A Pakistani Olive Branch Extended In Efforts to End the Afghani Conflict

In the face of the obvious failure of US policy in Afghanistan, Pakistan stepped up its efforts to peacefully resolve the Afghani conflict.

On August 24, at the invitation of Pakistani Foreign Ministry, a delegation of the Taliban (movement banned in the Russian Federation - ed.), headed by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar arrived from Doha, capital of Qatar, to meet both civilian and military representatives of Pakistan. Its purpose was to discuss the latest developments in the peace process in Afghanistan and further steps in this direction, improving the security situation for civilians in Afghanistan as well as trade between the two neighboring countries, as confirmed by Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen on his Twitter.

This meeting was already the third of its kind: previously the parties met in October 2019 at the Pakistani Foreign Ministry and in February this year in Doha. This third visit of the Taliban delegation, as intended by those behind it, should contribute to resolving the contradictions that have arisen in recent days on the eve of the intra-Afghan peace talks that did not start on August 20 and were postponed to a later date, and were part of the agreement signed in Doha in February between the Taliban and the United States. Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi emphasized in his statement that Islamabad invited the Taliban to emphasize the importance of negotiations, adding that negotiations are “the only way forward” in Afghanistan. “It is the Afghans who need reconciliation, and our task is mediating,” he said. “The main goal is to ensure peace, and the next stage should be the beginning of an intra-Afghan dialogue.”

In a statement in connection with this meeting, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry highlighted Islamabad’s positive contribution to the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan, which culminated in the signing of a peace agreement between the US and the Taliban in Doha on February 29, 2020. Therefore, Pakistani officials are confident that Afghani stakeholders must seize this historic opportunity to secure a comprehensive political negotiated solution to the Afghani conflict. Islamabad called on the international community to step up its participation in the reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan, by creating the necessary economic opportunities and conditions conducive to the return of Afghani refugees to their homeland.

Islamabad leaping to action in the peaceful resolution of the Afghani crisis is in part due to Washington’s unrelenting criticism of Pakistan for “insufficient efforts to counter Afghani anti-government forces,” which the US State Department has repeatedly noted in its reports. In particular, the United States emphasizes how Pakistan failed to prevent a number of attacks by militants from its territory against Afghanistan, and makes minimal efforts to suppress the activities of terrorist organizations. At the same time, it is especially clear Islamabad only conducted anti-terrorist operations against those militants who carried out attacks specifically on Pakistani territory. This critical position has been repeatedly voiced by the current Afghani authorities close to the United States, accusing Islamabad of supporting the Taliban and other militants operating in the weakly defended border, indicating, in particular, that Taliban leaders are based in cities along the Pakistani-Afghani border, including Quetta and Peshawar.

Washington’s latest accusations against Islamabad were voiced in the annual report on terrorism published by the US State Department on June 24. In it, in particular, it was noted that Pakistan is a haven for terrorists and terrorist groups operating in South Asia, such as the Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and alysh-e-Mohammad (all banned in the Russian Federation), and the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan and the Pakistani army have been
accused of inaction. In addition, the State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report indicated that religious minorities and children are frequent victims of the slave trade in Pakistan.

For these reasons and for alleged “insufficient support by the Pakistani authorities for the American strategy on South Asia” in 2018, the United States refused to provide financial assistance to Islamabad in the amount of $300 million. This has already caused Islamabad’s harsh discontent with such assessments of Washington’s actions by Pakistan, since the indicated amount was supposed to be not help, but compensation for funds already spent by this country on countering terrorism.

However, today everyone is already well aware that Washington’s criticism of Pakistan in recent years is primarily due to the desire of the current American authorities to shift the blame for the apparent failure of their policy in Afghanistan to a third party, including the deaths here of more than two thousand American soldiers as well as over 20 thousand injuries, hundreds of billions of dollars worthlessly spent on goals incomprehensible to the public, which was more than enough to have long ago made Afghanistan a flourishing state in many ways. An important factor in such attacks by the Donald Trump administration on the Pakistani authorities is also the establishment of closer bilateral relations between Pakistan and China, as a result of which the traditional ties between America and Pakistan have all but disintegrated.

Although it is still early to speak into the results of the third meeting of Pakistani representatives and the Taliban, it is nevertheless obvious that the negotiations that took place in the current situation were very necessary in hopes to settle the Afghan conflict. And once again it was Islamabad who extended the olive branch in an effort to achieve peace in Afghanistan.

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