

# How Russia-China Are Stage-managing the Taliban

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*The [first Taliban press conference](#) after this weekend's Saigon moment geopolitical earthquake, conducted by spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, was in itself a game-changer.*

The contrast could not be starker with those rambling pressers at the Taliban embassy in Islamabad after 9/11 and before the start of the American bombing – proving this is an entirely new political animal.

Yet some things never change. English translations remain atrocious.

[Here](#) is a good summary of the key Taliban statements, and [here](#) (in Russian) is a very detailed roundup.

These are the key takeaways.

- No problem for women to get education all the way to college, and to continue to work. They just need to wear the hijab (like in Qatar or Iran). No need to wear a burqa. The Taliban insist, “all women’s rights will be guaranteed within the limits of Islamic law.”
- The Islamic Emirate “does not threaten anyone” and will not treat anyone as enemies. Crucially, revenge – an essential plank of the Pashtunwali code – will be abandoned, and that’s unprecedented. There will be a general amnesty – including people who worked for the former NATO-aligned system. Translators, for instance, won’t be harassed, and don’t need to leave the country.
- Security of foreign embassies and international organizations “is a priority.” Taliban special security forces will protect both those leaving Afghanistan and those who remain.
- A strong inclusive Islamic government will be formed. “Inclusive” is code for the participation of women and Shi’ites.
- Foreign media will continue to work undisturbed. The Taliban government will allow public criticism and debate. But “freedom of speech in Afghanistan must be in line with Islamic values.”
- The Islamic Emirate of Taliban wants recognition from the “international community” – code for NATO. The overwhelming majority of Eurasia and the Global South will recognize it anyway. It’s essential to note, for example, the

closer integration of the expanding SCO – Iran is about to become a full member, Afghanistan is an observer – with ASEAN: the absolute majority of Asia will not shun the Taliban.

For the record, they also stated that the Taliban took all of Afghanistan in only 11 days: that's pretty accurate. They stressed "very good relations with Pakistan, Russia and China." Yet the Taliban don't have formal allies and are not part of any military-political bloc. They definitely "won't allow Afghanistan to become a safe haven for international terrorists". That's code for ISIS/Daesh.

On the key issue of opium/heroin: the Taliban will ban their production. So, for all practical purposes, [the CIA heroin rat line](#) is dead.

As eyebrow raising as these statements may be, the Taliban did not even get into detail on economic/infrastructure development deals – as they will need a lot of new industries, new jobs and improved Eurasian-wide trade relations. That will be announced later.

The go-to Russian guy

Sharp US observers are remarking, half in jest, that the Taliban in only one sitting answered more real questions from US media than POTUS since January.

What this first press conference reveals is how the Taliban are fast absorbing essential P.R. and media lessons from Moscow and Beijing, emphasizing ethnic harmony, the role of women, the role of diplomacy, and deftly defusing in a single move all the hysteria raging across NATOstan.

The next bombshell step in the P.R. wars will be to cut off the lethal, evidence-free Taliban-9/11 connection; afterwards the "terrorist organization" label will disappear, and the Taliban as a political movement will be fully legitimized.

Moscow and Beijing are meticulously stage-managing the Taliban reinsertion in regional and global geopolitics. This means that ultimately the SCO is stage-managing the whole process, applying a consensus reached after a series of ministerial and leaders meetings, leading to a very important summit next month in Dushanbe.

The key player the Taliban are talking to is Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special presidential envoy for Afghanistan. In yet another debunking of NATOstan narrative, Kabulov confirmed, for instance, "we see no direct threat to our allies in Central Asia. There are no facts proving otherwise."

The Beltway will be stunned to learn that Zabulov has also revealed, "we have long been in talks with the Taliban on the prospects for development after their capture of power and they have repeatedly confirmed that they have no extraterritorial ambition, they learned the lessons of 2000." These contacts were established "over the past 7 years."

Zabulov [reveals plenty of nuggets](#) when it comes to Taliban diplomacy:

"If we compare the negotiability of colleagues and partners, the Taliban have long seemed to me much more negotiable than the puppet Kabul government. We proceed from the premise that the agreements must be implemented. So far, with regard to the

security of the embassy and the security of our allies in Central Asia, the Taliban have respected the agreements.”

Faithful to its adherence to international law, and not the “rules-based international order”, Moscow is always keen to emphasize the responsibility of the UN Security Council:

“We must make sure that the new government is ready to behave conditionally, as we say, in a civilized manner. That’s when this point of view becomes common to all, then the procedure [of removing the qualification of the Taliban as a terrorist organization] will begin.”

So while the US/EU/NATO flee Kabul in spasms of self-inflicted panic, Moscow practices – what else – diplomacy. Zabulov:

“That we have prepared the ground for a conversation with the new government in Afghanistan in advance is an asset of Russian foreign policy.”

Dmitry Zhirnov, Russia’s ambassador to Afghanistan, is working overtime with the Taliban. He met a senior Taliban security official yesterday. The meeting was “positive, constructive...The Taliban movement has the most friendly; the best policy towards Russia... He arrived alone in one vehicle, with no guards.”

Both Moscow and Beijing have no illusions that the West is already deploying Hybrid War tactics to discredit and destabilize a government that isn’t even formed and hasn’t even started working. No wonder Chinese media is describing Washington as a “strategic rogue.”

What matters is that Russia-China are way ahead of the curve, cultivating parallel inside tracks of diplomatic dialogue with the Taliban. It’s always crucial to remember that Russia harbors 20 million Muslims, and China at least 35 million. These will be called to support the immense project of Afghan reconstruction – and full Eurasia reintegration.

The Chinese saw it coming

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi saw it coming weeks ago. And that explains the [meeting in Tianjin in late July](#), when he hosted a high-level Taliban delegation, led by Mullah Baradar, de facto conferring them total political legitimacy. Beijing already knew the Saigon moment was inevitable. Thus the statement stressing China expected to “play an important role in the process of peaceful reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan”.

What this means in practice is China will be a partner of Afghanistan on infrastructure investment, via Pakistan, incorporating it into an expanded China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) bound to diversify connectivity channels with Central Asia. The New Silk Road corridor from Xinjiang to the port of Gwadar in the Arabian Sea will branch out: the first graphic illustration is Chinese construction of the ultra-strategic Peshawar-Kabul highway.

The Chinese are also building a major road across the geologically spectacular, deserted Wakhan corridor from western Xinjiang all the way to Badakhshan province, which incidentally, is now under total Taliban control.

The trade off is quite straightforward: the Taliban should allow no safe haven for the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and no interference in Xinjiang.

The overall trade/security combo looks like a certified win-win. And we're not even talking about future deals allowing China to exploit Afghanistan's immense mineral wealth.

Once again, the Big Picture reads like the Russia-China double helix, connected to all the "stans" as well as Pakistan, drawing a comprehensive game plan/road map for Afghanistan. In their multiple contacts with both Russians and Chinese, the Taliban seem to have totally understood how to profit from their role in the New Great Game.

The extended New Axis of Evil

Imperial Hybrid War tactics to counteract the scenario are inevitable. Take the first proclamation of a Northern Alliance "resistance", in theory led by Ahmad Masoud, the son of the legendary Lion of the Panjshir killed by al-Qaeda two days before 9/11.

I met Masoud father – an icon. Afghan insider info on Masoud son is not exactly flattering. Yet he's already a darling of woke Europeans, complete with a glamour pose for AFP, an impromptu visit in the Panjshir by professional philosopher swindler Bernard-Henri Levy, and the release of a manifesto of sorts published in several European newspapers, exhibiting all the catchphrases: "tyranny", "slavery", "vendetta", "martyred nation", "Kabul screams", "nation in chains", etc.

The whole set up smells like a "son of Shah" [of Iran] gambit. Masoud son and his mini-militia are completely surrounded in the Panjshir mountains and can't be de facto effective even when it comes to regimenting the under 25s, two-thirds of the Afghan population, whose main worry is to find real jobs in a nascent real economy.

Woke NATOstan "analyses" of Taliban Afghanistan don't even qualify as irrelevant, insisting that Afghanistan is not strategic and even lost its tactical importance for NATO. It's a sorry spectacle illustrating how Europe is hopelessly behind the curve, drenched in trademark neo-colonialism of the White Man's Burden variety as it dismisses a land dominated by clans and tribes.

Expect China to be one of the first powers to formally recognize the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, alongside Turkey and, later on, Russia. I have already alluded to the coming of a New Axis of Evil: Pakistan-Taliban-China. The axis will inevitably be extended to Russia-Iran. So what? Ask Mullah Baradar: he couldn't care less.

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