



ISLAMABAD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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MEDIA COVERAGE

“Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward”

17 June 2020

1.

DAWN

June 18, 2020

Peace in Afghanistan will benefit the region: speakers

These were the views of most of the speakers at a special webinar on ‘Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward’ organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) on Wednesday. Speakers included retired ambassadors Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Rustam Shah Mohmand. It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year and President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah a leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the authority to name half the cabinet were historic achievements.

Both offer hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban. The speakers were of the view that while the US might have arm-twisted both to sign the power-sharing deal to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addressed President Ghani’s reservation of being pushed out of the loop in the Doha Agreement and putting him back into the heart of affairs along with Abdullah Abdullah.

All the speakers agreed that Taliban’s capacity to control violence was questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders should define the minimum standard for devising a new governance framework of the country. They were of the opinion that complete withdrawal of the US was not on the table. The US will likely have presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban, they said.

Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan discussed how this power sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defined both their roles. President Ghani will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another defacto “Prime Minister” and his powerplay, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building consensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). Responsibilities are split based on the strengths of both politicians which is a good omen, Mr Khan said. He also pointed out that while the Taliban have outlasted American military might, their test begins on the negotiating table. They have to prove themselves as more than a group of militant fundamentalists as they are still under international scrutiny. Moreover, the group needs to manifest that it has “modernised” to the needs of the contemporary Afghanistan, he added.

According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive ‘green new deal’ which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. He warned that the success of such a peace settlement depends on the independence of the Afghan economy, China could very well include Afghanistan as a major building block in China’s Belt and Road Initiative. In other words global powers as well as regional ones need to ramp up investment in the land-locked nation.

Rustam Shah Mohmand was of the view that the role of regional powers has been instrumental in the once considered elusive peace process in Afghanistan. The joint statement of representatives of Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia on May 18, 2020, shows the intent for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. All regional players will be beneficiaries of the peace deal. However, he warned that given the huge financial investments made by India in various sectors, it will continue to meddle in Afghan affairs, especially to destabilise Pakistan.

In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting IPRI President retired Brig Raashid Wali Janjua said there was a consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which was contingent on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue. All regional stakeholders need to be on board for withdrawal in an orderly fashion. One of the most important challenges is chalking out a power-sharing deal with the Taliban and the acceptability of that deal by all factions. The Afghan peace process needs to be inclusive and participatory with full support of the regional countries, he added.

Courtesy: Mr Ikram Junaidi-Dawn

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1564180>

2.



June 18, 2020

New governance framework imperative for sustainable Afghan peace: Diplomats

ISLAMABAD - Afghanistan has made historic achievements regarding peace recently, senior diplomats said on Wednesday. The Islamabad Policy Research Institute organized a special webinar on “Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward”, which featured former ambassadors Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Rustam Shah Mohmand.

It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, were historic achievements. Both offers hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban.

All the speakers agreed that the Taliban’s capacity to control violence was questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders needed to define the minimum standard of what would constitute the new governance framework of the country. It was also opined that complete withdrawal of the US is not on the table. The US would likely have presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban.

Hope for intra-Afghan dialogue as stakeholders in and outside Afghanistan looking to serve their interests. Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan discussed how this power sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defined the role of both: President Ghani, who being a technocrat, would have control of the executive without having to deal with another de facto “Prime Minister”, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building consensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation. He also pointed out that while the Taliban have outlasted American military might, their test begins on the negotiating table.

According to Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, COVID-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive ‘green new deal’ which would transform national policies, including foreign policies.

Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there was a ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display - a classic instance of elite governance through class warfare. He regretted that in such circumstances, merely honest and well-intentioned leaders might at best bring about piecemeal improvements, but never the systemic structural change required for survival. He outlined that the best case scenario is of a coalition political set-up which integrates the Taliban with the current dispensation in power-sharing, declares Daesh as the single biggest threat to Afghanistan, power is decentralized, with foreign troops replaced by an international monitoring mission.

Rustam Shah Mohmand was of the view that the role of regional powers has been instrumental in the once considered elusive peace process in Afghanistan. The joint statement of representatives of Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia on 18 May 2020, shows the intent for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. All regional players will be beneficiaries of peace deal. However, he warned that given the huge financial investments made by India in various sectors, it will continue to meddle in Afghan affairs, especially to destabilize Pakistan. He also cautioned about some past policies that have resulted in reduced trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan souring relations between the relations between the two countries.

In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting President IPRI, Brigadiar Raashid Wali Janjua (ret'd) highlighted that there was a consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which was contingent on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue.

Courtesy: Mr Shafqat Ali - The Nation

<https://nation.com.pk/18-Jun-2020/new-governance-framework-imperative-for-sustainable-afghan-peace-diplomats>

5.



June 17, 2020

Peace process in Afghanistan should not be seen as a zero sum game

The Islamabad Policy Research Institute organized a special webinar on “Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward” here in the capital today. Featured speakers included Ambassador (R) Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand.

It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, are historic achievements. Both offer hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban.

It was discussed that while the US may have arm-twisted both to sign the power-sharing deal in order to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addresses President Ghani’s reservation of being pushed out of the loop on the Doha Agreement, putting him back into the heart of affairs, along with Abdullah Abdullah, who is not only the government’s chief negotiator but also getting a hefty share in the cabinet. All the speakers agreed that the Taliban’s capacity to control violence is questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders need to define the minimum standard of what will constitute the new governance framework of the country.

It was also opined that complete withdrawal of the US is not on the table. The US will likely have presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban. The speakers also discussed that it will be interesting to see how various powers engage with Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops based on local interests or in the context of geopolitical interests towards the United States which has the ability to offer long-term commitments.

Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan discussed how this power sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defines the role of both: President Ghani, who enjoys being a technocrat, will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another defacto “Prime Minister” and his power play, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building consensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). Responsibilities are split based on the strengths

of both politicians which is a good omen. He also pointed out that while the Taliban have outlasted American military might, their test begins on the negotiating table. They have to prove themselves as more than a group of militant fundamentalists as they are still under international scrutiny. Moreover, the group needs to manifest that it has “modernized” to the needs of the contemporary Afghanistan. In this regard, small but symbolic steps have to be taken to ensure women and ethnic groups don’t have serious qualms about their rule given their blood soaked history. The potential peace spoilers like the Afghan Taliban’s future relationship with ANSDF and future shape of the government needs to be kept in view, while pursuing the peace process. The role of outside players like the US, especially its military establishment’s proclivity to have a military imprint might also act as spoilers. Whatever role Pakistan plays in the peace process, it needs to be done circumspectly.

According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive ‘green new deal’ which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. This is because of the nature of the overt and covert corporate/military dominance over governance countries like Afghanistan; and the corporate capitalist economic model that prioritises the interests of the rich over poor. Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there is ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display – a classic instance of elite governance through class warfare. He regretted that in such circumstances, merely honest and well-intentioned leaders may at best bring about piecemeal improvements, but never the systemic structural change required for survival. He outlined that the best case scenario is of a coalition political set-up which integrates the Taliban with the current dispensation in power-sharing, declares Daesh as the single biggest threat to Afghanistan, power is decentralized, with foreign troops replaced by an international monitoring mission. Ambassador Qazi warned that the success of such a peace settlement depends on the independence of the Afghan economy, China could very well include Afghanistan as a major building block in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, in other words global powers as well as regional ones need to ramp up investment in the land-landed nation.

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In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting IPRI President retired Brig Raashid Wali Janjua said there was a consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which was contingent

on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue. All regional stakeholders need to be on board for withdrawal in an orderly fashion. One of the most important challenges is chalking out a power-sharing deal with the Taliban and the acceptability of that deal by all factions. The Afghan peace process needs to be inclusive and participatory with full support of the regional countries, he added.

Courtesy: Mr Ansar Bhatti

<https://dnanews.com.pk/peace-process-afghanistan-not-seen-zero-sum-game/>

6.

CENTRELINE

June 17, 2020

Peace process in Afghanistan should not be seen as a zero sum game

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It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, are historic achievements.

Both offer hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban.

It was discussed that while the US may have arm-twisted both to sign the power-sharing deal in order to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addresses President Ghani’s reservation of being pushed out of the loop on the Doha Agreement, putting him back into the heart of affairs, along with Abdullah Abdullah, who is not only the government’s chief negotiator but also getting a hefty share in the cabinet. All the speakers agreed that the Taliban’s capacity to control violence is questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders need to define the minimum standard of what will constitute the new governance framework of the country.

It was also opined that complete withdrawal of the US is not on the table. The US will likely have presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban. The speakers also discussed that it will be interesting to see how various powers engage with Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops based on local interests or in the context of geopolitical interests towards the United States which has the ability to offer long-term commitments.

Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan discussed how this power sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defines the role of both: President Ghani, who enjoys being a technocrat, will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another defacto “Prime Minister” and his power play, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building consensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). Responsibilities are split based on the strengths of both politicians which is a good omen. He also pointed out that while the Taliban have outlasted American military might, their test begins on the negotiating table. They have to prove themselves as more than a group of militant fundamentalists as they are still under international scrutiny. Moreover, the group needs to manifest that it has “modernized” to the needs of the contemporary Afghanistan. In this regard, small but symbolic steps have to be taken to ensure women and ethnic groups don’t have serious qualms about their rule given their blood soaked history. The potential peace spoilers like the Afghan Taliban’s future relationship with ANSDF and future shape of the government needs to be kept in view, while pursuing the peace process. The role of outside players like the US, especially its military establishment’s proclivity to have a military imprint might also act as spoilers. Whatever role Pakistan plays in the peace process, it needs to be done circumspectly.

According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive ‘green new deal’ which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. This is because of the nature of the overt and covert corporate/military dominance over governance countries like Afghanistan; and the corporate capitalist economic model that prioritises the interests of the rich over poor. Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there is ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display – a classic instance of elite governance through class warfare. He regretted that in such circumstances, merely honest and well-intentioned leaders may at best bring about piecemeal improvements, but never the systemic structural change required for survival. He outlined that the best case scenario is of a coalition political set-up which integrates the Taliban with the current dispensation in power-sharing, declares Daesh as the single biggest threat to Afghanistan, power is decentralized, with foreign troops replaced by an international monitoring mission. Ambassador Qazi warned that the success of such a peace settlement depends on the independence of the Afghan economy, China could very well include Afghanistan as a major building block in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, in other words global powers as well as regional ones need to ramp up investment in the land-landed nation.

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regime will resort to extreme measures to jeopardize peace in the region since it has been using Afghan land to stir up insurgency for years in adjoining tribal areas and Balochistan. He also cautioned about some past policies that have resulted in reduced trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan souring relations between the relations between the two countries.

In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting IPRI President retired Brig Raashid Wali Janjua said there was a consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which was contingent on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue. All regional stakeholders need to be on board for withdrawal in an orderly fashion. One of the most important challenges is chalking out a power-sharing deal with the Taliban and the acceptability of that deal by all factions. The Afghan peace process needs to be inclusive and participatory with full support of the regional countries, he added.

Courtesy: Mr Ansar Bhatti

<https://centrelines.com.pk/2020/06/17/peace-process-in-afghanistan-should-not-be-seen-as-a-zero-sum-game/>

7.



June 17, 2020

Peace process in Afghanistan not be seen as a zero sum game, IPRI webinar

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) webinar unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, are historic achievements. These were unanimous views of the participants of the special webinar on “Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward” organized here in the capital today. Featured speakers included former secretary foreign affairs, Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and diplomat Rustam Shah Mohmand. It was discussed that while the US may have arm-twisted both to sign the power-sharing deal in order to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addresses President Ghani’s reservation of being pushed out of the loop on the Doha Agreement, putting him back into the heart of affairs, along with Abdullah Abdullah, who is not only the government’s chief negotiator but also getting a hefty share in the cabinet.

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<https://thenewstoday.com.pk/peace-process-in-afghanistan-not-be-seen-as-a-zero-sum-game-ipri-webinar/>

8.

KashmirWatch

June 17, 2020

US-Taliban agreement: IPRI webinar discusses the Afghanistan peace process challenges

The peace process in Afghanistan should not be seen as a zero-sum game, but as a much-needed bid to restore peace as well as prosperity in the country and the region.

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<http://kashmirwatch.com/us-taliban-agreement-ipri-seminar-discusses-afghanistan-peace-process-challenges/>

9.

Parliament Times

June 17, 2020

Peace in Afghanistan to benefit entire region: Experts

Islamabad: The Islamabad Policy Research Institute organised a special webinar on "Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward" here in Islamabad. The webinar was addressed by prominent speakers including Ambassador (R) Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan discussed how power sharing arrangement between two election opponents in Afghanistan lucidly defined the role of both: President Ghani, will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another de facto "Prime Minister" and his power play, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, is

saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). He said that responsibilities were split based on the strengths of both politicians, calling it a good omen. He also pointed out that while the Taliban had outlasted American military might, their test began on the negotiating table.

According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive ‘green new deal’ which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there was ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display. He regretted that in such circumstances, merely honest and well-intentioned leaders might at best bring about piecemeal improvements, but never the systemic structural change required for survival. He outlined that the best case scenario was of a coalition political set-up which integrated the Taliban with the current dispensation in power-sharing, declared Daesh as the single biggest threat to Afghanistan, power was decentralized, with foreign troops replaced by an international monitoring mission.

Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand was of the view that the role of regional powers had been instrumental in the once considered elusive peace process in Afghanistan. “The joint statement of representatives of Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia on 18 May 2020, shows the intent for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process,” he added. All regional players will be beneficiaries of peace deal. However, he warned that given the huge financial investments made by India in various sectors, it will continue to meddle in Afghan affairs, especially to destabilize Pakistan.

In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting President IPRI, Brig (R) Raashid Wali Janjua, highlighted that there was consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which is contingent on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue.

It was unanimously agreed by speakers that the US-Taliban peace deal in February 2020, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, were historic achievements as both offered hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban.

Courtesy: Mr Nuaman Ishfaq - Parliament Times

<https://www.dailyparliamenttimes.com/2020/06/18/peace-in-afghanistan-to-benefit-entire-region-experts/#.XuvgtJovPIU>

10.

NEWSWIRE

International
June 17, 2020

Afghan peace process: The way forward

Islamabad: The Islamabad Policy Research Institute organized a special webinar on “Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward” here in the capital today. Featured speakers included Ambassador (R) Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand. It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, are historic achievements. Both offer hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban. It was discussed that while the US may have arm-twisted both to sign the power-sharing deal in order to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addresses President Ghani’s reservation of being pushed out of the loop on the Doha Agreement, putting him back into the heart of affairs, along with Abdullah Abdullah, who is not only the government’s chief negotiator but also getting a hefty share in the cabinet. All the speakers agreed that the Taliban’s capacity to control violence is questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders need to define the minimum standard of what will constitute the new governance framework of the country. It was also opined that complete withdrawal of the US is not on the table. The US will likely have presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban. The speakers also discussed that it will be interesting to see how various powers engage with Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops based on local interests or in the context of geopolitical interests towards the United States which has the ability to offer long-term commitments.

Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan discussed how this power sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defines the role of both: President Ghani, who enjoys being a technocrat, will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another de facto “Prime Minister” and his power play, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building consensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). Responsibilities are split based on the strengths of both politicians which is a good omen. He also pointed out that while the Taliban have outlasted American military might, their test begins on the negotiating table. They have to prove themselves as more than a group of militant fundamentalists as they are still under international scrutiny. Moreover, the group needs to manifest that it has “modernized” to the needs of the contemporary Afghanistan. In this regard, small but symbolic steps have to be taken to ensure women and ethnic groups don’t have serious qualms about their rule given their blood soaked history. The potential peace spoilers like the Afghan Taliban’s future relationship with ANSDF and future shape of the government needs to be kept in view, while pursuing the peace process. The role of outside players like the US, especially its military establishment’s proclivity to have a military imprint might also

act as spoilers. Whatever role Pakistan plays in the peace process, it needs to be done circumspectly.

According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive 'green new deal' which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. This is because of the nature of the overt and covert corporate/military dominance over governance countries like Afghanistan; and the corporate capitalist economic model that prioritises the interests of the rich over poor. Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there is ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display – a classic instance of elite governance through class warfare. He regretted that in such circumstances, merely honest and well-intentioned leaders may at best bring about piecemeal improvements, but never the systemic structural change required for survival. He outlined that the best case scenario is of a coalition political set-up which integrates the Taliban with the current dispensation in power-sharing, declares Daesh as the single biggest threat to Afghanistan, power is decentralized, with foreign troops replaced by an international monitoring mission. Ambassador Qazi warned that the success of such a peace settlement depends on the independence of the Afghan economy, China could very well include Afghanistan as a major building block in China's Belt and Road Initiative, in other words global powers as well as regional ones need to ramp up investment in the land-locked nation.

Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand was of the view that the role of regional powers has been instrumental in the once considered elusive peace process in Afghanistan. The joint statement of representatives of Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia on 18 May 2020, shows the intent for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. All regional players will be beneficiaries of peace deal. However, he warned that given the huge financial investments made by India in various sectors, it will continue to meddle in Afghan affairs, especially to destabilize Pakistan. He opined that regional players are on the same page by being non-partisan towards all stakeholders of the intra-Afghan dialogue and want to ensure the Afghan soil does not become a hotbed of proxy warfare. Albeit, India's role should not be taken lightly by Pakistan, because this fascist bellicose regime will resort to extreme measures to jeopardize peace in the region since it has been using Afghan land to stir up insurgency for years in adjoining tribal areas and Balochistan. He also cautioned about some past policies that have resulted in reduced trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan souring relations between the relations between the two countries.

In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting IPRI President retired Brig Raashid Wali Janjua said there was a consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which was contingent on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue. All regional stakeholders need to be on board for withdrawal in an orderly fashion. One of the most important challenges is chalking out a power-sharing deal with the Taliban and the acceptability of that deal by all factions. The Afghan peace process needs to be inclusive and participatory with full support of the regional countries, he added.

Courtesy: Mr Shafqat Ali - Newswire

<https://www.newswire.com.pk/2020/06/18/0617202086/>

11. South Asian Broadcasting Agency (SABAH)



Peace Process in Afghanistan should not be seen as zero sum game: Experts

June 17, 2020, Mubashir Ali

The peace process in Afghanistan should not be seen as a zero-sum game, but as a much-needed bid to restore peace as well as prosperity in the country and the region. The Islamabad Policy Research Institute organized a special webinar on the “Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward” here in the capital today. Featured speakers included Ambassador (R) Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand. It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the cabinet, are historic achievements. Both offer hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban. It was discussed that while the US may have arm-twisted both to sign the power-sharing deal in order to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addresses President Ghani’s reservation of being pushed out of the loop on the Doha Agreement, putting him back into the heart of affairs, along with Abdullah Abdullah, who is not only the government’s chief negotiator but also getting a hefty share in the cabinet. All the speakers agreed that the Taliban’s capacity to control violence is questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders need to define the minimum standard of what will constitute the new governance framework of the country. It was also opined that the complete withdrawal of the US is not on the table. The US will likely have a presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban. The speakers also discussed that it will be interesting to see how various powers engage with Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops based on local interests or in the context of geopolitical interests towards the United States which has the ability to offer long-term commitments.

Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khan discussed how this power-sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defines the role of both: President Ghani, who enjoys being a technocrat, will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another de facto “Prime Minister” and his power play, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building consensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). Responsibilities are split based on the strengths

of both politicians which is a good omen. He also pointed out that while the Taliban have outlasted American military might, their test begins on the negotiating table. They have to prove themselves as more than a group of militant fundamentalists as they are still under international scrutiny. Moreover, the group needs to manifest that it has “modernized” to the needs of contemporary Afghanistan. In this regard, small but symbolic steps have to be taken to ensure women and ethnic groups don’t have serious qualms about their rule given their blood-soaked history. The potential peace spoilers like the Afghan Taliban’s future relationship with ANSDF and future shape of the government needs to be kept in view while pursuing the peace process. The role of outside players like the US, especially its military establishment’s proclivity to have a military imprint might also act as spoilers. Whatever role Pakistan plays in the peace process, it needs to be done circumspectly.

According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive ‘green new deal’ which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. This is because of the nature of the overt and covert corporate/military dominance over governance countries like Afghanistan; and the corporate capitalist economic model that prioritizes the interests of the rich over poor. Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there is ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display – a classic instance of elite governance through class warfare. He regretted that in such circumstances, merely honest and well-intentioned leaders may at best bring about piecemeal improvements, but never the systemic structural change required for survival. He outlined that the best-case scenario is of a coalition political set-up that integrates the Taliban with the current dispensation in power-sharing, declares Daesh as the single biggest threat to Afghanistan, power is decentralized, with foreign troops replaced by an international monitoring mission. Ambassador Qazi warned that the success of such a peace settlement depends on the independence of the Afghan economy, China could very well include Afghanistan as a major building block in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, in other words, global powers, as well as regional ones, need to ramp up investment in the land-locked nation.

Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand was of the view that the role of regional powers has been instrumental in the once considered elusive peace process in Afghanistan. The joint statement of representatives of Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia on 18 May 2020, shows the intent for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. All regional players will be beneficiaries of the peace deal. However, he warned that given the huge financial investments made by India in various sectors, it will continue to meddle in Afghan affairs, especially to destabilize Pakistan. He opined that regional players are on the same page by being non-partisan towards all stakeholders of the intra-Afghan dialogue and want to ensure the Afghan soil does not become a hotbed of proxy warfare. Albeit, India’s role should not be taken lightly by Pakistan, because this fascist bellicose regime will resort to extreme measures to jeopardize peace in the region since it has been using Afghan land to stir up insurgency for years in adjoining tribal areas and Balochistan. He also cautioned about some past policies that have resulted in reduced trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan souring relations between the two countries.

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Courtesy: Mr Shakil Turabi - South Asian Broadcasting Agency (SABAH)

<https://www.sabahnews.net/english/archives/31103>