[Afghan peace a festering sore?](https://nation.com.pk/08-Feb-2019/afghan-peace-a-festering-sore%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new)

Yasir Habib Khan February 08, 2019 the nation

Every spell of Afghan peace process lies in indigenous solutions instead of a set of overtures imposed by global powers. Home solution with the consultations of main stakeholders—Afghan people and Taliban—forms the basis of embedded peace.

Rest of gambits dreaming for permanent peace is a far cry and they will prove to be just a sit-down and deal-brokerage extravaganza leaving everyone high and dry.

Afghanistan turmoil is a festering sore over the last 18 years. Many solutions were injected overtly and covertly and ended up in limbo. Once again a set of foreign-aided strategies are afoot to make things happen. Frankly speaking, a sorry state of affairs is that among team of peace-brokers are those who created mess and now are championing the cause of trouble-shooting by hook or crook.

With the onset of news spell of Afghan peace process efforts, it augurs bad that main stakeholders—Afghan people and Taliban—are not brought together under one umbrella.

What really happening on the ground now is that all those who have close interest in Afghanistan including China, Pakistan, Russia, America, India and Iran with their doctrines and groups have jumped on to the bandwagon aspiring to wind down the longest war and nail down peace in Afghanistan.

Most current move allegedly believed to be pushed by Russian President Vladimir Putin is “Moscow Peace talks” for Afghanistan. The talks were held in Moscow’s President Hotel, owned by the Kremlin. US, Afghanistan and India blame Russia for orchestrating the huddle. All of them boast different torrent of assertions which signify vividly how they see Afghan solutions according to their own interests and demands.

The US is running a “Qatar Show” in recent past taking on board solely Taliban representatives who were once part of Taliban government (1996-2001) in a bid to initiate intra-Afghan dialogue, an interim government in Kabul and a nation-wide ceasefire. Since neither Afghanistan government nor Indian regime has been incorporated in both peace endeavours, they oppose “Qatar Show” as well “Moscow talks” in clear terms.

Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani wants to hold presidential election scheduled to be held soon under present constitution requesting Taliban to be involved in direct talks with Afghanistan government and participate in elections as a political party. However the Taliban have shown complete disregard to this offer.

Indian government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has joined Ghani camp toeing the same line as expressed by present Afghan government. India knows after present Afghan setup becomes irrelevant with the entry of Taliban, Indian penetrations and interests will be frustrated badly.

Pakistan and China have no issue with “Qatar Show” and “Moscow talks” as both serve their purposes and visions. Because US-led talks and Russia-led talks share somehow same targets leaving aside some divergent points between US, Russian and China on the future of Afghanistan, which is to let peace gain ground with inclusive government chosen by Afghan people under the system they deem best for their country, Pakistan and China has been playing role of facilitators.

However, Russian government shrugged off all accusation on meeting held in Moscow. It called the shot saying the Council of Afghan Society, a Moscow-based organisation of the Afghan diaspora, is architect of Afghan peace talks gathering.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry termed the meeting as an Afghan initiative designed to lay down foundation for an eventual peace process. “The Russian side welcomes this initiative of Afghanistan’s civil society and believes that a direct dialogue between Afghans can make a political dialogue in Afghanistan more inclusive and open the way for engaging armed opposition,” said the Russian statement. “The planned meeting effectively implements the principle of a peace process led by the Afghans and owned by the Afghans, which has been approved by the international community.”

Here comes another constructive initiative categorised as Pakistan product called Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) formed in 2018.

China puts a complete weight behind APAPPS. Rather there is belief that China generically bred APAPPS and later let Pakistan to don the clock as former does not want to lead any move directly under clandestine geo-strategic expediency.

APAPPS works in the areas of counter-terrorism, reduction of violence, peace and reconciliation, refugees’ repatriation and joint economic development. It is comprised of five Working Groups on Politico-diplomatic, Military, Intelligence, Economic & Trade and Refugees issues.

As per China’s vision, Pakistan and Afghanistan are central stakeholders in Afghan issue and any solutions without their practical consultation would be an exercise in futility.

Iran being another important player in the region has come up with its own Afghan peace push showing its mettle as facilitator for the cause. Last year Tehran held second peace talk in attendance with central leadership of Afghan Taliban to help end 18 years of conflict.

This move has definitely angered the US as later never accepts Iran’s role in the Afghan problem. Stanley McChrystal, the former commander of US and international forces in Afghanistan, told ABC: “Iran is intensifying its sway across the region. If US pull outs, American influence subsides and Iran may spread its tentacles in Afghanistan.”

Meanwhile, United National Security Council have given till March 17, 2019 Mission’s mandate in support of Afghanistan’s full assumption of leadership and ownership of its security, governance and development. By the 12 page text, it decided that UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary General will be focusing on supporting the Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process, and preparations for presidential elections in 2019.

The Council called on regional and international partners to support the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation initiated in June 2017, working towards early and direct talks between the Government and authorised representatives of Taliban groups.

Afghan official said “The time has come that we openly debate the regional State sponsorship of terror outfits exported to our country and let the world know more of its behaviour,” he said. The Kabul Process was not just about outreach to the Taliban, but rather ending the conflict and preserving democratic order. “We look to international partners, this Council included, to remain beside us in this endeavour.”

Main impediment in hashing out peace deal putting to rest the war in Afghanistan is arch confrontation between present Afghan government and Taliban. They are as poles apart as they were before. Better fixer will be for all to help lay down “home solution” as facilitators instead of becoming a party in Afghanistan.

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