



The Goals of the Tashkent Security Conference

OE Watch Commentary: The Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan, which took place 25-27 March in the capital of Uzbekistan and involved a number of participants (including representatives from the Central Asian states, Russia, China, Turkey and the US), advocated for the government of Afghanistan to launch direct talks with the Taliban and resolve the conflict in Afghanistan. The accompanying excerpted article features an interview with the director of Uzbekistan's Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies (an organization under the president), which took place during the conference. There are a couple of things mentioned in it that provide insight into how the government of Uzbekistan will be involved with Afghanistan over the next several years.

The article appeared in *Fergana*, a Russian-language website with news on Central Asia, and consisted of an interview conducted by Arkady Dubnov (a Russian political scientist who focuses on the region) of Vladimir Norov, the director of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies. Norov mentions the Uzbek government's creation of the "6+2" group, which conducted negotiations in the late 1990s with all states bordering Afghanistan (China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), in addition to Russia and the US. The UN backed the group's Tashkent Declaration, which included members agreeing not to provide weapons or other security assistance to any party in Afghanistan as well as having dialogue between all factions in the country and resolving the conflict through non-violent means. The 6+2 group effectively ceased functioning in 2001, but the Uzbek government under former President Islam Karimov periodically mentioned reorganizing the group. If the Tashkent Conference is any indication, the current government under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is looking to continue some of the 6+2 group's efforts and put the Uzbek government in a unique diplomatic position. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: "Ўзбекистан беретя за старое. Почему Ташкент снова готов принять талибов (Uzbekistan reaches back in time. Why Tashkent is again prepared to accept the Taliban)," *Fergana*, 2 April 2018. <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9880>

The expert on Central Asia Arkady Dubnov met with Vladimir Norov, the director of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan, during the Tashkent conference on Afghanistan, which took place at the end of March. With permission, Fergana is publishing a written version of this conversation.

Dubnov: Will the Tashkent conference on Afghanistan be the first real step on the way to achieving the Afghan negotiation process?

Norov: This high-level event is not one day long. The leadership of Uzbekistan has already put forth several initiatives for peace and stability in Afghanistan, including the creation of a group "Neighbors and Friends" of Afghanistan under the auspices of the UN and in the "6+2" format...It is significant that a high-level meeting of the "6+2" group on Afghanistan took place in Tashkent in July 1999. Outside of the members of the group, representatives of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban took part in it...

Today, there is a great opportunity for the start of the peace process in Afghanistan. Among the key reasons: ...Currently in Afghanistan, as it was in 1997, there has been a sort of status quo, when neither the Taliban nor the officials in Kabul fully control the situation across the country...The general opinion of all the participants in the (Tashkent) conference is that the Taliban must be recognized as an independent political force. It is in this respect that the Tashkent Declaration emphasizes the need for a guaranteed inclusion of the Taliban in the negotiation process...The Tashkent Declaration of 1998 on the basic principles of the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan is still the only official document agreed and accepted by all the political forces of this country and approved by the UN...

Dubnov: Can Uzbekistan, using its dominating role in the region and providing significant economic assistance to Afghanistan, force Kabul to have loyalty to its opposition?

Norov: Uzbekistan follows the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan...Uzbekistan hopes that the Taliban will listen to the appeals of the participants of the Tashkent conference...

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Skylines of Tashkent, 2010.

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