

## Afghanistan, The War is Not Over... US “Diplomacy” to Find New Allies

Region: Asia

Theme: Intelligence, Militarization and WMD, US NATO War Agenda

WMD, US NATO War Agenda

*There is no gainsaying that Afghanistan's road to peace after 17 years of war with the US is not going to be an easy one. For one thing, the war is not over yet. For another, the invader's agenda is not finished yet, and therefore, it continues to use different means to deny peace.*

While the US, the invader, has supposedly upped its efforts to engage in peace talks with the Afghan Taliban through the (US-backed) regime in Kabul, enough evidence exists to prove that these efforts are spurious and deceptive, hiding the US' un-finished agenda of turning Afghanistan into a permanent strategic outpost in the region, watching over the Central Asia, Russia and China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI); hence, the US' 'game of accusations', a game that previously focused solely on Pakistan but now includes Russia as well. Whereas it appears to be a coincident that the US officials had started to accuse Russia of arming the Taliban just when Russia started participating in and inviting regional stakeholders to peace talks and conferences, the 'game of accusations' has intensified to an extent whereby even the US sponsored talks on Afghanistan have started to fall a prey to this game. This became pretty evident before and during the recently held conference in Tashkent.

As such, while the Tashkent conference, where a number of countries were participating, had been convened to build a sort of 'regional consensus' on the ways and means to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table, the US, which was itself the primary mover behind the conference, had effectively blocked any possibility of developing such a consensus well before the Conference took place.

It was only few days before the conference that the head of the US forces in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, gave an [interview to the BBC](#) and blatantly accused—once again—Russia of ‘arming the Taliban’ to undermine the US efforts to control the insurgency and bring the war to an end.

“We know that the Russians are involved” and are smuggling weapons into Afghanistan through the border with Tajikistan, said Nicholson in his interview. And, just when diplomats from the regional countries, including Russia, were preparing for the conference to build consensus, Nicholson went to describe Afghanistan as a template of the new Cold War between the West and Russia, nipping effectively all hopes of consensus deep in the bud, and leaving the conference just another stand-alone event of no significance.

Linking Russia's increasing involvement in Afghanistan, which, in reality, has been primarily motivated by its assessment of the increasing presence of ISIS in its backyard, Nicholson

said that Russian “activity really picked up in the last 18 to 24 months. Prior to that we had not seen this kind of destabilizing activity by Russia here. When you look at the timing it roughly correlates to when things started to heat up in Syria. So it’s interesting to note the timing of the whole thing.”

With this level of accusations being leveled on Russia by the invader itself, there remains little to believe that the invader sincerely wants to offer peace. But the question still is: was the US, with this anti-Russia mindset, really going for peace when it convened the Tashkent conference? Or was it hoping to construct a kind of consensus in the region that would support ending the war but would equally support a long-term, open-ended, US military presence as well?

It is the open-ended military presence in Afghanistan that the US is after, a presence that it can no longer impose without support from key regional players. And, within the key regional players, there are hardly any states, except India, which might support the US; hence, the US efforts to shore it up its diplomatic activity in Central Asia to not only to find support for its presence in Afghanistan but also to establish an alternative route, not depending upon Pakistan and Russia, for its military supplies to Afghanistan.

This has been recently seen with regard to considerably upped co-operation between Central Asia and the European Union, and between Central Asia and the US with regard to sponsoring new regional groupings in what has been called a “5+1” format. And even before the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan, the EU and Central Asian representative had a meeting, which had been held four months after the most recent formal EU-Central Asia Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Samarkand in November 2017, and two weeks after an informal meeting of Central Asian Heads of State in Astana. Unsurprisingly, one of the agenda of this most recent meeting was the “role” that these states could play in bringing “stability” to Afghanistan.

However, within the US calculation, it is Russia which is engaged in a destabilizing activity in Afghanistan. Therefore, if the US and EU are trying to up the Central Asian states’ role in Afghanistan to bring the US version of stability, it logically means that the US and EU are wooing the CAS into anti-Russian regional grouping and thus build the so-called regional consensus and find an alternative supply route as well. This, in turn, is a part of sustained US diplomatic effort to lure the CAS out of the Russian and Chinese orbit.

But the US is unlikely to achieve these objectives. For one thing, Russia has a very strong presence in CAS, and out of its frustration, the US has also accused Tajikistan of smuggling Russian weapons into Afghanistan, reflecting the difficulty of cracking Russia-CAS relations. For another, the CAS states are themselves weary of the increasing presence of ISIS in Afghanistan, known as Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), which, unlike the Taliban, does want to spread into Central Asia and has also established links with the CAS-based Islamist movements such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Thirdly, co-operation with the US would mean having to bear a long-term and open-ended military presence in Afghanistan and an un-ending conflict in their backyard, likely to have strong spill-over effects.

For Central Asia States, co-operation with the US is, therefore, likely to cost a lot more than co-operation with Russia and China in bringing the war to a negotiated end. The US doesn’t want such an end, which means that it wants to prolong the war and keep Russia and China at bay, and which also means the Central Asian states becoming a party to the conflict they should not be directly involved in.

\*

*Salman Rafi Sheikh is a research-analyst of International Relations and Pakistan's foreign and domestic affairs, exclusively for the online magazine "[New Eastern Outlook](#)".*

*Featured image is from the author.*

The original source of this article is [New Eastern Outlook](#)  
Copyright © [Salman Rafi Sheikh](#), [New Eastern Outlook](#), 2018

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Salman Rafi Sheikh](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.  
For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)