrated their elegant demeanour through the Chinese Bridge language proficiency competition for college students. Three outstanding female students won the first prize and were invited to China to compete with learners of the Chinese language from all over the world. Last May, the Chinese Embassy invited two young female teachers from Ghulam Maimanagi Art Institute to visit China to experience a different landscape and hold an exhibition at the Prince Gong's Mansion in Beijing in an exchange with Chinese artists and audience on fine arts. This March, the Chinese Embassy held a special photo exhibition for renowned female photographer Hossaini Fatima. Nearly 150 women from the Afghan government, parliament, Confucius Institute and diplomatic missions in Afghanistan attended the event and learnt together the diverse lives of Afghan women and their pursuit of truth, kindness and beauty. Hossaini Fatima will give an exhibition in China next month at the invitation of China Soong Ching Ling Foundation. I wish that the exhibition will be a complete success and more Chinese people will feel the beauty, sunshine, struggle and strength of Afghan women.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Afghan independence. The past hundred years have witnessed the outstanding contributions of Afghan women to national independence and construction, their deep sufferings in the war and chaos and their ardent desire for lasting peace. As President Xi said, the level of woman's development varies across countries and regions, societal understanding of woman's potential, talents and contributions remains insufficient. In this situation, we must make unremitting efforts to broaden the development of woman's undertakings. In the future, the Chinese Embassy will continue implementing the Chinese commitment by providing more opportunities for Afghan women to study, engage in exchanges and receive training in China. It is our hope that the Afghan women will hold up half the sky, contribute the Afghan dream of achieving peace at an early date, and joint build and enjoy a better world.

Mr. Wang Daxue, is the Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Afghanistan

## The probably Differences among Political Actors in intra-Afghan Talks

By: Rajkumar Singh

There are numerous actors involved in the current Afghan conflict while each one seeks their interests at three levels (global, regional and domestic). The United States and the Taliban are among the most important actors in the conflict while one at the international level and other at the domestic level seeking to fulfill their own demands. The US and the Taliban have apparently come to an agreement and may signed a formal agreement in the next few days, but the major problem is differences between Taliban and other actors such as Pakistan, Iran, Russia, the European Union, china, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and importantly people and government of Afghanistan.

Since mid-2018, serious negotiations have been going on between the United States and the Taliban until the two sides have somehow agreed upon two main issues (withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and disconnection of the Taliban from other terrorist groups), but Taliban disagreements with other actors in the conflict has not solved yet. In the last few days, there have been discussions about intra-Afghan talks while the Taliban main focus is on opposition to the Afghan negotiating delegation. In addition, there are so many issues between Afghan and other regional actors which never have been openly touched.

Given the Taliban political position, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan is glorious successes that legitimize the Taliban eighteen-year destruction and violence. After collapse of Taliban in 2001, the United States tried to create a political system due to some shortcomings in nation-building process in Afghanistan and also larger events happened in the world, the United States did not achieve its goals as it had outlined earlier. Now, what justifies the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is the international demands and the ruling idea in White House rather than the pressures of the Taliban and other armed fundamentalists. Even during Obama's presidency, the United States got to know that its involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq had sidelined US attention from some of the crucial issues while China and Russia were taking advantage of the opportunity. Obama has repeatedly acknowledged that the United States is undertaking costly expenses in the fight against terrorism while China is developing and modernizing. According to realistic theories, this is not in interests of The United States because the more China and Russia are increasing their power, the less powerful America will become.

The US strategists argue that the United States must minimize its involvement in the Middle East and also confrontation with political Islam in order to prevent the emerging China. Because of this, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan cannot help a permanent peace process in Afghanistan, especially in the short run. On the other hand, the Taliban's dogmatism in intra-Afghan talks requires them not

to give up their basic demands which legitimize their identity. The most important differences between the Taliban and other actors can be summarized in two main categories:

First category is type of Political System and interpretation from religion: The Taliban, like other radical Islamists, is seeking to establish a religious-political system on basis of Sharia law. Although other internal actors are not trying to eliminate Islam from the country, the main differences are the types of interpretation between the two groups. The Taliban are intellectually close to the Deobandis which is very similar to the Salafists in the Arab world in terms of political view and government. Therefore, the Taliban's extreme interpretation from Islam undermines coexistence in Afghanistan's multi-ethnic community. Afghanistan is an Islamic country but there are different religious groups such as Sunni Hanafi, Sunni Sufi, twelve Imam shia, Ismaili shia. In addition, there are some non-Muslim people such as Sikhs, Hindus and Christian that are worried about return of Talibanism in Afghanistan. The majority of the Afghan people are in favor of republicanism and democratic political order while the Taliban disagree with democracy. Given Afghanistan's multi-ethnicity, political participation and access to national resources have always been one of the most challenging issues in Afghanistan. According to Taliban worldview, all social and cultural groups do not have equal rights. Whatever the Taliban provide is correct and the rest must accept or leave the country.

Second category is the Mechanisms for transition of Political Power; in the contemporary era, there are two methods in transition of power: democracy and authoritarianism. Although the type of political system seems different in democracies, what forms the nature of system is that the sovereignty belongs to citizens. The second method is authoritarianism which itself divided into several types but religious authoritarianism is the one which is chosen by Taliban. In fact, the Taliban are trying to reestablish the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, but the majorities of the people have a very bitter memory from the Islamic Emirate in the nineties and do not want to experience it again. Since republicanism and the Emirate are not combinable, reaching an agreement between the two groups of actors in the intra-Afghan negotiation would be very difficult. In addition to these differences, Taliban have a kind of monopolistic view to Afghanistan and think that they are the real owner of this country giving no rights to the rest. This kind of racial-ethnic supremacy when combined with religious supremacy can lead to an inflexible system against the will of the majority of citizens. Therefore, the differences in intra-Afghan talks would be deeper than the differences between the US and the Taliban, and so it could take longer time or even face stalemate.

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