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## Afghanistan Endangered By US Imparting Political Legitimacy to Taliban:

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Afghanistan's secure and stable future, however apparently uncertain in 2019, stands more endangered by United States imparting political legitimacy to Afghan Taliban by engaging them in official peace talks in Doha, and which political legitimacy the Afghan Taliban could not acquire by battling against the United States in Afghanistan for two decades.

Afghanistan's future is not a trilateral exclusive affair between the United States-Pakistan Army-Afghan Taliban combinations. It has much wider regional and global implications which the United States cannot ignore. More significantly, the will of the peace-loving and war-weary Afghan people brutalised by medieval Afghan Taliban when earlier in power in Kabul till 2001 should count more. The Afghan majority of the people would not welcome handing over Afghanistan's future to the Afghan Taliban by the United States.

Seemingly, in January 2019, the United States is in a tearing hurry to induce the Afghan Taliban to seal a ceasefire in Afghanistan and also sign on some peace agreement with some ambiguous unenforceable guarantees contained therein. That the Afghan Taliban was concurrently blasting Kabul with suicide bombings and terrorist attacks at the same time as the American interlocutors were parleying with the Afghan Taliban in Doha, Qatar did not seem to weigh in US calculations.

The United States should have rightly called off the Doha Talks and insisted that the Afghan Taliban cease disruptive suicide bombings in Kabul as a pre-condition for talks to continue. The United States should have also delineated some stringent 'red-lines' that the Afghan Taliban would have to adhere to, unconditionally for sustaining a peace dialogue with the United States.

Credentials so damning as outlined above of the Afghan Taliban being glaringly demonstrably exhibited in its shop-window, it beats all

imagination as to how the United States is so eager to entrust Afghanistan's future to the Afghan Taliban who never have proved themselves as responsible stakeholders in Afghanistan's security and stability.

Political optics therefore suggest that the United States as the global reigning Superpower is submitting "under duress" to a terrorist organisation sponsored and sustained by the 'Terrorist State of Pakistan'. The whole sordid spectacle suggests that the United States is in effect 'Dancing with the Wolves.'

Fearing this sordid outcome, it was this that prompted the recent resignation of US Secretary of Defense Mattis, himself a distinguished soldier with vast operational experience in dealing with the Afghanistan challenge posed by the Afghan Taliban. US Defense Secretary Mattis was opposed to the United States seemingly talking peace with Afghan Taliban under duress.

Perceptually therefore, the emerging optics would globally suggest that Pakistan Army through its terrorist militia affiliate—the Afghan Taliban, has been victorious in its strategic blueprint of imposing combat-fatigue on the United States and prompting US military retreat from Afghanistan.

Pakistan Army would doubly rejoice as it would once again reinstall a Taliban Regime in Kabul. Was not the US military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 pointedly aimed at military removal of the Taliban Regime in Kabul?

Is it also not a fact that Pakistan then under Army rule of General Musharraf had initially refused to give-in to US demands of removal of Taliban Regime in Kabul and that US military intervention had to take place?"

Strangely, the United States all of a sudden in 2019 finds virtues which do not exist in the Pakistan Army and the Afghan Taliban making them worthy of handing over Afghanistan to both of them ? Is the United States unaware that the Afghan Taliban is rejected by bulk of the peace-loving and war-weary Afghan people?

The United States after exhibiting determination and audacity under President Trump to secure Afghanistan's future suddenly after two years of doing so makes a U-Turn. Is this impelled by US presidential election run-up years?

In the above process, the United States is wittingly or unwittingly, not only back-stabbing the legitimate politically elected Afghan Government in Afghanistan but United States is also oblivious to regional actors like India whose strategic sensitivities as United States latest and weighty strategic partner for Indo Pacific security should have been taken into account. This could possibly cloud India's perceptions of United States staying the course in upholding Indo Pacific security in times to come.

The refusal of the Afghan Taliban to include and sit at the same table with Afghan Government officials in US-sponsored peace dialogues on future of Afghanistan's security and stability should have been an eye-opener to the US policy establishment on the real intentions of the

Afghan Taliban.

This refusal of the Afghan Taliban to share power in Kabul with an elected Afghan Government in Kabul post-withdrawal of US Forces reflects the strategic blueprint scripted by their masters---the Pakistan Army. The Pakistan Army has an obsessive fixation of imposing its own colonial hold on Kabul.

The Afghan Taliban's overriding strategic aim is that the United States under duress of domestic political compulsions simply hands over the keys of Kabul to them over the heads of the elected Afghanistan Government. Perceptionally, this is what the United States seems to be in the danger of doing so, going by the ongoing direction of US-Afghan on the ongoing analysis is as to why did the United States and its NATO Allies of the ISAF battle against the Afghan Taliban for nearly two decades? The United States could have made a military exit from Afghanistan in 2014 which was declared years earlier as the US schedule for exit, why did the United States not do that?

Additionally, if the United States was not seriously concerned about Afghanistan's future emergence as a politically secure nation-state then why did the United States spend considerable money and political capital to put Afghanistan through political paces of democratic elections and building up democratic state structures? Not forgetting the loss of valuable lives of US soldiers who died in making Afghanistan secure against Afghan Taliban depredations.

No cogent answers are emerging from an analysis of the prevailing security situation in Afghanistan that would suggest the sudden U-Turn in the decision-making of the US policy establishment. The United States was not losing the plot in Afghanistan. What the United States seems to be losing is the political will to stay the course in Afghanistan and steadily but surely make the Kabul Government more self-reliant against the combined efforts of the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistan Army.

There is also a much wider context that the United States that should have been taken into consideration in terms of regional and global implications of its move to unwittingly impart political legitimacy to the Afghan Taliban by considering them as responsible political stakeholders in Afghanistan's future.

In terms of regional implications of the United States conceding Afghan Taliban inclusive in political governance of Afghanistan what seems to have been overlooked by the United States are the regional reverberations attendant on the same. India and Iran have legitimate security stakes in the stability of Afghanistan. Their past experience of having an Afghan Taliban in the governance of Afghanistan was a horrific one with the Pakistan-dominant say in Kabul.

India and Iran cannot be expected as regional powers to lend any political weight to the Afghan Taliban being inserted by the United States into Afghanistan's political space. One can foresee that India and Iran would not prefer to be idle spectators of the civil war strife likely to ensue in the event of an Afghan Taliban Government being facilitated by the United States in Kabul.

The major global implication emerging from a United States exit from Afghanistan under duress is the diminution of United States stature as the Superpower and this eventuality feeding the perception that the United States global predominance and power are on the decline.

Concluding, one fervently hopes that the United States does some soul-searching on its current hurry to exit Afghanistan by bartering its future in exchange for an unwarranted exit from Afghanistan and that too under duress induced by the machinations of the Pakistan Army and its protégé—the Afghan Taliban. Surely the Afghan people on the path to security and stable future, however wobbly at present, do not deserve to be left as prey of Islamic medieval governance. The Afghan people have the right to expect a better deal from the United States on their future.

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