



Organization for Policy Research & Development Studies (DROPS)

Afghan Peace Talks

May 2019

DROPS ANALYSIS

Peace Talks Haunted by a Resurfacing 'Islamic Emirate'

By Bismillah Alizada, Deputy Director of DROPS

May witnessed a few crucial developments and events with regards to the Afghan peace process. These events and developments included conclusion of a Consultative Loya Jirga with a strong statement, sixth round of US-Taliban talks, more efforts for regional consensus on the Afghan peace talks, and the second round of talks between the Taliban and Afghan political elites in Moscow. However, no concrete accomplishments were achieved to advance the peace process, and yet, more complexities and challenges resurfaced that makes the prospects of peace talks gloomier.

The Consultative Loya Jirga (April 29-May 3) concluded with a [strong](#) statement that called on intra-Afghan talks under the leadership of the Afghan government, ceasefire, preservation of the constitution and democratic gains, and constitutional rights of the citizens among others. The Jirga, although contentious for the [restriction on media coverage](#) and [selection of its participants](#), was a crucial event that helped the peace process in two ways. First, it helped the Afghan government as it helped consolidate its position in the peace talks by broadening the popular base and support for the conditions and redlines of the Afghan government in peace talks, including preserving state institutions, the constitution, and democratic gains. Second, it helped the US-Taliban talks by providing support to

the two topics on their agenda that seems to have taken the talks to a deadlock: a ceasefire and intra-Afghan dialogues. Although this is seemingly very important in consolidating the stance of the Afghan government and the US negotiating team, in practice the Jirga yielded no concrete outcomes that could help advance the talks into another level.

Meanwhile, the [sixth round of US-Taliban talks](#) were held in Qatar between April 30 and May 9. This round of talks was important in that the Taliban team of negotiators were led by the group co-founder and deputy leader Mullah Baradar whose presence meant that the Taliban team had more authority in talks. However, this round of talks failed to discuss the two contentious points on the US agenda that can take the talks to another level: a ceasefire and intra-Afghan dialogue. Instead, this round of talks again [lingered](#) on the US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan and assurance by the Taliban that Afghanistan will not be used against the US. The US and Taliban stance in the wake of the conclusion of this round of talks further revealed that the two sides had not made any significant progress. While US reiterated that troop withdrawal will be directly depend on the negotiations, and a few days later, the [Taliban announced](#) triumphantly that “the US is on the verge of defeat.” The US, on the other hand, [promised](#) intensification of war against the Taliban.

Regional developments during the month of May in conjunction with the current peace talks revealed the lack of regional consensus on a lasting peace in Afghanistan. Iran and China [stressed](#) on the role of their countries in the peace talks, stressing that the talks should be led by the Afghan government, a hint that the current US-led talks with the Taliban lacks legitimacy. This was further complicated by the [assertion](#) by the Afghan Ambassador to the US who said that the Trump Administration leaves Afghanistan in dark with regards to talks with the Taliban. Foreign diplomats meeting with Mullah Baradar in Doha, Qatar also [received criticism](#) on the grounds that it gives the group legitimacy. Russia, on the other hand, hosted the second round of talks between the Taliban and opposition of the Afghan government between May 28-30. This round of talks, which is also referred to as intra-Afghan talks by its participants, attempted to agree on a ceasefire during Eid ul-Fitr, but [failed](#). Meanwhile, the Taliban and Russian officials used the platform to announce that the [US troops leave Afghanistan](#) as it remains a major impediment to peace. Against these grim developments, [India](#), [Pakistan](#) and [Turkey](#) voiced their full support of the Afghan peace process, an apparently promising development. Nonetheless, it is unclear what such a pledge would mean in practice for the Afghan peace process.

In addition, the second Moscow Talks make the prospects of peace in Afghanistan gloomier as the issue of Islamic Emirate as a mode of government resurfaced during these talks. At least two participants of the talks voiced their concerns in this regard. While Fawzia Kofi, one of the participants, [said](#) in the aftermath of the talks that the Taliban “still dream of their Islamic Emirates,” Mohammad Mohaqiq, another participant, [said](#) that the Taliban “are not ready to leave Islamic Emirates behind” and that the Taliban are seeking to balance their power to advance the issue of Islamic Emirates. This means that the Afghan peace talks is faced with

grave ideological differences on a theological emirate and an Islamic republic.

With the Taliban having repeatedly rejected talks with the Afghan government and a ceasefire, and the groups' inclination towards Islamic Emirates that resurfaced during Moscow Talks according to Kofi and Mohaqiq, the talks seems to have reached a deadlock. Although the seventh round of US-Taliban talks is scheduled for June, and a fresh round of talks between the Taliban and Afghan politicians absent the Afghan government is promised to be held in Doha in the near future, it seems that such talks will not have any good chance for success in light of the developments during the month of May. However, change in the position of the Taliban and the posture of the US and the Afghan government is not completely unpredictable.

Studies by Afghan/Foreign Think-Tanks and Organizations

Peace Jirga Delegates Issue Resolution; Stress On Ceasefire

The delegates in their resolution called on the Afghan government and the Taliban to agree on an immediate ceasefire.

At least 3,200 delegates from across the country included their demands in a 23-Article resolution after the Grand Consultative Jirga on Peace ended after five days.

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

INTERVIEW: Former Afghan Envoy Mahmoud Saikal Discusses Peace

In this program host, Yaser Abrar discusses the Afghan peace talks with Mahmoud Saikal, former permanent representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations.

To watch the full interview, [click here...](#)

Peacemaking in Afghanistan: Procedural and Substantive Challenges

By Dr. Nilofar Sakhi

The peace process in Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. Either the current peace deal will bring together a war torn country or further divide it. Whether the outcome leads the country toward progress and development, or undermines and jeopardizes the current gains and achievements made over the last eighteen years remains to be seen.

In early May, the Afghan government hosted a national four-day Consultative Peace Loya Jirga. Three thousand people had been invited from all over Afghanistan to share their opinions on the national peace process. While the current administration has argued this traditional method of consultation would be inclusive of women, youth, Afghan returnees from neighboring countries, and representatives of ulemas, among others and, therefore, gather the opinions of a wide cross section of society, opponents of the government are suspicious. Former President, Hamid Karzai, is among a group of political elites boycotting the Loya Jirga despite his previous and active participation in the Afghan peace process. They claim the process is being used by the current government to influence its grip on power. Others view this as a blatant attempt by President Ashraf Ghani to use the Loya Jirga as a platform for his forthcoming election campaign.

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

Fragility and Making Peace: Rights of Afghan Women and Peace with the Taliban

Research by Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO)

The report presents findings from two surveys conducted in six provinces (18 districts) of Afghanistan, in October 2018 and February 2019, with over 2200 male and female respondents for each survey. The aim for surveys was to gain an understanding of how ordinary Afghans feel about a peace deal with the Taliban and what they expect as consequences of peace. The research was designed within the framework of Afghanistan's National Action Plan (NAP 1325) for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, to examine the degree to which a peace settlement with the Taliban is compatible with the provisions of Afghanistan's NAP 1325. Relatedly, the research sought to examine views and expectations of Afghans on whether and how a peace settlement adheres to provisions in the Constitution, various laws, and the many policies and structures put in place by successive Afghan governments since 2001 to protect and promote women's equal rights.

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

MEHWAR: Mohaqiq Discusses Moscow Meeting

After the second Moscow Talks that took place on May 28-30 between Taliban delegation and a number of prominent political figures from Afghanistan, Mr. Mohaqiq, one of the participants of this round of talks elaborated during an interview with Tolonews that the Taliban want Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan.

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

Special Interview With US Ambassador On Afghan Peace, Elections

By Tolonews

In this program, TOLONews' Lotfullah Najafizada has discussed the Afghan peace process and the upcoming presidential elections with the US Ambassador to Kabul Johan Bass.

To watch the full interview, [click here...](#)

Assessing the Trump Team's Afghanistan Peace Plan

By Michael Rubin and the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS)

Zalmay Khalilzad, President Trump's special envoy for Afghanistan, continues to pursue a diplomatic settlement with the Taliban framed mostly around the idea that the United States will withdraw from Afghanistan and, in exchange, the Taliban will forswear terrorism.

Khalilzad's strategy will never work. Within the American political context, Khalilzad's diplomatic agreement with the Taliban is meant to provide cover for President Donald Trump's decision to withdrawal from Afghanistan and nothing more. Just as President Barack Obama became so committed to a nuclear bargain with Iran that he embraced a bad deal rather than consider no deal, the Taliban today recognizes that Trump and Khalilzad will make any concession so long as Trump can promise peace in our time. Khalilzad appears willing to undercut the elected and legitimate government in Kabul without first demanding the group demonstrate its popular support at the ballot box. This approach places

too much faith in the false notion that the Taliban have changed while simultaneously empowering them.

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

Rights of Afghan Women and Peace Negotiations

A Policy Brief by Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO)

This policy brief is based on the findings from two surveys undertaken by APPRO in October 2018 and February 2019, as part of the NAP 1325 Monitor project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), to conduct monitoring and in-depth research on the implementation of Afghanistan's NAP 1325.

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

Perspectives on Peace from Taliban Areas of Afghanistan

By Ashley Jackson (USIP Afghanistan)

Notably absent from the debate around peace in Afghanistan are the voices of those living in parts of the country that have borne the brunt of the fighting since 2001—particularly those living in areas under Taliban control or influence. This report provides insight into how Afghan men and women in Taliban-influenced areas view the prospects for peace, what requirements would have to be met for local Taliban fighters to lay down their arms, and how views on a political settlement and a future government differ between Taliban fighters and civilians.

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

OPINION PIECES & COMMENTARIES

Could Peace Talks In Afghanistan Fail Before They Really Begin?

By Kai Eide

Is the peace process in Afghanistan already in serious trouble? Talks

Making the best of a bad situation in Afghanistan

By Retired Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Phillips

Last week, after four days of intensive discussions in Kabul between prominent Afghan representatives from across the country, the 3,200-member loya jirga

continue in Doha between the US and the Taliban – which is good. The Loya Jirga – dedicated to peace and reconciliation - has concluded, but with a number of prominent politicians abstaining. In Moscow a significant group of prominent Afghan politicians met in February to start a dialogue with the Taliban negotiating team. But efforts to continue this dialogue failed, with Kabul presenting an unmanageable list of 250 representatives. Who was responsible for the failure is not for me to judge.

However, the fact is that real negotiations – Afghan-owned and Afghan-led – have not started, nine months after the US initiated talks with the Taliban about withdrawal of US forces. The reason is not simply that the Taliban refuses to recognize the current leadership in Kabul as a legitimate ...

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What Afghan Women (and Men) Really Want

By Pamina Firchow , Eliza Urwin

aliban representatives had something surprising to say during recent peace talks in Moscow: They would support, they said, a constitutional reform that upholds women's access to education and work. There is reason to be skeptical of these commitments. Nevertheless, it is important to hold the group to their promise, because that is what most Afghans want. Research

released its recommendations for the peace process to the Afghan government and the Taliban. The conclusion was clear: if peace in Afghanistan is to be achieved, all parties now fighting must stop doing so, and engage in serious, substantive, inclusive political negotiations.

The conclusions of the grand assembly are the inevitable byproduct of four consecutive decades of armed conflict. Many Afghans are worn out from essentially a lifetime of violence that has killed tens of thousands of their countrymen and women. The American people, weary of the endless, and increasing hopeless, cycle of U.S. troop deployments to Afghanistan at a cost of nearly \$1 trillion, want the longest war in our history to end.

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سرنوشت مبهم صلح

محمد هدایت

ششمین دور مذاکرات صلح افغانستان میان نمایندگان ایالات متحده و طالبان در قطر در حالی پایان یافت که هیچگونه توافقی در پی نداشت. اگرچه دو طرف از پیشرفت های اندک سخن به میان آورده اند؛ ولی بر اساس برخی گزارش های موثق در این دور از مذاکرات موضوعات تازه ای به میان آمده است که کلیت پروسه را با چالش جدی مواجه کرده است. ظاهراً نمایندگان طالبان در این دور، مطالبات اصلی خود را مطرح کرده اند و خواهان برقراری امارت اسلامی در افغانستان شده اند. موضوعی که حداقل در ظاهر با مخالفت جدی ایالات متحده مواجه شده است. البته این

from eastern Afghanistan demonstrates that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, which holds that Afghans are broadly unsupportive of women's rights, rural Afghan men and women do want to see girls go to school and women go to work. Beyond that, they believe that such progress is fundamental to peace.

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The End of the Jirga: Strong Words and Not Much Controversy

By Kate Clark, Ehsan Qaane and Ali Yawar Adili

The Consultative Peace Loya Jirga, described by the head of the organising commission of the jirga, Omar Daudzai, in his opening speech to the 3,200 delegates as “an opportunity for representatives from provinces and districts to share their views and thoughts on peace and stability in Afghanistan,” has wrapped up. It was a day later than planned – it had taken longer than expected to elect the various jirga officials which meant the main ‘meat’ of the jirga, the delegates’ discussions, only began on day 3, rather than day 2 as planned.

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Afghan Women Drawing #MyRedLine For Peace With The Taliban

By Farangis Najibullah

چیزی تازه ای از نگاه طالبان و کسانی که این گروه را به درستی می شناسند، نیست. نمایندگان این گروه در کنفرانس مسکو نیز با صراحت تمام قانون اساسی، نظام سیاسی موجود و ارزش های جدید را به کلی مردود شمرده بودند. علاوه بر زیاده خواهی های جدید طالبان به نظر می رسد حمله مرگ بار این گروه بر یک موسسه آمریکایی در شهر نو کابل در روز چهارشنبه گذشته نیز عامل دیگر بر پایان بی نتیجه مذاکرات ...

[بیشتر بخوانید...](#)

Why I don't Support Peace Talks with the Taliban

BY Rohullah Naderi

Both sides – the Taliban and the Americans – are content with the ongoing talks many hope will result in a much-needed peace in Afghanistan. After 18 years of military campaigns and bloodshed, the two sides have finally decided to talk, seeking to agree on a political settlement. The sticking point that prevented talks between the two was the Taliban's stubborn stance that it would only negotiate with the American side and not with the Afghan government. The Taliban labels the Afghan government illegitimate even though the Taliban peace overtures had been made before, only to be ...

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What Happened to the Afghan-Led, Afghan-Owned Peace Talks?

By Monish Tourangbam and Nandita

"I don't want to give up my work and hobbies."

"I'm not willing to sacrifice my right to watch a football match at the stadium with my friends."

"I didn't have a chance to chase my dreams, but my daughter now has this opportunity. I don't want to sacrifice her future, her rights. That's my red line."

Hundreds of thousands of Afghan women have joined an online campaign, #MyRedLine, to speak about the freedoms and rights they are not willing to give up in the name of peace with the Taliban.

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Column: It's past time to get out of Afghanistan

By Richard S. Haddad

When major U.S. and coalition operations in Afghanistan began on Oct. 7, 2001, it was for a noble purpose. Less than four weeks earlier — on Sept. 11 — al-Qaida had commandeered four passenger aircraft and used them as guided missiles against civilian targets. When the morning was over, some of America's landmark buildings were destroyed or damaged and the lives of nearly 3,000 people were cut short.

Palrecha

All the stakeholders involved in Afghanistan seem to concur on the desire for peace and security there. However, differences emerge when it comes to on what, and whose, terms such a peaceful Afghanistan would be built. Countries involved directly or indirectly in the future of Afghanistan have largely supported "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" peace talks. While the Afghan government under Ashraf Ghani projects a Kabul that is in control of the shape of things to come in the country, the rising indispensability of the Taliban in the peace talks and the distaste for Ghani's leadership among a number of non-Taliban Afghan politicians appear to be eclipsing the centrality of the ...

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Why Khalilzad Diplomacy is Catastrophic for Afghanistan?

By Dr. Yaqub Ibrahimi

In the six rounds of bilateral talks between Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban, there was no promising prospect for Afghanistan. Khalilzad's diplomacy and the so-called Qatar process have had three clear outcomes: the isolation of the government of Afghanistan, the increase of Taliban's political legitimacy, and the mobilization of the Kabul-based political elite as a competing parallel force to the government. The three outcomes are in the Taliban's ideal interest and,

The American people wanted revenge — and they were absolutely justified in demanding it. More than 17 years later, approximately 14,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan. What their mission set is remains unclear. Is it defending the homeland from another mass-casualty terrorist attack? Protecting Kabul from being overrun by the Taliban? Building an Afghan government that can sustain itself? U.S. soldiers, trainers and advisers are essentially maintaining a stalemate ...

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Why Afghanistan's government is losing the war with the Taliban

The Economist

SITTING ON A dusty rug beside their lorries at the edge of Kandahar, Afghanistan's second city, a group of middle-aged drivers explain the difference between the Taliban and the government. Both groups take money from drivers on the road, says Muhammad Akram, leaning forward in a black kurta; both are violent. But when the Taliban stop him at a checkpoint, they write him a receipt. Waving a fistful of green papers, he explains how they ensure he won't be charged twice: after he pays one group of Talibs, his receipt gets him through subsequent stops. Government soldiers, in contrast, rob him over and over. When he drives from Herat, a city near the Iranian border, to Kandahar, Mr Akram says, he will pay

therefore, the Khalilzad diplomacy has served to materialize this interest. Using the Khalilzad card, the Taliban autonomously move forward claiming itself as a shadow government. Hence, the Khalilzad doctrine is dangerous for an independent, democratic, progressive, and inclusive Afghanistan. This diplomacy has four key elements which I articulate below and explain my reasons about its catastrophic consequences.

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The Battles over Peace in Afghanistan

By Kristian Berg Harpviken & filed under Regions and Powers

The battles over leadership of the peace process in Afghanistan are intensifying. It seems increasingly likely that there will be a peace agreement, in one form or other, between the United States and the Taliban. But an Afghan peace settlement that is not based on dialogue between parties within Afghanistan — between the Taliban and other groups — will have scarcely any hope of survival. The international nature of the conflict means that agreement is also needed with Afghanistan's neighbours, as well as unanimity among global powers. Coordinating this process, between all the different parties, and at many different levels, is a challenging task. Right now, there is reason to fear that the struggle over leadership of a

the Taliban once. Government soldiers he will pay at least 30 times.

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Inching towards Afghan reconciliation

By Afrasiab Khattak

The most recent round of intense negotiations between the United States and the Taliban reflects how serious all parties are about achieving peace in Afghanistan. The fact that the talks in Doha continued into the first week of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan hints that both parties want to achieve concrete results. It is encouraging that both sides have indicated slow but steady progress toward resolving one of the most intractable conflicts in contemporary times.

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process is taking up more energy than the peace process itself.

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Afghanistan Cannot Afford Another Government Breakdown

By William Byrd

Afghanistan is on uncertain terrain this year. Along with scheduled presidential and other elections and a nascent peace process, the possibility of withdrawal of international troops, worsening security, and an economic downturn loom heavily over the country. In this critical moment, government failure would make peace and political stability even harder to achieve, let alone sustain. How can basic government functioning be ...

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NEWS

US-Taliban Resume Talks Amid Optimism

The United States and the Taliban have begun a new round of negotiations in Doha, Qatar, in a bid to advance peace efforts in Afghanistan and to urge the insurgent group to participate in an inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue.

U.S. special reconciliation envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, led the U.S. team Wednesday in talks with insurgent

Time To Stop Violence, Embrace Peace: Khalilzad To Taliban

The US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, who has started a new round of talks with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, said that on the opening session he underscored to the Taliban that it is time to quit violence and embrace peace as it is a demand of Afghans.

leaders based in the Qatari capital, officials said.

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Afghan Government Ready For Ceasefire: Ghani

President Ashraf Ghani addressed the closing ceremony of the Grand Consultative Jirga on Peace on Friday where he said the Afghan government is ready to implement all recommendations mentioned in the Peace Jirga's resolution.

He said the Afghan government is ready to announce a ceasefire if the Taliban show readiness in this regard.

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Taliban Reject US, Afghan Demands for Cease-Fire

An Afghan grand assembly, or loya jirga, ended Friday with the delegates in Kabul demanding peace with the Taliban, as President Ashraf Ghani promised to free 175 Taliban prisoners ahead of Ramadan, which begins in a few days.

The Afghan Taliban, for their part, responded harshly to demands for a cease-fire, saying the United States should end the use of force instead.

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"In our opening session, I underscored to the Talibs that the Afghan people, who are their brothers and sisters, ...

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Commander: No Decision on US Troops in Afghanistan

As the United States and the Taliban begin a new round of negotiations in an effort to move the peace process forward, a senior U.S. military commander says no decision has been made about the presence of U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, told U.S.-funded ...

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Turkey In Favor Of Durable Peace In Afghanistan: Erdogan

The President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan his country and government want a durable, just and implementable peace in Afghanistan as he met with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in Istanbul on Friday.

"Afghanistan and Turkey have had time-tested relations throughout the history and peace and stability in Afghanistan is highly crucial for Turkey," Erdogan said ...

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Presidential Candidates React To Peace Jirga Resolution

A day after the conclusion of the grand assembly of 3,200 delegates from around the country, a number of presidential candidates reacted to the resolution of the grand council and said it was not in favor of the people and that it did not encompass anything new.

The grand council, also called the Grand Consultative Jirga for Peace, was suggested by President Ghani in February in order to determine a ...

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Qatar Talks Moving In The Right Direction: HPC

The talks between the US and the Taliban delegations entered the fourth day in Doha, Qatar, as fresh spate of violence grips the country in several fronts including an attack by a group of Taliban gunmen who stormed the police headquarters in Pul-e-Khumri city in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan province on Sunday afternoon.

Local officials said that the attack has left eight dead and over 50 others wounded.

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Pakistan Ready For 'Any Cooperation' On Afghan Peace: Khan

Afghan President Makes Rare Phone Call to Pakistani PM

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani telephoned Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday and the two leaders discussed ongoing Afghan peace efforts, security as and bilateral economic cooperation.

Afghan and Pakistani officials said Ghani accepted Khan's invitation to visit Islamabad "for a comprehensive exchange of views on all issues of mutual interest."

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Afghans Call For Ceasefire During Ramadhan

Despite Taliban's refusal to lay down their arms and agree on a truce with the Afghan government, dozens of Helmand residents, religious scholars, tribal elders and activists at a gathering in Lashkargah city on Sunday called on the two sides to announce a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadhan which begins on Monday.

Taliban has said that their "Jihad" will have more rewards during Ramadhan as they rejected the ceasefire ...

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Khalilzad Reacts To Taliban's Rejection Of 'Laying Down Arms'

President Ashraf Ghani discussed the Afghan peace process and regional connectivity in a telephonic conversation with Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday, the Presidential Palace said in a statement.

Khan said his country is ready for any cooperation which will lead to peace and stability in Afghanistan, the statement said.

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Abdullah Does Not See 'Anything New' In Jirga Resolution

A day after the grand assembly of almost 3,200 delegates from around the country issued a resolution after four days of consultations, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah said he does not see "anything new" in the document as peace has always been the main demand of the people of Afghanistan.

"Overall, the issues which were expressed in the Loya Jirga resolution were not new. Therefore, we had reasons for not attending the Jirga," Abdullah said in an interview

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Afghanistan Has Certain Limits For Peace Talks: Rabbani

As the peace efforts are ongoing despite an increasing violence across

The US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad on Saturday reacted to a comment by the Taliban on rejecting of his call for laying down their arms and stopping violence as part of efforts to move forward the ongoing peace process.

In a tweet on Friday, May 3, Khalilzad said that on the opening session in ...

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Calls Mount For Ceasefire As Taliban Continues Refusal

Taliban is still insisting on more discussions on foreign forces withdrawal in their talks with US officials in Qatar as the calls for a ceasefire are growing from the Afghan government side, the High Peace Council and the ordinary Afghans.

The Qatar talks were stopped for one day due to the arrival of Ramadhan and will resume on Tuesday.

The High Peace Council, which shoulders peace efforts under the Afghan government,...

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US envoy briefs Indian FM on Afghan peace efforts

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay

the country, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani said the legal system of Afghanistan has defined certain limits for engaging into peace talks and national reconciliation process, suggesting caution when it comes to the negotiations with the Taliban who refuse to stop violence and engage in intra-Afghan dialogue.

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Taliban Attack on US-Funded Relief Group in Afghanistan Kills 5

Officials in Afghanistan say a Taliban car bomb-and-gun attack against a U.S.-funded international relief organization Wednesday killed at least five people, including a police guard, and wounded 24 others.

Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said insurgents targeted the nonprofit group Counterpart ...

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NATO envoy hopes for intra-Afghan talks 'as soon as possible'

NATO's senior civilian representative in Afghanistan has expressed hope that the intra-Afghan dialogue will start "as soon as possible even in the month of Ramadan or shortly after."

"There is no time to delay. The Afghan people want this dialogue to start and

Khalilzad on Monday briefed Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj on Afghan peace efforts.

Khalilzad visited India after he entered sixth round of peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar last week.

Khalilzad and Swaraj discussed role ...

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Afghan women must be at forefront of peace negotiations: EU envoy

Afghan women must be at the forefront of peace negotiations with the Taliban, the European Union envoy in the country said on Thursday.

"Peace belongs to all people of Afghanistan and it must be forged by all," EU envoy Pierre Mayaudon said in a statement issued on the occasion of Europe Day.

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Govt Asked Not To Delay In Forming Negotiating Team

As the peace efforts are gaining momentum despite an increase in violence across the country, a senior member of the Reconciliation Leadership Council called on government to give priority to the formation of the negotiating team as according to him, a limited time has remained for possible talks with the

the Taliban have also indicated that ...

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Taliban Has No Political Will For Peace: Abdullah's Office

An official from Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah said they doubt the Taliban's "political will" for a ceasefire and intra-Afghan talks which are the main factors that will move forward the ongoing peace efforts.

Abdullah, who has 50 percent share of the National Unity Government with President Ghani as part of an agreement signed between the two sides in 2014, has often criticized ...

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Taliban Attack on US-Based Aid Group Raises Concern in Kabul

A brazen Taliban attack on U.S.-based aid group in the Afghan capital raised concerns Thursday among other relief organizations they could be targeted even as the insurgents held peace talks with a U.S. envoy.

Authorities said Wednesday's assault on the Kabul office of Counterpart International, a group that promotes gender equity, killed at least nine people.

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Afghan government to name

Taliban.

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Week-Long US-Taliban Talks End Without Breakthrough

The Taliban and the United States on Thursday concluded weeklong negotiations in Qatar but reported no significant progress on peace efforts in Afghanistan.

The talks focused on two issues: U.S. troop withdrawal from the country in return for Taliban assurances that they will not allow terrorists to use Afghan soil to attack other countries, said a spokesman for the insurgent group.

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Khalilzad: Progress was made for ending the Afghan war in sixth round of talks

Progress was made for ending the Afghan war in sixth round of talks; however, the current pace of talks isn't sufficient when so much conflict rages and innocent people die, said Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation.

Meanwhile, the Taliban said in a statement that sixth round of talks ended with some progress made ...

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Afghan Official: US Diversion of

new delegation for talks with Taliban

Afghanistan government will name a new delegation for talks with the Taliban, an official said Saturday.

Ahmad Omid Maisam, deputy spokesman for Afghan chief executive, said that consultations were underway over a new composition, which could represent entire Afghanistan.

“We hope that we could announce a new delegation soon,” he said.

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Former US defense chief warns against early Afghan exit

Former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates believes that the Taliban might retake control of Afghanistan, if American troops leave Afghanistan without an intra-Afghan peace settlement.

Speaking in an interview with CBS News, Gates said that the US should ensure that the Afghan government ...

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Russia Demands ‘Balance of Power’ in Afghanistan

Russian presidential aide Yury Ushakov said on Tuesday that the country’s

Funds Not to Undermine Security Cooperation

Afghan officials are downplaying the significance of the United States diverting funds from its military mission in Afghanistan, as a senior American diplomat has arrived in Kabul for high-level discussions.

Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan on Friday approved the transfer of \$1.5 billion to build barriers on the border with Mexico, including taking more than \$600 million ...

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Abdullah regrets Taliban's refusal to agree to Ramadan ceasefire

Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah on Monday criticized the Taliban for refusing to agree to ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan.

Earlier, President Ashraf Ghani at Loya Jirga agreed to a Ramadan truce provided it was not “one-sided” after participants of the grand assembly ...

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US To Transfer Part Of \$1.5B To Border Wall From Afghan Forces

Acting US Defense Secretary Patrick

President Vladimir Putin and U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo have discussed Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, and Iran, quoted in a report by the Russian TASS news agency.

Russia and the United States should cooperate more actively on settlement in Afghanistan, Ushakov said as quoted by TASS.

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Alice Wells Holds Talks With Afghan Leaders

The US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice Wells met with Afghan leaders in Kabul and discussed issues around US-Afghan Civilians Assistance Review and the presidential elections.

In her meeting with President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday, they discussed US-Afghan Civilians Assistance Review to promote strong governance and self-reliance as proposed by President Ghani in his letter to US President ...

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HPC Continues Efforts To Facilitate Intra-Afghan Talks

The High Peace Council (HPC) has started fresh efforts to facilitate direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban while critics continue to see Kabul as a "main obstacle" for the

Shanahan has approved the transfer of \$1.5 billion to build more than 80 miles (130 km) of barriers on the border with Mexico, US officials said on Friday, including taking about \$600 million from an account meant for Afghan security forces.

The latest move was opposed by congressional Democrats, who also criticized a March transfer of \$1 billion...

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Iran, China Diplomats Hold Talks On Afghanistan

The Chinese Foreign Ministry's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Deng Xijun, and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi met on Monday in Tehran and discussed Afghan peace process, Iran's Mehar news agency reported.

The report said that during the talks, the two sides looked into the latest political and security situation of Afghanistan as well as the ongoing peace efforts in the country.

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Former defense secretary: "Real risk" of Vietnam-like scenario after U.S. pulls out of Afghanistan

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates believes there is a "real risk" that if American troops are pulled out of

peace process.

“The High Peace Council is continuing its efforts to facilitate direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban,” said Jawed Ahmad Ghafoor, the HPC spokesman.

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Taliban fighters double as reporters to wage Afghan digital war

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban’s chief spokesman and editor-in-chief of the insurgent group’s daily news bulletin, starts every day by collecting reports of overnight fighting with U.S. and Afghan forces.

Mujahid says he gets his team of writers to cross-check facts shared by some of the hardline Islamist groups fighters, who double as reporters in the 34 provinces across the country. The writers prepare press statements in five languages and gather footage and photographs shot on smartphones.

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Afghanistan settlement a complicated issue, Putin tells US

Russian President Vladimir Putin told the United States on Tuesday that the settlement in Afghanistan is a complicated issue as the process itself is difficult.

Afghanistan, the Taliban might retake control of the country. He told "Face the Nation" host Margaret Brennan that the U.S. should ensure that the Afghan government is stable before bringing American forces home. There are currently 12,000 U.S. service ...

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Afghan Taliban Chief Negotiator: 'US on Verge of Defeat'

The Taliban’s chief negotiator says in newly released remarks that the United States is on the verge of defeat and will quit Afghanistan soon “either of their own accord, or they will be forced out.”

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai made the assertions in an April 28 speech to an “internal gathering” in Doha, Qatar, just two days before he led his team of insurgent negotiators into fresh talks with U.S. interlocutors. Pro-Taliban social media outlets Friday released video of Stanekzai’s speech, one day after the U.S. special ...

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Afghan delegation for Taliban talks likely to be finalized next week: HPC

The composition of delegation from Afghanistan for talks with the Taliban in Qatar will most likely be finalized next week, High Peace Council said on Wednesday.

Putin said this while meeting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi.

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India Extends 'Full Support' To Afghan Peace

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in a meeting with President Ghani's Special Envoy and the head of the High Peace Council's secretariat expressed her country's full support to sustainable peace, economic development and stability in Afghanistan, a spokesman for India's Foreign External Affairs Ministry said in a tweet.

Daudzai briefed the minister on the outcome of the recently held ...

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Pentagon asked Congress for funds to pay expenses of Taliban negotiators: report

The Pentagon asked Congress earlier this year for funding to reimburse the Taliban for expenses the militant group incurs attending peace talks, a US newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The money would cover the Taliban's costs for expenses such as transportation, lodging, food and supplies, Kevin Spicer, a spokesman for the chairman of the House

Last month, a peace meeting between the Taliban and Afghan politicians and civil society in Doha was postponed ...

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Daudzai, Indian NSA Discuss Afghan Peace

President Ghani's Special Envoy Umer Daudzai held talks with Ajit Doval, India's National Security Advisor, in New Delhi on Thursday and discussed the regional countries' role in the Afghan peace process, the High Peace Council said in a statement on Friday.

In this meeting, Daudzai stressed the need for regional countries, especially India's role, in the Afghan peace process and said the process will be led by the government of Afghanistan.

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Govt Not Willing To Form Negotiating Team: Political Parties

Members of three mainstream political parties on Sunday said the Afghan government is not willing to form a negotiating team and that it has "no intention" for peace.

The formation of the negotiation team, which was a main demand of the peace Jirga delegates, is counted as the main step for moving forward the peace process. The parties members said the

Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, told Roll Call.

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Ambassador Roya Rahmani: Trump administration leaves Afghanistan in dark with direct Taliban talks

The Trump administration's direct talks with the Taliban have left the Afghanistan in the dark, raising concern that any peace deal will lack the public support to work, Afghan ambassador to US, Roya Rahmani warned.

Ms. Rahmani told a small group of reporters this week about fears that the emerging U.S. plan will only ...

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Foreign Diplomats Criticized For 'Backdoor' Meetings With Taliban

A number of Kabul-based critics on Wednesday cast their doubt on the aim of the foreign diplomats meetings with the Taliban deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and his team in Doha, saying that it means giving legitimacy to the group.

Ghani Baradar has had four meetings with top foreign diplomats in less ...

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Afghan government has "failed" to implement the suggestions of the Jirga delegates.

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Deal with Taliban unlikely before September election: Daudzai

A peace agreement with the Taliban is unlikely to be struck before the September election in Afghanistan, President Ashraf Ghani's special envoy has said.

Addressing a gathering in India, Mohammad Umer Daudzai, who is also the head of High Peace Council secretariat, said that peace talks is a complex and long process.

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Khalilzad Briefs US Lawmakers On Afghan Peace Talks

An envoy to Afghanistan was met with skepticism Wednesday on Capitol Hill as he briefed lawmakers on peace talks with the Taliban aimed at ending the 17-year war.

Lawmakers were tight-lipped as they left the classified meeting with special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, but the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, ...

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US, Taliban Blame Each Other for Acting Against Afghan Peace

Taliban and American military officials have taken to social media to accuse each other of acting against peace building efforts in conflict-torn Afghanistan.

The spar between the two adversaries via Twitter comes as American and representatives of the insurgent group are engaged in a months-long dialogue to try to bring an end to the Afghan war. But the talks have failed to deter the Taliban from ceasing or reducing battlefield hostilities. Deadly battles between Taliban insurgents and U.S.-backed Afghan security forces in recent days have killed and ...

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Deep conflict between intel community's views on Afghan peace and Khalilzad's optimism: US senator

There is a deep conflict between the US intelligence community's views on the prospects for Afghan peace and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad's optimism, a senior US senator has said on Wednesday.

Khalilzad has held six rounds of peace talks with the Taliban and on Wednesday he briefed US ...

Afghanistan peace has never been as close as now: Chinese FM

The Afghan people have never been so close to peace as today despite that uncertainties still exist in the war-torn country, China's top diplomat Wang Yi said on Monday.

"After years of war and turmoil in Afghanistan, peace has eventually become possible," Wang said at a press conference after meeting with Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon.

As neighbors of Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan have coordinated stances on how to promote reconciliation and reconstruction in the country, Wang said.

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Taliban Wants Peace: Mullah Baradar

A group of Afghan politicians led by former President Hamid Karzai and members of the Taliban led by the deputy leader of the group Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar on Tuesday attended a ceremony in Moscow on 100 years of Afghanistan-Russia diplomatic relations.

Addressing the ceremony, Taliban deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar said "the Islamic Emirate wants peace", but "the hurdles on the way of peace should be removed".

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Moscow Talks: Taliban Rejects Calls For Ceasefire

A group of Afghan politicians led by former President Hamid Karzai and a 14-member Taliban team led by the co-founder of the group Abdul Ghani Baradar sat for the second day in Moscow to discuss the Afghan peace, but behind the closed doors.

The group rejected the calls for a ceasefire which was the main demand by Afghan politicians – who publicly raised the demand at a ceremony in Moscow on the centenary of Afghanistan-Russia diplomatic ties on Tuesday, May 28.

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Dunford Vows To Press Afghan Fighting Despite Taliban Talks

Washington's campaign against terror groups in Afghanistan will continue unabated despite Taliban demands for a full US withdrawal from the country, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford said Wednesday, according to Washington Times report.

America's continued military presence in the country is not up for debate, despite during a sharp escalation of both US and Russian peace talks seeking a political settlement with the Islamist Taliban forces, Dunford said.

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Russia Hosts Feuding Afghan Factions for Talks

The Taliban and other Afghan factions have wrapped another round of talks in Moscow to discuss peace settlement.

The negotiations followed a previous round of consultations in February. Russia has sought to play power broker in Afghanistan, attempting to mediate between warring factions as it jockeyes with Washington for influence in a country where a U.S.-led coalition has been fighting for more than 17 years.

Suhail Shaheen, spokesman for the Taliban's political office in Doha, ...

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No logical reason for Taliban's refusal to accept ceasefire: Noor

There was no logical reason for Taliban's refusal to accept ceasefire, Ata Mohammad Noor, executive chief of Jamiat-i-Islami political party, said after Afghan politicians' talks with Taliban in Moscow.

Afghan politicians and Taliban discussed ceasefire, civilian protection, prisoners, foreign troop exit, foreign interference, establishing Islamic system, maintaining territorial integrity and national unity, and women's ...

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Pakistan and Afghanistan Leaders Hold Rare Talks

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani held their first face-to-face talks Friday on the sidelines of an annual summit of Islamic countries in Saudi Arabia.

The rare interaction at the highest level is the latest sign of easing tensions in traditionally acrimonious relations between the neighbors.

The animosity stems from mutual accusations of supporting militant attacks against each other.

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Moscow Meeting Wrapped Up With A Joint Statement

The two-day meeting between Afghan politicians and Taliban members in Moscow was concluded on Thursday with a joint statement issued by the delegates.

The two sides held discussions on the Afghan peace on May 28 and 29 and on Thursday issued a statement that highlights the discussed issues.

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President Ghani Discusses

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Moscow Delegates Form Working Group

Delegates of Moscow meeting have assigned a committee to work on a joint statement of their meetings with the Taliban, Fawzia Kofi, one of the delegates said on Thursday.

One of the differences on Wednesday's meeting was the discussions on ceasefire and despite repeated request, the Taliban has not agreed on this, Koofi said.

This comes as a group of Afghan politicians led by former President ...

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Taliban Wants An 'Inclusive Post-Peace Govt'

Amir Khan Muttaqi, a member of Taliban who attended the Moscow meeting, said the group wants an inclusive government to come on power in Afghanistan after a possible peace deal.

Muttaqi's remarks came following a two-day meeting between the Taliban members and Afghan politicians in Moscow this week where they ...

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Taliban, Russia Demand

Afghan Peace With Imran Khan

President Ashraf Ghani met Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday on the sidelines of the 14th summit of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Saudi Arabia and discussed the Afghan peace process and bilateral ties.

Khan assured Ghani that Islamabad will support Kabul in bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan, the Pakistani Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

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India keeps close watch on US dialogue with Afghan militants

India is keeping a close watch on counterterror guarantees the US is discussing with the Afghan militants because operatives from Pakistan-backed terror groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) continue to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan, people familiar with the developments have said.

The US talks come at a time when key players such as China and Russia have stepped up consultations on the situation in Afghanistan with India, which has legitimate security ...

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Foreign Troops Leave Afghanistan

The Taliban and Russia have jointly called for the withdrawal of U.S.-led coalition troops from Afghanistan, with a top leader of the Islamist insurgent group denouncing the foreign presence in the country as a major obstacle to Afghan peace.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the political deputy of the Taliban, ...

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India falls in line with others on Afghanistan

After swinging its Iran policy from 'no dictate from the U.S.' and compliance only with the U.N sanctions to completely ditching their purchase of oil from Iran and principally following the U.S. policy of isolating and crippling Iran's economy, India has now also made a major change in its Afghanistan policy, making a major shift from its previous 'principled' position of 'no talks with the Taliban to any political set up for Afghanistan that might help end the war. India has thus completely fallen in line with the U.S. policies vis-à-vis this part of the world i.e. Iran and Afghanistan.

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