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***Session V:  
Trilateral Initiatives focusing on Afghanistan:  
US-China-Pakistan and Russia-China-Pakistan***

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## China's Role in Facilitating the Peace Process of Afghanistan

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South Asia is a very important region in the diplomatic list of China. The stability of South Asia, especially Afghanistan, has been challenging since the Anti-Terror war started in 2001. As a close neighbor, China wants to see a peace, stable and prosperous outside environment for the development of domestic economy since China is still a developing country with a huge number of population. The last thing China wants to see is the chaos of Afghanistan lasting any further. As a result, China would like to contribute to the international as well as regional effort to ensure a stable Afghanistan. Unlike U.S and other west countries, China adopts kind of limited involvement strategy in Afghanistan and emphasizes the role of multilateral diplomacy as well as economic development.

The content of China's limited involvement strategy is as follows. First, the government of China made great efforts to facilitate the development of the economy of Afghanistan through enhancing bilateral trade and providing more job opportunities, thus gradually wipe out the social root of terrorism. Generally speaking, most of the militants in Afghanistan aren't Mujahideen with the aim of global jihad. Some militants join militant group aims at money and support their family. If the international community can re-energize the economy of Afghanistan and provide more jobs, lots of militants will abandon violence and integrate to the society and thus pave the way for a peace and stable Afghanistan. At present, dozens of China enterprises get deeply involved in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. For example, MCC win the bid of Aynak cooper mine in 2007. According to the contract between MCC and Afghanistan government, MCC will pay more than 800 million U.S dollars for rent of the cooper mine and 60 million U.S dollars each year as tax. Other than that, MCC also promise to build school, mosque, road, hospital, railway, power plant together with iron plant. MCC agrees to employ as many local workers as possible. Another example is the Amu Darya oil basin project. CNPC won the bid to extract Amu Darya oil basin. "The company will extract 1,950 barrels per day, which will crucially help Afghanistan towards self-sustainability and economic independence," The venture with CNPC, which has invested hundreds of millions of dollars, was expected to produce billions of dollars over the next two decades - CNPC will pay a 15 percent royalty on oil, 20 percent

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corporate tax. In the future, the Amu Darya basin should be able to supply Afghanistan with all its domestic oil needs eventually.

Other than that, the government of China provides government-to-government assistance to meet the urgent need of the Afghan government. The Chinese government has offered 1 billion U.S dollars, more or less, in aid to the Afghan government since 2001. While China's aid to Afghanistan is less than some countries, but China's commitment of aid can be put in place in very short term.

Second, the government of China offers assistance to the Afghan government in terms of cultivating talents and strengthen the growth momentum. Afghanistan's economic, social as well as other sectors are actively promoting reconstruction and in badly need of all kinds of professionals. China has an obvious advantage in the field of education and technical training and has the ability to help the Afghan government to cultivate talents. From 2007 to 2008, the Chinese government offered 10 short-term training classes for Afghanistan, including diplomats training, human resource management and leadership ability construction, project contract management, hospital management, government fiscal and financial management, economic management, public administration as well as other fields. Under these projects, China trained up to 200 Afghan officials. China's defense ministry, the ministry of public security also launched training projects for Afghan authorities. For example, the ministry of defense offered minesweeping training classes for more than 40 people from Iraq and Afghanistan. Those people mastered basic minesweeping knowledge and improve the minesweeping skills as well as organizational ability.

Last but not least, China makes great contributions to the international and regional efforts for peace in Afghanistan and is more than willing to facilitate the reconciliation process of Afghanistan.

## 1 Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) initiated by U.S, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan

U.S and China attended the talks brokered by Pakistan in July 2015 in Murree as two observers, Pakistan. Afghan Taliban delegates included Mullah Mansour, former health minister of Taliban government Mullah Abbas Stanikzai, and the leader of the Haqqani network Ibrahim, the government's deputy foreign minister of the Afghan government Hekmat Karzai, and High Council for Peace member Haji Muhammad. However, the death of Mullah Omar, confirmed by the Taliban, caused the second round of government-Taliban peace talks to collapse. Active involvement of China and US in the peace process had begun in early 2016 when they initiated the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) with Afghanistan and Pakistan to create the

environment for talks between the Afghan government and Afghan Taliban. At the fifth QCG meeting in May 2016, the four countries' representatives consulted over the roadmap of national reconciliation, and expressed shared commitment to an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process to bring lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. Their joint statement that called for all factions of the Taliban to join the peace talks with the Afghan government as quickly as possible, emphasized solving political issues through dialogue. The delegation was led by Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry, China Special Envoy for Afghan Affairs Ambassador Deng Xijun, and US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard Olson.

Although QCG made some concrete progress in drawing the roadmap of national reconciliation, it has not succeeded in calling on Taliban to join the initiative. Reasons why breakthroughs in the peace process are so difficult involve the death of Mansour. With his death on May 25, 2016 by US drone strike in Pakistan, Mansour's deputy Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada succeeded him, along with two deputies, Haqqani Network leader Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Yaqoob. While the loss of Mansour provided an opportunity for certain Taliban who intended to enter into negotiations, the transition of the Taliban top leader again in such short period would prove negative for the peace process. Although Mansour often changed his negotiating stance and repeatedly vowed to fight to the end, his intent was to maintain Taliban as a unity to consolidate his power. Haibatullah was different in that he was considered a Taliban hawk. Since Haibatullah had disadvantages due to a deficit in political and military know-how that might not win him the approval from Taliban at all levels, his priority might be internal unity. At that, fighting would be better than peace-making with the government. Another issue is that the relationship between Afghanistan with Pakistan has been deteriorating. The Ghani government's overtures to Pakistan provoked serious domestic opposition. For example, Karzai's former security chief blamed Ghani for blindly appeasing Pakistan. Abdul Rabb Rassoul Sayyaf also complained Ghani was dictatorial in peace talks. Atta Muhammad Nur, governor of Balkh province, demanded that all political factions be accommodated in talks with the Taliban. Under domestic pressures, President Ghani retreated on bilateral counter-terrorism and intelligence cooperation with Pakistan. Bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan went down again.

Although QCG suffers some setbacks, it still provides a useful and valuable platform to facilitate communications among different parties. For example, both U.S and China admit that it's necessary to carry out a next round of QCG meeting in the near future and maybe we should be optimistic with that.

## 2 Russia-China-Pakistan initiative on Afghanistan

### *The reason for this trilateral initiative:*

First, three countries are deeply concerned over the rising activity in the country of extremist groups including the Afghan branch of ISIS.

Second, three countries are all worried about the future of Afghanistan as well as the whole region against the background of U.S role and contribution in Afghanistan is not so clear to regional countries.

Third, three countries agree to continue their efforts towards further facilitating the Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan according to the known principles of reintegration of the armed opposition into peaceful life.

### *The development of this trilateral initiative:*

Going back, the initiative was started by Pakistan, China, and Russia in April 2013. While these three countries were always mindful of the importance of diplomatic solution to the Afghan problem, the fact that more representation from other countries was needed to find a consolidated solution never escaped their sight. Three countries held three rounds of trilateral meeting then expand the initiative to six party talks with Afghanistan, India and Iran get involved. Then the initiative expands again by inviting U.S and Central Asian countries. In April, 2015, eleven countries took part in meeting in Moscow, including Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan and India. Former Soviet Central Asian states have been invited to attend for the first time. The main agenda was to deliberate upon and discuss the ways to bring peace to Afghanistan. The United States was also invited to the talks, but Washington declined, saying it had not been informed of the agenda beforehand and was unclear about the meeting's motives.

In a word, we have dozens of initiatives with the purpose of peace and stability in Afghanistan, the key for the future is in the hand of the key players like the Afghan government, Taliban, U.S, Pakistan and so on. All countries including China will do more in terms of paving the way for the direct talks between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban which is the only way for the future of peace and stability both in China and Afghanistan. However, even if negotiations resume with the facilitation of different initiatives, it is unknown whether there could be a consensus on some key issues. First, the Afghan government insists negotiations must be Afghan-led and stresses “peace should be reached within Afghanistan.” The Taliban sees external intervention as the core problem and wishes to talk with the US first

before the Afghan government, or at least hold talks with both simultaneously. Second, another dilemma is how to withdraw foreign troops from Afghanistan. U.S and Afghan governments want an internal peace agreement before withdrawing troops, while Taliban see withdrawal as the precondition for peace talks. Other than that, the U.S and Afghan government insist the Taliban to respect political reality and the constitution, while the Taliban asserts the constitution and government are illegal, because the constitution was imposed on Afghanistan by the US and it did not participate in its establishment.

Other than that, like the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said "the international community should fully recognize Pakistan's anti-terrorism efforts" and appreciate its "important contributions to safeguarding regional and global peace and stability."