

Moscow Conference on Afghan Peace

March 25, 2021

In News: Representatives of the United States, Russia, China, and Pakistan began two-hour talks about Afghanistan at Moscow in the conference hall of Russia's Kremlin palace on Thursday, March 18, 2021.

Moscow Conference on Afghan Peace

- The gathering in Moscow is the first of three planned international conferences ahead of a May 1, 2021 deadline for the final withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO, date fixed under a year-old agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban.
- The Moscow conference is attended by U.S. peace envoy, head of Afghanistan's National Reconciliation Council, and Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Representatives of Pakistan, Iran, and China are also participating.

Five Countries Involved in Conference:

1. United States,
2. Russia,
3. China,
4. Pakistan,
5. Afghanistan

Aim of Conference: Larger effort by regional powers to make peace between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Troika: The group known as the "Troika," including the U.S., Russia, and China, plus Pakistan, called "on the Taliban not to pursue a Spring offensive," a major fighting campaign by the Taliban that happens in the spring season of each year.

View of Different Players in this Conference

- **The United States joined Russia, China, and Pakistan:** In a joint statement that stressed that they “do not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate.”
- **Russia:** Urged the US to comply with agreements to withdraw its troops from the country by May 1.
- **Taliban:** During talks they were firm on their demand for an Islamic government, without elaborating on what an Islamic government would look like.
- **Afghan Government:** The joint statement from the Troika, plus Pakistan, after the Moscow conference was largely welcomed by the Afghan government.
- **U.S.** Biden said last week that the May 1 deadline “could happen, but it is tough,” adding that if the deadline is extended it wouldn’t be by “a lot longer.”

What is the role of Women of Afghanistan in this talk?

- The conference alarmed Afghan women, who are worried about diminishing rights in the country’s future.
- **Habiba Sarabi:** Politician and women’s rights activist, found herself the only woman at the table. In 2005, she became the first female governor in Afghanistan after President Hamid Karzai appointed her to the position in Bamyan Province.
- There were no women among the Taliban’s delegates.
- Afghan women fear that they will lose their legal protections in a potential settlement in the name of peace.
- With all the difficulties that women face in Afghan society, their nightmare is a return of the Taliban’s style of government, an Islamic Emirate.
- In the absence of women, the chances are higher that men will negotiate over women’s rights in talks with the Taliban.

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