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## **Afghanistan's Future- Exclusive Preserve of Afghan People and not US-Taliban Agreement:**

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Afghanistan's future and decisions thereto are exclusively the preserve of the will of the Afghan people and not within purview of the United States-Taliban Agreements as perceptionally the Afghan people perceive both the United States and the Afghan Taliban in military occupation of Afghanistan. Major part of Afghanistan under so-called Taliban control is not by choice of Afghan people but by Taliban terror.

Strangely, the future of Afghanistan is not being discussed in Kabul but by the United States in Doha with the Afghan Taliban and by Russia in Moscow also with the Afghan Taliban, with both side-lining the elected Afghanistan Government.

Reality check of the Afghan Taliban's disruptive role in brutally destabilising Afghanistan for over two decades as the "Cat's Paw" of the Pakistan Army hardly qualifies the Taliban to sit in any peace negotiations on the future of Afghanistan. The Taliban are certainly not the 'Liberators of Afghanistan' in the mould of the Mukti Bahini in Bangladesh or the Viet minh in Vietnam. They demonstrated themselves as 'free-booters' let loose on Afghanistan by the Pakistan Army. They operated from safe-havens provided by Pakistan Army.

The stark reality is that if peace and security of Afghanistan is paramount in the geopolitical power calculus of the United States and Russia then the pressing imperative for achievement of that aim would necessarily involve that the Pakistan Army and the Afghan Taliban are "Exorcised" from peace processes on Afghanistan. They can never be part of any solution as both are the root cause of all Afghanistan problems.

Curiously, neither the United States nor Russia or for the matter of fact China, have ever advocated that the United Nations be given the mandate over Afghanistan both for ensuring the writ of the elected Afghan Government over the whole of Afghanistan by UN Military Forces and simultaneous UN Peace-Building Operations.

Ironically, the last nearly four decades the once proud and honour-code bound people of Afghanistan were hapless and mute spectators as the Former Soviet Union and the United States used Afghanistan for their 'Great Power' Games. Pakistan and Afghan Taliban exploited the power tussle by inflicting medieval Islamic Jihad as their currency to achieve their own ends to extend their sway on Afghanistan.

In 2019, Pakistan Army and the Afghan Taliban remain the lowest common denominator behind the perpetuation of unending misery on the people of Afghanistan. What is it that impels both the United States and Russia to persist in co-opting these "compulsive disruptors" of Afghanistan's peace and security as the panacea to restore peace and security in this externally war-ravaged nation?

The Afghan Taliban does not enjoy mass popular support of the vast majority of the Afghan people. If they did then the Afghan Taliban with popular mass Afghan support by the Afghan people would have driven out the United States out of their country.

The Taliban Regime in Kabul in 1990s was not elected by the Afghan people. The Taliban Regime in Kabul was a forced military installation by the Pakistan Army through the machinations of its IS notorious intelligence agency. The decade that followed witnessed the brutal suppression of the Afghan people by medieval Islamic repression unleashed terrifyingly by the Taliban

Should not the international community with the United States and Russia in the lead not learn any historical lessons from the above before advocating that the Afghan people should yield to their brokered impositions of a Taliban-inclusive Government in Kabul?

'Artificial Transplant' of an externally- brokered replacement Government in Kabul by United States or Russia to submit to Taliban demands of a new Afghan Constitution will fail and invite more armed conflict and emergence of new disruptive actors on Afghanistan's political and security fabric.

Secure and stable future of Afghanistan is achievable by reinforcing the political and military capacity of the Kabul Government in power by international resuscitation and not politically expedient compromise solutions with the Afghan Taliban by either United States or Russia or the China-Pakistan-Russia Trilateral.

The United States conceding that major part of Afghanistan is under Taliban control is a distorted perspective to provide plausible exit of US Forces from Afghanistan and does not reflect any political ground-swell mood-change of the Afghan people welcoming the Taliban as 'Liberators of the Afghan People from the American Yoke'.

Afghanistan President Abdul Ghani has publicly asserted that no decisions on Afghanistan's future can be made without reference to the lawfully elected Government of Afghanistan in place in Kabul.

Implicit in this statement is the fact that the Afghan people represented by the Government in position in Kabul will not countenance any peace deals cobbled by the United States or Russia with the Taliban in conferences in Doha or Moscow. Implicit in this assertion is also an underlying reality that should United States or Moscow politically coerce the Kabul Government into grudging acceptance of any brokered deal with the Taliban behind the backs of the Kabul Government, possibilities of an imposed Taliban Government or Taliban-dominated Government in Afghanistan will be challenged by armed conflict by Afghan people.

If the Afghan Taliban are so sure of the political support of the vast majority of the Afghan people then the United States or Russia as the external powers most interested in a Taliban-inclusive Government in Afghanistan should ask these Pakistan Army proxies to lay down their arms in a ceasefire and politically participate in the next Afghan parliamentary or presidential elections. Will they do so? They cannot afford to do so as that would not fit into the larger blueprint of Pakistan Army-Afghan Taliban blueprint for colonial hold over Afghanistan.

Since both the United States and Russia are persisting in involving the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan in the Afghanistan peace exploration processes and since both the United States and Russia for different strategic reasons would be permissive in including Afghan Taliban in future governance of Afghanistan, it becomes necessarily becomes important to spend some time in analysing whether such misperceived steps would in the end effectively contribute to the end-game of peace and stability in Afghanistan?

Analytically, it strikes me that whatever little compromises that the Afghan Taliban concede to the US interlocutors in Doha would not be arising from any US political or military coercion but as a tactical ploy of a half-way house solution to get a foothold in the governance of Afghanistan

With the half-way aim achieved by the Afghan Taliban possibly in the form of sharing power with the elected Government of Afghanistan, it can be visualised that the Afghan Taliban would then resort to undermining and destabilising the elected component of shred Government to dislodge them and gain full control of Afghanistan's governance.

The resulting picture of the above sequential developments would be a possible civil war returning once again to Afghanistan and also a re-stepping in of regional and other actors.

Additionally, the above is only a simple linear outlining of what could happen. But there are more serious complicating factors which in the hasty pursuance of a possible speedy exit of US Forces from Afghanistan are being overlooked. This is the ethnic divide that dominates the Afghan political landscape. The Afghan Taliban is Pashtun dominated and strongest in Pashtun areas contiguous to Pakistan.

On the other hand, there is virtually no Pashtun ethnic presence in other parts of Afghanistan and particularly in Northern Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban are pathologically in hatred of the various ethnic groups of Northern and Central Afghanistan. They are neither politically empowered by their past credentials or their inclinations to work towards an inclusive governance of Afghanistan.

Contextually, then are we to believe that the ultimate solution for Afghanistan lies in partition of Afghanistan? Would the United States like to go with this solution? Would it be in the best interest of US national security interest? Is the United States conscious that in both the above visualisations the nett gainers would be the China-Pakistan-Russia Trilateral?

Russia would be the biggest gainer as with Northern Afghanistan contiguous to erstwhile Soviet Republics and where Russia still enjoys residual influence and intervention capabilities, Russia can step in profitably this time with Pakistan on its side to dominate Afghanistan strategically.

Markedly, the two regional powers in the region with sizeable and legitimate stakes in the security and stability of Afghanistan have not been co-opted in any prominent role in conflict resolution of the Afghanistan war. These are India and Iran.

In fact there is a noticeable effort by both the United States and Russia to side-line India from any peace dialogues on Afghanistan. India has invested nearly \$ 3 billion in infrastructure projects facilitating the reconstruction of war ravaged Afghanistan including the construction of the new Parliament Building in Kabul. This itself symbolically highlights as to how India is genuinely committed to emergence of sustainable democratic peace in Afghanistan.

The above is in stark contrast to United States and Russia sitting down for peace talks with the Afghan Taliban---their erstwhile enemies and the enemies of the Afghan people. On no account should India reach out to the Afghan Taliban or join in US or Russia-led peace talks with Afghan Taliban.

Concluding, it needs to be asserted that with the United States and Russia bent on out-pacing each other to include the Afghan Taliban disruptors of Afghanistan's security, it is high time that the Kabul Government limbers itself to the contingencies of an United States premature exit from Afghanistan or the United States or Russia coercing the Kabul Government to forcibly accept Afghan Taliban inclusion in the nation's governance. Various options are available to the Kabul Government including the obvious one of resurrecting the Northern Alliance as counterweight against the Afghan Taliban and its Pakistan Army backers.

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