



## Organization for Policy Research & Development Studies (DROPS)

# Afghan Peace Talks

March 2019

### DROPS ANALYSIS

#### **Another Marathon of US-Taliban Talks Ends: Was There a Positive Outcome for the Afghan State?**

By Bismillah Alizada, Deputy Director of DROPS

The fifth round of talks between the American and the Taliban [ended in an “agreement in draft”](#) on March 12 after 16 days of tough talks. The draft agreement, only covered [two main topics](#) on the agenda: a timeline for withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and counter-terrorism. According to Mr. Khalilzad, the Special Envoy who leads the US negotiation team, [the agreement will not be finalized](#) until and unless an agreement is reached on the other two crucial topics of a comprehensive ceasefire and direct talks with the Afghan government that were [agreed upon “in principle”](#) in January. Although the development proves a strong will on the part of the US and the Taliban to end the current war, persisting regional divide on the future of Afghanistan and continued isolation of the Afghan state remains as looming threats to an enduring settlement in Afghanistan.

The recent round of talks was the longest of them to date, testifying to a

determination on the part of the US and the Taliban to reach an agreement that will end a war that gets deadlier day by day. The Taliban demonstrated the will by [appointing](#) its co-founder, Mullah Baradar, to lead the the Taliban team of negotiators that [includes five former Guantanamo prisoner](#). The US, on the other hand, also displayed a strong will by “[requesting](#)” Baradar’s release from Pakistan and accepting the composition of Taliban’s team. The fact that this round of talks went on for 16 days also proves that there is a great deal of will on the part of both parties to make the process a success. Details of the talks, however, remains scanty but reports have revealed that the talks were focused on [withdrawal timeline and counter-terrorism measures, including the definition of terrorism](#).

Lack of clarity on the agenda and details of talks have stirred fierce reactions from the Afghan government. Afghanistan’s National Security Advisor, Hamdullah Mohib, [lashed out](#) the US Envoy for lack of transparency and clarity on peace talks, accusing him of seeking to head an interim government in Afghanistan as a “viceroy”. Following the fall out, [the US severed all its contacts with him](#), souring the relations between Afghanistan and the US at a very critical time and further isolating the Afghan state in the talks. Lack of transparency over talks has also engendered outcries from [within](#) and [outside](#) Afghanistan in support of preserving democratic gains and human rights in a deal with the Taliban. Although the US has stated that [it is not seeking to impose a deal on the Afghans](#), it remains unclear how such assurance be delivered in the absence of the Afghan state and people at the talks.

Furthermore, there is no regional and international consensus on the ongoing peace talks. Afghanistan’s neighbors are not on the same page when it comes to a peaceful settlement of the Afghan war, [each seeking to ensure their influence and interest](#). Moreover, as the ally of the US in the Afghan war, NATO is major stakeholders who have [expressed their concerns](#) in this regard. India has also [raised concerns](#) over the interim government proposal as part of the peace deal, explicitly warning against such a scenario. Although “interim government” is not officially announced by the US to be part of the deal, the issue was recently [raised](#) by Pakistan’s Prime Minister, and faced a strong backlash from the Afghanistan and [the US](#), denoting that the US and Pakistan are not on the same page either, on this issue at least.

Most of all, the key party to the current war, the Afghan state, remains excluded from that talks. The Taliban has repeatedly derided the incumbent government as a puppet of the United States and thus illegitimate, foreclosing any possibility of direct talks with it. The US, on the other hand, has remained equivocal on the topic, vacillating between direct talks with the Afghan government and intra-Afghan

dialogues. The Afghan government also remains irresolute and weak in reclaiming its role in the process. It has not been able to form a national team of negotiators that was due before the fifth round of negotiations kickstarted in late February. It has also failed to hold the national-level consultative Loya Jirga on peace talks, which was first [scheduled for March 17](#), now [rescheduled for April 29](#). The Jirga will [convene](#) around 2,000 delegates from across Afghanistan to discuss red lines in peace talks with the Taliban. It is also worth mentioning that the government remains politically weak as it continuously loses support of the political class who tacitly approve an interim government, if not lauding it.

Given the above, the prospects for peace talks remains gloomy and complex in spite of the draft agreement reached on two major points on the US and Taliban agenda. Lack of regional and international consensus on, and support of, the process coupled with isolation and irresoluteness of the Afghan government makes the picture gloomier. Nonetheless, it seems that the future course of the talks will be affected by the national team of negotiators and the consultative Jirga, in one way or the other.

## Studies by Afghan Think-Tanks and Organizations

### Political Settlement of the Afghanistan Conflict: Divergent Models

By Omar Sadr

On Thursday March 7, 2019, the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), launched its recent research paper titled “Political Settlement of the Afghanistan Conflict: Divergent Models”. This paper explores and analyses different possibilities of a political settlement in Afghanistan.

This paper explores and analyses different possibilities of a political settlement in Afghanistan. It particularly assesses the prospects of four different forms of political settlement: (i) inclusion of insurgents in the elections; (ii) decentralization of power; (iii) power sharing, and (iv) the interim government. Generally, once the parties to the conflict agree on a negotiated settlement of the conflict, there is a need for sorting out a political mechanism for the reorganization of politics and power.

- 1) This paper seeks to address the following research questions:
- 2) What are the prospects of a political settlement in Afghanistan?
- 3) What are the assets and liabilities/advantages and drawbacks of the above mentioned four different settlements?

- 4) Is it possible to accommodate an ideological insurgency which makes an ideological distinction between “the Republic” and the “Islamic Emirate” as two different and irreconcilable political systems?
- 5) Is it possible to accommodate/reintegrate a highly ideological insurgency into a system which is marked by weakened governance system, the crisis of legitimacy and rampant corruption?

To read the full paper, click [here...](#)

## **Mariam Safi, DROPS Director, Briefs The North Atlantic Council NATO HQ on 8th March 2019**

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, 8th March 2019, Mariam Safi Director of the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies Briefed the North Atlantic Council at NATO HQ in Brussels, on “The Peace Process in Afghanistan: Taking Stock of the Challenges and Possibilities through the Lens of Afghan Women, Civil Society Organizations, and Think-Tanks.”

You can find the full brief [here...](#)

### **OPINION PIECES & COMMENTARIES**

#### **Negotiations Are the Best Way to End the War in Afghanistan**

**By Barnett Rubin**

In 2012, while I was serving as senior adviser to the State Department special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I met in Istanbul with a group of Iranian scholars and former diplomats. After listening to the Iranians protest the United States’ purported plans to establish permanent bases in Afghanistan, I told them that they were worrying about the wrong thing. Their problem was not that U.S. forces would stay forever; it was that, sooner or later, they would leave, and the Iranians and

#### **US must not sacrifice the Afghan people in a rush to ‘reform’ the Taliban**

**By Camelia Entekhabifard**

Until recently, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, was on a blacklist of terrorists compiled by the United States. A co-founder of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and deputy to Mullah Mohammed Omar, he was captured in February 2010 in Pakistan by a joint team of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence and US Central Intelligence Agency officers.

On October 25, 2018, the Taliban

their neighbors would once again be stuck with a problem that they could not solve.

Sure enough, that time is coming. In December, The New York Times reported, "The Trump administration has ordered the military to start withdrawing roughly 7,000 troops from Afghanistan in the coming months."

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## Bush Ignored History Going Into Afghanistan. Trump Is Oblivious Pulling Out.

By David S. Sedney

On February 15, 1989, I was on duty in the White House Situation Room as a Soviet general retreated across a bridge from Afghanistan into the USSR, ending the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. While the aides and officials in the Situation Room 30 years ago traded high fives and toasted "victory" in their decade-long campaign, they had no clue that the poorly done, partial agreements that had "ended" the war in Afghanistan had instead set in motion forces that resulted in more tragedies and continue to bring us threats today.

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## One Year or Five. U.S., Taliban Spar Over Troop-Pullout Timing

By Iltaf Najafizada

announced that Pakistan had released Baradar. Zalmay Khalilzad, Washington's special envoy to Afghanistan, said that he had been freed at the request of the United States. Baradar was subsequently appointed chief of the Taliban's diplomatic office in Doha, Qatar.

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## تنوری چهارضلعی صلح چگونه می‌توان با طالبان به صلح رسید؟

محمدامین احمدی، رییس دانشگاه ابن سینا

گفت‌وگویی صلح با طالبان جدی‌تر از هر زمان دیگر شده است و چنین به نظر می‌رسد که امریکا تصمیم گرفته است روندی را به وجود آورد که طالبان شریک مهم و تأثیرگذار آن باشد و از یک گروه شورشی و یا تروریستی شریک القاعده و گروه‌های جهادی دیگر جدا، جزئی از یک روند دولت‌سازی در افغانستان گردد تا زمینه‌ی ختم جنگ در افغانستان که با حمله امریکا علیه این گروه در افغانستان بعد از یازده سپتامبر شروع شد و برای این کشور هزینه جانی و مالی داشته است، فراهم گردد.

امریکا برای رسیدن به این صلح، به گفته خودشان بر حامی طالبان یعنی پاکستان، فشار لازم اقتصادی و سیاسی را وارد کرده است و پاکستان طالبان را برای مذاکره و صلح حاضر کرده است. طرف سوم قضیه دولت و مردم افغانستان است که سال‌ها است صلح طلب کنند.

[بیشتر بخوانید...](#)

## Is the end of war peace? Remarks on the US-Taliban peace talks in Afghanistan

The Afghan Taliban rejected a proposal that would result in U.S. forces being withdrawn from the war-torn nation in five years, posing a serious setback to the efforts aimed at ending America's longest war through negotiations. The rebel group wants foreign troops to leave the country within a year, according to two former Taliban leaders.

The U.S. and the insurgents resumed peace talks on Saturday after a two-day break for internal deliberations, but five rounds of discussions haven't yielded a breakthrough on the timeline for a withdrawal nor has it elicited a pledge from the Taliban to stop terrorists from using the country as a base.

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## **U.S. Peace Talks With Taliban Trip Over a Big Question: What Is Terrorism?**

**By Mujib Mashal**

Nearly 11 days after peace negotiations between the United States and the Taliban began with high hopes, it has become clear that any resolution to the 18-year war could be frustratingly slow. One of the most prominent issues thwarting progress is a disagreement over a fundamental question: What is terrorism, and who is a terrorist?

The answer is so important because the two sides had already agreed in

**By Ghazaal Habibyar**

The recent peace talks with the Taliban have brought a lot of hopes, concerns, fears and memories among Afghans. They can't help but wonder what the cost of these negotiations and an unknown peace agreement, will be. They wonder what it means for them when Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, and the Taliban negotiators say they have "in principle agreed to a framework for a peace deal". They question why the government that they have elected at the expense of their lives is being sidelined.

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## **Can the Taliban movement become a meaningful diplomatic actor?**

**By Farkhondeh Akbari**

It is clear that the Trump administration is seeking an exit from Afghanistan as soon as possible. US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has signalled that a deal is imminent with the Taliban. But we are yet to see if the deal entails a framework for the withdrawal of US forces to end 17 years of conflict or if it entails a plan for sustainable peace for Afghanistan after 40 years of war. The characteristics of the Taliban pose major challenges to achieve the latter.

principle on a framework for two crucial issues: the withdrawal of American troops, and a commitment that Afghan soil would not again be used to launch terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies, as Al Qaeda did with its strikes on Sept. 11, 2001. That attack led the Americans to invade Afghanistan in an effort to hunt down Al Qaeda's mastermind, Osama bin Laden.

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## **Everyone Wants a Piece of Afghanistan**

**By Barnett R. Rubin**

President Donald Trump's intention to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan has given new life to the quest for a political settlement after 41 years of war, including over 17 directly involving the U.S. military. According to both U.S. government and Taliban sources, negotiations between the two sides have led to agreement on the outline of a framework for a deal in which the United States would withdraw troops and the Taliban would guarantee that any future government in which they participate would cooperate with international efforts against terrorism. The Taliban will have to disavow al Qaeda explicitly for the first time.

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History has shown that not all peace settlement negotiations lead to peace. Negotiations brought peace in Bosnia and genocide in Rwanda.

The characteristics of the actors involved are key indicators of whether a meaningful outcome will be achieved from negotiations.

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## **Burqas and betrayals: Is U.S. selling out Afghans to the Taliban?**

**By Trudy Rubin**

Is the White House so eager to quit Afghanistan that it will hand 35 million Afghans over to the Taliban in rushed "peace" negotiations?

Hamdullah Mohib, the visibly angry Afghan national security adviser, raised this question with U.S. journalists and diplomats last week on a visit to Washington, earning sharp State Department pushback.

Yet it is a question that must be asked, as special U.S. representative Zalmay Khalilzad negotiates a timeline for U.S. troop withdrawal directly with Taliban leaders at talks in Qatar.

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## **The U.S. needs more from the Taliban than a cease-fire and talks**

**Washington Post Editorial Board**

THE TRUMP administration has now conducted five rounds of negotiations with the Taliban, including a grueling 16-day round that ended Tuesday in Qatar. Both sides are claiming progress, but details have been scant — including, it turns out, for the Afghan government, which has been excluded from the talks. That prompted an undiplomatic outburst Thursday by the national security adviser to President Ashraf Ghani, who told reporters in Washington that the U.S. administration is “ostracizing and alienating a very trusted ally.”

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## **Trump’s Bad Deal with the Taliban**

**By Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio**

Last week, Afghanistan’s national security adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, launched into a broadside against Zalmay Khalilzad, the chief American diplomat responsible for negotiating with the Taliban. Addressing reporters in Washington, Mohib insinuated that Khalilzad is seeking to install himself as the “viceroy” of a new “caretaker government.” The State Department

## **Don't blame Afghanistan for blowing whistle on Zalmay Khalilzad**

**Michael Rubin**

Hamdullah Mohib, national security adviser to Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani, broke diplomatic china on Thursday when he told a Washington audience:

"Knowing Ambassador Khalilzad's own history, personal history, he has ambitions in Afghanistan. He has wanted to run for president twice, in 2009 and 2014... The perception in Afghanistan [was that] perhaps all of this talk is to create a caretaker government, of which he will then become the viceroy. We're only saying this because this is the perception."

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## **US-Taliban Talks: To What End?**

**By Umair Jamal**

The peace talks between the Afghan Taliban and the United States have not progressed despite the fact that both parties have steadily been meeting for weeks.

There has not been any significant news when it comes to the parties mutually agreeing to some sort of overarching peace formula. About two months ago, a peace plan that was



quickly issued a sharp rebuke, saying that any condemnation of Khalilzad was really a critique of its leader, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

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## **‘Women Here Are Very, Very Worried’**

**By Susan Chira**

It was once a prominent and bipartisan cause: the liberation of Afghan women from the tyranny of the Taliban.

These women were championed by an array of strange bedfellows: feminists like Eleanor Smeal, celebrities like Lily Tomlin and stalwarts of a conservative administration like Laura Bush and Dick Cheney.

In the early days of the invasion, the world heard vivid stories of the changes the war had brought. Women could walk freely outside their houses and put on makeup; girls could go to school. It was a narrative that helped buoy public support for the fight in Afghanistan and deflect criticism about American empire.

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## **Once Jailed in Guantánamo, 5 Taliban Now Face U.S. at Peace Talks**

reportedly proposed and drafted by the RAND corporation was projected as an agreement that the Taliban and the U.S. may sign on in the near future. The reports related to the future of the RAND formula have also gone ...

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## **Weighing the Costs of War and Peace in Afghanistan**

**By Jonathan Schroden**

On Mar. 12, the United States and the Taliban finished their longest set of talks to date. After 16 days of negotiations, the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Amb. Zalmay Khalilzad, tweeted that “peace requires agreement on four issues: counter-terrorism assurances, troop withdrawal, intra-Afghan dialogue, and a comprehensive ceasefire ... We’re now ‘agreed in draft’ on the first two.” This is a positive development, as previously the two sides had been only “agreed in principle.” The next step is for both sides to consult with decision-makers and seek their approval of the draft agreement so as to finalize it. This would presumably pave the way for direct talks between the Taliban ....

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## **Understanding Iran’s Moves in the Afghan Endgame**

**By Saurav Sarkar**

## By Mujib Mashal

DOHA, Qatar — When the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and toppled the Taliban government, even those who surrendered were treated as terrorists: handcuffed, hooded and shipped to the American detention camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Now, in a stark demonstration of the twists and contradictions of the long American involvement in Afghanistan, five of those men are sitting across a negotiating table from their former captors, part of the Taliban team discussing the terms of an American troop withdrawal.

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Much has been speculated about the United States' troop withdrawal announced by President Trump from Syria and, reportedly, from Afghanistan. At the 2019 State of the Union address, Trump said that any troop withdrawals would be dependent on progress at the ongoing peace talks. Iran, a regional power with geopolitical inroads into South Asia, has become a major player in the Afghanistan endgame, having transformed its adversarial relationship with the Afghan Taliban into a cooperative partnership. Tehran's continued engagement with the Taliban since 2015 is intended to extend and solidify its leverage over ....

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## NEWS

### Govt Begins Forming National, Inclusive Negotiating Team

Government has called on politicians and people from different layers of the society to introduce their delegates for a national and inclusive negotiating team which will conduct peace talks on behalf of Afghans, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman Haroon Chakhansuri said Saturday.

The formation of an inclusive national team for peace talks is a demand ....

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### U.S., Taliban Officials Resume Talks after Two-Day Break

The United States and the Taliban representatives resumed the highest-level negotiations yet in Qatar on Saturday after a two-day pause.

Sources close to the peace negotiations told Ariana News that the U.S. officials have proposed a plan to the Taliban which upon all American troops would withdraw from Afghanistan over the next three to five years.

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## **U.S. Troops To Leave Afghanistan Within Five Years: Report**

Under a new Pentagon plan, All American troops would withdraw from Afghanistan over the next three to five years, the New York Times reported. The rest of the international force in Afghanistan would leave at the same time, after having mixed success in stabilizing the country since 2001.

NYT reported that the plan is being discussed with European allies and was devised, in part, to appeal to President Trump, who has long expressed skepticism of enduring American ...

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## **Freedoms Should Not Be Sacrificed For Peace: Afghan Women**

A group of women activists and residents of Jawzjan at a ceremony in the province announced their support to the ongoing talks in Qatar but said that the achievements of Afghanistan in women's rights, freedom of press and other gains should not be ignored the process.

They called o government to share the developments of peace talks with the people. The women said they want peace but their freedoms should not be sacrificed for it.

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## **Option To Delay Peace Jirga On The Table: HPC**

The High Peace Council (HPC) on Sunday said the option to delay the Consultative Loya Jirga on Peace remains on the table, but a final decision regarding the issue has not been taken so far.

The reason behind the proposal is because of weather conditions, said the HPC spokesman Sayed Ehsan Tahiri, adding that if the cold weather prevails, members from remote regions of the country will not be able to attend the Jirga.

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## **Loya Jirga postponed**

Loya Jirga for consultation on peace with the Taliban has been postponed, sources told 1TV on Sunday.

The Jirga, which is expected to gather 2,000 Afghan representatives from across the country, was previously scheduled to be held between 17 March and 20 March in Kabul.

Asadullah Zaeri, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan High Peace Council, confirmed that the gathering could not be held on the scheduled dates due to technical problems particularly caused by snowfall and rainfall.

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## **U.S., Taliban Qatar Talks Continue Focus on Two Key Issues**

The United States and the Taliban representatives continued their highest-level negotiations yet on foreign troop withdrawals and counter-terrorism on Sunday, sources close to the peace negotiations said.

The Taliban sources said that the U.S. and Taliban officials were close to reaching into a preliminary draft of peace agreement.

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## **Uzbekistan FM meets Taliban deputy chief in Doha, group says**

Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Kamilov met with Taliban's deputy chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Qatar capital Doha on Sunday evening, the group said.

The meeting comes as latest round of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban are ongoing in Doha. Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, in a statement said that the group's delegation met also with visiting Uzbekistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Ismatullah Irgashev.

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## **UN, Norway providing technical support to negotiators in US-Taliban talks**

Representatives from the United Nations and the Norwegian government are providing technical support to negotiators in peace talks between the United States and the Taliban in Qatar, sources said on Sunday.

Representatives from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation would also join the talks which are happening in Doha. They are expected to act as ....

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## **Afghan National Security Advisor visits Uzbekistan for discussing Afghan war and peace**

Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Moheb, arrived in Uzbekistan on Sunday. A spokesman for the National Security Council Tariq Arian said in a video message that the purpose of Mr. Moheb's visit is to discuss regional issues and security in Afghanistan. Mr. Arian said: "The country's national security adviser will discuss high-level security issues, the peace process, counter-narcotics, fight against terrorism..."

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## **Taliban Sources Report Progress On Troop Withdrawal**

The US negotiators and the Taliban members have reached to some kind of agreements on the modality of foreign forces withdrawal from Afghanistan and the guarantee that Afghanistan's territory is not used as a threat against other countries, Taliban sources familiar with the talks said.

In the past two days, the two sides have worked on the details of these agreements and there is a possibility that the negotiations will extend, the sources added.

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## **Afghan Youths Call For Intra-Afghan Talks**

A group of Herat youths at a gathering in Herat city, in the west of Afghanistan, said they support the ongoing peace talks in Qatar but they added that there should be intra-Afghan dialogues in order to move forward the peace process and pave the ground for a sustainable peace in the country.

Those who attended the event, said that the role of political parties should not be ignored in the peace process, referring to recent efforts by a number of mainstream political parties and movements which sent their delegates to Moscow last month to hold talks with the Taliban.

## **Qatar, Russia Pledge To Expedite Efforts For Afghan Peace**

Qatar Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani has said that his country is coordinating efforts with Russia to expedite the peace process in Afghanistan.

In a joint presser with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Doha on Monday, Qatar's top diplomat said Doha is holding discussions with Moscow about creating a special communication point about Afghanistan.

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## **U.S. Abrupt Withdrawal from Afghanistan Will Bring 'Unpleasant Consequences'**

A number of civil society organizations and military experts have warned of Unpleasant Consequences if the United States abruptly withdraw from Afghanistan.

The U.S. and the Taliban officials engaged in at least five round of talks on Afghanistan to each into a political settlement in the war-torn country. Withdrawal of the U.S. troops and preventing Afghanistan from being used against other countries have been the two key issues being discussed in the ongoing U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar.

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## **Qatar Talks: U.S., Taliban Officials Working on 'Draft of Peace Agreement'**

The fifth round of the U.S. and the Taliban officials Talks in Qatar are focusing on draft of the peace agreement regarding two issues including withdrawal of foreign forces

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## **Homes Lost and Lives Trampled, Rural Afghans Urgently Want Peace**

When the war engulfing southern Afghanistan reached Sayed Mohammed's doorstep, he resisted the urge to abandon his home. When Taliban fighters looted his chicken farm, he still refused to leave.

But the birth of his fifth child, a daughter, changed his mind. Named Halima, she was born amid a raging battle a couple months ago, with explosions shaking the walls of the family farmhouse on the rural outskirts of the city of Tirin Kot.

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## **'Ceasefire, trust-building key to effective peace process in Afghanistan'**

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## **Bolton: 'No blind trust' in possible Taliban deal**

When asked how the Taliban could be trusted to hold up its end of a possible deal with the U.S., White House national security adviser John Bolton tells Jake Tapper that the administration has "no blind trust in the Taliban."

[Watch full interview...](#)

## **Prominent US Senator Wants Afghanistan War End**

Bernie Sanders, a prominent US senator, criticizing the United States long war in Afghanistan and said on Monday in a tweet that the Americans do not want endless war.

"American troops have been in Afghanistan for nearly 18 years, Iraq since 2003 and in Syria since 2015," he tweeted. "The American people do not want endless war," Sanders said. "Congress must reassert its Constitutional authority over the use of force and responsibly end these interventions."

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## **'This Is Not The Way': Afghan Women Push Back On U.S.-Taliban Peace Talks**

Despite the series of talks over past many months, the two sides have failed to produce a draft agreement. President Ashraf Ghani has been sidelined by the Taliban and cold-shouldered by the U.S., undermining the credibility of his government.

Farkhunda Zahra Naderi is a former Afghan parliamentarian, N-Peace awardee, former advisor to Afghan President on UN affairs and a strong voice in Afghanistan. In an interview with Tehran Times, she talks about the prospects of ongoing peace talks, importance of ceasefire and ....

[Read the full interview here...](#)

### **Uzbekistan FM briefs Afghan NSA after meeting US, Taliban negotiators in Doha**

Uzbekistan Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Kamilov briefed Afghanistan's National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib in Tashkent on Wednesday, after meeting Taliban and US negotiators in Qatar. The Taliban are holding fifth round of peace talks with the US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Doha. The group has so far refused to negotiate with the Afghan government.

During the meeting in Tashkent, Kamilov told the visiting the Afghan delegation that Uzbekistan ....

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In recent weeks, thousands of women and young people in Afghanistan as well as Afghans living abroad have been protesting and speaking out against peace talks taking place between the U.S. and the Taliban.

Activists say that the views of the Taliban — whose harsh rule from 1996 to 2001 was notorious for repression of women — do not reflect the views and needs of Afghan people. They fear a Taliban return to power will undermine the progress that the country has worked to build since the regime fell nearly two decades ago.

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### **US-Taliban talks in Qatar: Pompeo hopes for enough progress for him to travel and move it further**

As US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is holding talks with the Taliban in Qatar, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Monday hoped the envoy makes enough progress for him to travel in a couple of weeks and help move it further.

US and the Taliban began their latest round of peace talks on 25 February and the sides took two-day break for internal deliberations before resuming talks on 2 March.

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## **Conditions Not Ready For Full Troop Pullout: Votel**

Amid the ongoing efforts for bringing the Taliban to the peace table with the Afghan government, Gen. Joseph Votel, Commander of the US Central Command, said that politically Afghanistan is not ready for the complete withdrawal of foreign troops.

Votel said that Pentagon has not received any order for troop withdrawal. He said the US needs to remain in the region in order to prevent the activities of extremist groups such as Daesh and al-Qaeda.

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## **What Afghan Soldiers Think About U.S. Troop Withdrawal and Taliban Peace Talks**

KABUL, Afghanistan — As the world watches peace talks between the Taliban and United States representatives in Doha, Qatar, Afghans are acutely aware of how much is on the line for their country—especially members of the Afghan National Security Forces.

The men and women of the ANSF have spent the last 18 years fighting for two countries: their homeland, and the U.S. As bodies were still being recovered from the wreckage of the World Trade Center in 2001, Afghans fought shona ba shona, "shoulder to shoulder," with

## **China Calls For Int'l Community's Firm Support To Afghan Peace**

China calls on the international community to give firm support for the "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" reconciliation process, according to Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday.

"Afghanistan is at a critical moment; the country will see potential dawn of peace, while facing the buildup of risks and challenges. Pursuing peace requires more courage than stoking conflict.

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## **2 Weeks of U.S.-Taliban Talks End With 'Progress' but No Breakthrough**

DOHA, Qatar — Although more than two weeks of talks between the United States and the Taliban ended Tuesday without a breakthrough, two American officials said they were close to a final agreement on one crucial element to a framework for ending the long war: a Taliban promise to not allow terrorist attacks from Afghanistan.

The officials also said they had made substantial progress on a second element, detailing a plan for the withdrawal of American troops.

The chief American peace envoy,



U.S. forces to push the Taliban out of Afghanistan.

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### **A Taliban Leader, Eyeing U.S. Peace Deal, Speaks to Afghans' Fears**

DOHA, Qatar — In a sign that the Taliban see a peace deal with the United States as imminent, one of their top leaders released a rare audio message on Thursday seeking to ease the concerns of the insurgency's own fighters — and those of Afghans who fear that an agreement could let the Taliban return to power and roll back human rights.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a deputy Taliban leader who was recently freed from a Pakistani cell to lead the talks with the Americans in Qatar, said in the message that he was “very hopeful” that the discussions that ended Tuesday could help end a war that has dragged on for 18 years.

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### **India to US: Don't want interim government in Afghanistan**

India has told the United States that any drawdown of US troops in Afghanistan as a result of talks with the Taliban should not be followed by an interim government, an Indian newspaper

Zalmay Khalilzad, was expected to fly back to Washington on Tuesday....

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### **Afghan official accuses top U.S. envoy of undermining Ghani government with colonial intentions**

Washington -- In an extraordinary accusation made here in the U.S. capital, Afghanistan's top national security official asserted on Thursday that the Trump administration is conspiring to unseat elected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and replace him with a colonial style government led by American diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad.

Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Adviser to Ghani, said he flew to Washington specifically to bring the concerns about Khalilzad to the White House's attention. He was told that his counterpart John Bolton was too "busy" to meet with him to discuss the concerns, however.

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### **Left out of peace talks, U.S. allies reassess Afghan support**

KABUL (Reuters) - At a dinner party in Kabul's high-security "green zone" in March, a senior European diplomat poured himself a glass of red wine and pulled up a photograph on his iPhone.

reported Saturday.

The message was conveyed by India's foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale as he met with US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad during visit to Washington, Hindustan Times reported.

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### **If US-Afghan peace talks fail, Trump may have plans that involve 'army': WH**

Donald Trump has prioritised peace efforts in Afghanistan and his special envoy has initiated direct talks with the Taliban, but the US President will not accept a "bad deal" on efforts to end America's longest war, the White House has said.

According to a senior Trump administration official, America has "contingency" plans, which might involve "military options" if the peace talks fail to yield desired results.

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### **Mogherini Vows EU's Full Support To Afghan Peace**

Federica Maria Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is visiting Kabul, said the EU strongly supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and that

Released by Qatar's foreign ministry on Feb. 25, it showed seven Qatari officials alongside U.S. and Taliban negotiators as talks on ending the 17-year-old war in Afghanistan had restarted in the Gulf state the previous day.

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### **Ghani Sees Big Opportunity For Peace In Afghanistan**

President Ashraf Ghani, who addressed a press conference with Federica Maria Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in Kabul on Tuesday, said a big opportunity has been created for peace in the country and that this opportunity can only be used by the elected government of Afghanistan.

He indirectly pointed at recent pressures by some politicians and some countries in the region about peace ...

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### **Pakistan's PM Proposes Interim Setup In Afghanistan**

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday suggested an interim setup in Afghanistan as a possible solution to an apparent impasse in the ongoing peace process, while blaming the Afghan government for the stalemate in

achievements of Afghanistan should be preserved in this process.

Addressing a press conference with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul on Tuesday, Mogherini said the European Union has always been on the side of Afghan people.

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### **Khalilzad briefed Ghani almost everyday during US-Taliban talks in Qatar: Daudzai**

US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad briefed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani almost every day during latest round of talks with the Taliban representatives in Qatar, an Afghan official said Sunday.

This comes as earlier Afghanistan's national security adviser accused Khalilzad of a lack of transparency about peace talks.

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### **US, Afghan envoys talk next steps in peace process**

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad has met with Afghan ambassador in Washington Roya Rahmani.

During the meeting, the sides had substantive discussion and talked next

talks, Pakistan's Express Tribune said in a report.

According to the report, the suggestion came during Khan's interaction with journalists at his office in Islamabad on Monday.

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### **Trump won't accept 'bad deal' on Afghanistan: White House**

US President Donald Trump will not accept a bad deal on Afghanistan, a senior White House official reportedly said on Wednesday.

According to the official, US has "contingency" plans, which might involve "military options" if the peace fail to yield desired results.

"We are certainly prioritising peace efforts in Afghanistan..."

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### **Russian diplomat to visit US to seek information on Taliban talks**

Russian president's special representative on Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, will visit the United States to seek information about Washington's talks with the Taliban, TASS agency reported on Tuesday.

steps in the peace process. "It is neither an easy nor straight path we are walking. To stay on track it's of utmost importance we continue to walk it together," Khalilad said on Twitter.

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### **US will no longer deal with Afghan NSA Hamdullah Mohib: report**

The United States had decided to end contacts with the Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib after the official blasted Washington's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad over talks with the Taliban, Reuters reported Tuesday.

Addressing reporters in Washington last Thursday, Mohib had publicly criticized Khalilzad accusing him of selling out Afghanistan in talks with the Taliban, which have excluded Kabul.

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### **Abu Dhabi crown prince 'proposed killing Taliban leaders': report**

Mohammed bin Zayed, Abu Dhabi's crown prince, proposed to set up an assassination programme targeting top Taliban leaders during a meeting with the top US diplomat earlier this year, the Middle East Eye (MEE) news website has reported.

"I will go to Washington [on March 20-21]," Kabulov said. "We certainly expect them to do it [provide information about the United States' recent contacts with the Taliban], this is the reason..."

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### **Khalilzad meets Pakistan, UK envoys in US**

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad has met with Pakistan and British ambassadors to Washington.

In a tweet announcing the meetings, Khalilzad said: "Whether your perspective is regional or international, everyone benefits from the security and economic dividends an end to war in Afghanistan will bring."

US and Taliban negotiators have held multiple rounds of peace talks.

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### **China, U.S., Russia meet on Afghanistan issue, agree on further talks**

WASHINGTON, March 22 (Xinhua) -- A trilateral two-day meeting on the Afghanistan issue ended here on Friday, as representatives of China, the United States and Russia agreed to hold further talks regarding the issue.

Chinese special envoy for Afghanistan

The crown prince made the offer during Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to the UAE on January 12 amid disagreements over the progress of peace talks between US and Taliban negotiators, MEE reported on Thursday, citing to a source with detailed knowledge of the meeting.

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### **Opportunity For Peace This Time Is Real: NATO Envoy**

NATO's Senior Civilian Representative for Afghanistan Nicholas Kay has said that to ensure establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan, there is a dire need to preserve the achievements of the last 18 years in the country.

"This year in Afghanistan, I really do believe is a critical year in deciding whether this country will enjoy the peace that it so much deserves. There has never been a year like this since 2001, the opportunity is real, but the risks are real as well and this moment will not lose forever," he said.

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### **Govt Remains Skeptical About Outcome Of 'Qatar Meeting'**

Delegates from mainstream political parties and the civil society are preparing to attend a second meeting

affairs Deng Xijun, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and Russian Presidential Special Representative Zamir Kabulov attended the meeting starting Thursday, during which they discussed the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan ...

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### **Civil Liberties, Human Rights Afghan Women's Red Lines For Peace**

As the Afghan politicians preparing to hold the second round of face-to-face talks with Taliban in Doha, Qatar, concerns are rising among many ordinary Afghans, particularly women, against whom many restricted rules were imposed by the Taliban when the group was in power in Afghanistan nearly two decades ago.

Women's rights activists on Sunday reiterated the call on the Afghan politicians to bring the protection of civil liberties and human rights as the red lines while talking peace with the Taliban.

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### **Peace Should Not Put Human Rights At Risk: EU Envoy**

In a video message on occasion of Nowruz Festival, Pierre Mayaudon, the Head of European Union's Delegation to

with the Taliban next month in Qatar, but the Afghan government, which has not confirmed or rejected its presence at the meeting, remains skeptical about the outcome of the conference.

At least 80 delegates, including the 40 delegates of Moscow meeting, as well as the civil society members will attend the meeting on April 14 and 15 in Qatar, sources confirmed.

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## **The Journey Of Afghan Peace In A Year**

The most important occurrence witnessed by Afghans during the 1397 solar year (March 22, 2018 to March 22, 2019) was the negotiations held between the US and Taliban officials in Doha as well as between Afghan politicians and members of the Taliban in Moscow. However, Afghan government's delegates were absent in the meetings.

The new solar year will be celebrated on Thursday, March 22. There are increasing hopes among Afghan politicians about making progresses in peace during the upcoming solar year.

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## **Afghans Will Not Accept Islamic Emirate System: Political Parties**

Afghanistan on Thursday said that peace process in Afghanistan should not put human rights, specifically the rights of Afghan women, at risk.

He said that there are serious concerns among the EU members about a potential compromise on the gains Afghanistan has obtained in its strides towards democracy, specially in the area of human rights and ....

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## **Herat Activists Ask Govt To Expedite Peace Efforts**

A group of Herat residents, civil society activists, youths and religious scholars at a gathering titled "The Public Voice in the Peace Process" called on government and the international community to accelerate the peace efforts and said they support the talks but they should be led and owned by Afghans.

The event was divided into different working groups who collected their ideas and presented them under a united umbrella which all stressed on supporting the peace talks with the Taliban, ...

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## **Danish Stresses On Preserving Freedom Of Press In Peace Talks**

Representatives of Afghanistan's mainstream political parties on Monday said that protection of the republic system should be a red line in the peace talks with the Taliban and that they will "never" endorse any change in the system of governance which defies the country's Constitution

A delegation of Afghanistan's political elites are expected to hold a second round of talks with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, as part of efforts to bring the ongoing conflict to an end.

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### **'Multiplicity Of Initiatives' A Problem For Peace: Daudzai**

Umer Daudzai, President Ashraf Ghani's Special Envoy on Regional Affairs for Consensus on Peace, who addressed an event at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran on Sunday, said regional and world countries are playing their roles in the Afghan peace process but according to him "multiplicity of initiatives" is a problem for the process.

"International political will is there, the regional will is there, regional intentions are there, but there is a bit of problem also in the region and that problem is multiplicity of initiatives," he said.

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### **Some aspects of cricket don't apply in diplomacy, US envoy tells Pakistan PM**

Senior officials from President Ghani's administration, including Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish, marked the Journalists National Day at a ceremony in Kabul on Monday.

Addressing the event, Danish said freedom of the press, which is one of the biggest achievements of Afghanistan in the past 18 years, should be preserved in the peace talks with the Taliban – who were once against freedom of the press during their rule in Kabul between 1996 to 2001.

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### **We Will Never Bow' To Pakistan: Saleh**

Amrullah Saleh, a vice-presidential candidate for the next elections and former head of the NDS has said that Afghanistan can be an ally to Pakistan but it "will never bow" to it.

"What we are communicating to Pakistanis is: We can be your allies, but we will never bow to you," Saleh said in an interview with FRANCE 24.

Saleh blasted the suggestion by Pakistani PM Imran Khan to create an interim government in Afghanistan to conduct talks with the Taliban, ...

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### **US not seeking to create and impose a settlement on Afghanistan: envoy**

US envoy in Kabul, John Bass, on Wednesday criticized Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's remarks proposing an interim government in Afghanistan.

Khan said on Monday that forming an interim government would smooth peace talks between US and Taliban officials since the militant group refuses to talk to the current government.

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### **Pakistan should put pressure on Taliban, not make comment on Afghanistan's future: Abdullah**

Pakistan should cooperate on peace and put pressure on the Taliban instead of making comment on Afghanistan's future, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah said on Wednesday.

The remarks come two days after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan proposed interim government in Afghanistan to smooth peace talks between the United States and the Taliban.

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### **Ghani Consults Peace With Afghan Political Leaders**

President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday met prominent political leaders, including

The United States has profound respect for Afghan people's ability to make their own choices and it does not seek to create and impose a settlement on Afghanistan, Washington's ambassador in Kabul said on Tuesday.

The comments come amid tensions between Washington and Kabul over exclusion of Afghan government from the talks with the Taliban.

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### **Afghan people should not be spectators in peace process: EU's top diplomat**

Visiting Kabul amid stepped up diplomatic efforts for peace with the Taliban, EU foreign policy chief on Tuesday called for Afghan people not to be spectators but the authors to write their own present and future.

The remarks come as the United States has held multiple rounds of peace talks with the Taliban, but the group has refused to negotiate directly with the Afghan government.

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### **They Are Thriving After Years of Persecution but Fear a Taliban Deal**

KABUL, Afghanistan — Daoud Naji was



Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and former President Hamid Karzai, to consult with them on the Afghan peace process, the Presidential Palace said in a statement.

Other attendants of the meeting were former Jihadi leader Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, the Second Vice President Sarwar Danish and the head of the High Peace Council Mohammad Karim Khalili.

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a student in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif during a massacre of members of his ethnic Hazara minority in 1998. He remembers digging tunnels to hide terrified families during a Taliban killing spree that left as many as 2,000 civilians dead.

Mr. Naji, now 45 and a leader of a Hazara political movement, fears more mass killings if peace talks between the United States and the Taliban ...

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