

The Mirage of Peace: Turkey's Role in the Afghan Peace Talks

Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, met with Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Friday, January 4. Amid the meeting, Erdoğan affirmed to initiating a tripartite summit between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey in the coming months. Meanwhile, some reports have revealed that military relations between Turkey and Pakistan have improved in recent years.

Imran Khan's trip to Turkey takes place right at a time as the peace talks, led by Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy for reconciliation in Afghanistan, have been proceeding with the Taliban. On December 17, 2018, Zalmay Khalilzad, along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, discussed with the Taliban's representatives at Abu Dhabi. According to some reports, Asim Munir, the newly-appointed chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) also attended the meeting. In fact, Pakistan had coordinated the Taliban military representatives' presence in the meeting, too.

The peace talks with the Taliban bear up a great scale of confidentiality as yet not even one single picture or video of the talks has leaked through media. At the Abu Dhabi meeting, Afghan delegations, with an excitingly striving desire to meeting with the Taliban, waited for long hours in the corridor, but the Taliban rejected any sort of appointments with the Afghan delegations.

By scrutinizing the current situation, it seems that the US has not yet achieved a tangible result after three-time talks with the Taliban. As a result, the US urged Pakistan to take an active leading role as one of the pivotal players in the peace talks to eventually conclude the talks to the satisfaction of the US no matter what. That's why, after the Abu Dhabi meeting, the US promised \$9 billion as a political bribe to Pakistan, \$6 billion of which will be paid by Saudi Arabia and another \$3 billion will be paid by the UAE to Pakistan.

The Afghan government is well aware of what is happening on the ground and realizes that it has turned into a dysfunctional spare-part in this process; for this reason, after the Abu Dhabi meeting, the Afghan National Security Council's office declared, through a press release, that no one (no country) has the authority to decide on Afghan peace talks except the Afghan government. It is apparently clear that the Action Plan and prospective agendas for peace talks have been devised by Pakistan under close supervision of the US.

Since the US is in a hurry for concluding the peace talks with the Taliban, it got ready to deal with Pakistan because Pakistan has demonstrated the capacity to carrying out this mission as it did in 2001; that's to say, Pakistan traded off a group of Taliban with Americans as well as paved the way for the US occupation of Afghanistan by allowing the NATO and US forces supply line through Karachi Seaport. Imran Khan's trip to Turkey is one part of the US-PAK agreed-agenda based on which other Pakistani top officials will likely to travel excessively to regional countries in the future in order to attract their political and technical cooperation.

On the other hand, such diplomatic travels of senior Pakistani officials to the regional countries are to ensure that the agreement being made between the US and Pakistan over peace talks is unlikely to harm the national interests of the regional countries.

In fact, the ongoing process or the so-called "peace talks" is an entirely American process, in which the US plays the central role together with the firm cooperation of the regional countries, particularly, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, UAE, Qatar and Turkey. Therefore, in such a situation, it might seem way more impractical for the US to actively engage Turkey in the peace talks, but it will likely seek Turkey's political and technical cooperation as a supporter of the peace talks in Afghanistan. Also, Turkey does not have that influence even over a fragment of the Taliban group as do Pakistan, Iran and Russia.

On the other hand, one must not forget that Turkey is seriously involved in implementing the colonial agendas of the US in the Middle East and Central Asia; therefore, the US has employed other politically puppet leaders to better implement its colonial and Western agendas in Afghanistan other than Turkey. Of course, the US did use Turkey in Syria and Iraq, but Turkey is not likely to achieve the same conducive opportunity in Afghanistan. Since Afghanistan and Turkey bear very little close-and-mutual political relations, so it is unlikely for Turkey to get a pivotal role in the peace talks in Afghanistan.

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