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**Ghani: Taliban Will
not See the Face of
Interim Government**

In a phone conversation with Afghan soldiers on Saturday, President Ghani reportedly said that the Taliban will not get an interim government and that he is ready for threats of the Taliban.

"As long as I am alive, they will not see the face of an interim government," President Ghani said.

This comes as National Security Adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, reacted to remarks by a Russian special envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov saying that the interim government plan is not useful for the country.

While addressing a press conference, Mohib said that such remarks shouldn't be made and added that the Taliban don't want peace and are not willing to lose their prosperous lives in Doha.

According to Mohib Taliban leadership "don't want peace" in the country and "Taliban leadership have prosperous lives in Doha, they do not want to lose it" Ariana news quoted Mohib.

Meanwhile, Afghan defense officials said that NATO's support to Afghan National Army indicates that the Taliban are not ready to make peace. ...

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**90pc of Fencing
completed at
Pak-Afghan Border:
Pakistani Minister**

Pakistan's Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, who is on a four-day visit to Balochistan, has said that the government is boosting security arrangements by erecting fences along the borders with Afghanistan and Iran. According to Pakistani media, the country's Interior Minister stated that 90pc fencing work had been completed at the Afghan border and the remaining work would be completed in four months.

He noted that Pakistan was developing its border management system on modern lines to provide maximum legal crossing and trade facilities at the borders with Afghanistan.

U.S Supports Permanent 'Ceasefire' in Afghanistan



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Abdullah Abdullah, head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, in which he told US supports durable political settlement and permanent and comprehensive ceasefire in Afghanistan.

The US Department of State said in a statement that Blinken and

Abdullah discussed the United States' review of its strategy in Afghanistan.

"The Secretary thanked Abdullah for his vital work in support of the Afghanistan peace process, and he expressed America's resolve to support a just and durable political settlement and permanent and comprehensive ceasefire in

Afghanistan," it said. Abdullah's office said that Afghanistan's situation and the peace process were discussed in this conversation.

"Blinken reiterated US's continued support for expediting the efforts for achieving a lasting and durable peace in Afghanistan," it said.

This comes as US President Joe

Biden in an address to Munich Security Conference on Friday said that the United States will work together with its allies in Europe and that his administration is fully committed to working with NATO allies on the way forward in Afghanistan.

"My administration strongly supports the diplomatic process that is underway and to bring an end to this war (Afghan war) that is closing out 20 years," said Biden. Biden said he's "determined" to re-engage with Europe as he addresses Munich Security Conference.

Biden said that the US is committed to make sure that threats are not posed against US and its allies from Afghanistan.

"We remain committed to ensuring that Afghanistan never again provides base for terrorist attacks against the United States and our partners and our interests," he said. Biden added that the US will not allow Daesh to reopen and regroup. Taliban Violence 'Must Decrease Now'

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Friday said that ...

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**1 Killed, 14
Wounded in
Helmand Blast**

One person was killed and 14 more were wounded in a blast that hit a car in Lashkargah city, capital of Helmand province, on Sunday morning, said hospital officials.

The incident occurred around 10:00 am local time in Lashkargah city, local officials said, who confirmed that one person was killed and others--including civilians--were wounded.

Local officials did not provide further details about the incident.

No group has claimed responsibility for the blast.



More than 70,000 Families Displaced in Afghanistan

Officials from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations on Saturday stated that more than 70,000 families have been displaced in the current solar year in Afghanistan.

Addressing a press conference, Noor Rahman Akhlaqi, Minister of Refugees and Repatriations said the displaced families have been receiving aid from Government and international bodies.

"Government provides help for more than 70,000 families and every family received 15,000Afs. The displaced people are also helped by other international organizations," said Akhlaqi. Meanwhile, Mohammad Qasam, a resident of Faryab province, who has been displaced and moved to Kabul, said that he has



faced serious financial problems. "We are 10 members in our family, my eight-year-old sons are working hard to find food," said Qasam.

This comes as government said they have also distributed aid to

poor families this winter.

According to the Refugees and Repatriations Ministry, approximately four million people have been displaced because of clashes and war in Afghanistan in the past 18 years.

Russia-EU...

unresolved issues at the level of the EU bureaucracy. Therefore, in principle – I repeat once again – a break is possible, but it is extremely unwanted because it is fraught with many negative consequences.”

Iran Says...

be implemented,” Araqchi said. “About 20 to 30% of the IAEA’s oversight capacity will be reduced as a result of the implementation of the parliament’s decision.”

Cabinet spokesman Ali Rabiei said earlier that Iran believed sanctions would soon be lifted despite continued “diplomatic wrangling” over reviving the nuclear deal, signalling Tehran’s desire to end the impasse while not offering a new position.

“We predict with confidence that diplomatic initiatives will result in a favourable outcome despite the diplomatic wrangling, which are a natural prelude to the return of the parties to their commitments, including the lifting of all sanctions in the near future,” Rabiei was quoted as saying by state media. Under the deal with major powers, Iran accepted curbs to its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of international sanctions. Washington reimposed sanctions after Trump quit the deal in 2018, and Iran responded by violating some of the deal’s nuclear limits.

Ghani: Taliban...

Deputy Minister of Defense, Shah Mahmood Miakhel added that the NATO defense ministerial meeting indicates that the world believes the Taliban are not committed to peace.

Head of National Directorate, Ahmad Zia Saraj in his turn said 20 terrorist groups in Afghanistan operate under the direct supervision of the Taliban, and this has raised complexity in the war.

By Andrew Hammond

Afghanistan at a Key Crossroads in its History

Almost two decades after 9/11, one of the biggest early foreign policy decisions that U.S. President Joe Biden will have to make is over Afghanistan, at a crossroads in its history.

Biden and his new administration are in the throes of a comprehensive policy review over how best to end America’s 20-year engagement there, its longest war. Biden will report before the May 1 deadline to withdraw all foreign forces, set in a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement brokered by the Trump team.

NATO, which took control of international security operations in Afghanistan in 2003, met last week to discuss its own presence in what is also the military alliance’s longest, costliest, and most ambitious operation. At the meeting, NATO defense ministers effectively pushed back a decision on the May 1 deadline to await Biden’s review, to try to ensure alignment with Washington.

It is possible that the final call on NATO’s operation will not come until after its foreign ministers meet in mid-March. To try to buy time before then, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg urged the Afghan government and the Taliban to step up the pace of reconciliation talks.

NATO has about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan, helping to train and advise the Afghan security forces. Most are not now U.S. personnel, but the wider troop contingent could not continue if U.S. transport, logistics and other support were withdrawn.

The Biden review of the peace deal, which involves withdrawal of foreign forces in exchange for security guarantees by the Taliban, comes as Afghanistan stands at a crossroads. The peace deal has been violated repeatedly with growing concerns that levels of violence are still too high to justify a total pullout of foreign forces.

While the peace process with the Taliban may offer the best hope in decades for a sustained peace, many in Afghanistan are understandably anxious about their future. Fragile gains have been made since 2001, but there remains a daunting array of economic, security, and political risks.

The biggest challenge may be the internal security situation, despite pledges by Taliban militants. This



increase in disorder comes after Afghan authorities released thousands of Taliban prisoners, as promised in last year’s deal.

In this context, fears have been repeatedly raised that should the security situation deteriorate much further in coming months the U.S. and NATO force (now a tiny fraction of the previously 150,000-strong combat presence) is not big enough. This footprint also remains key for ensuring training and cohesion for the several hundred thousand Afghan police and military personnel with day-to-day responsibility for security in the country, which may otherwise disintegrate.

On the economic front, the news is not good either. Reconstruction has been slow, unemployment remains high, and over a million Afghans are internally displaced, with millions more refugees believed to be in Pakistan and Iran; this despite estimates that Washington has spent more on Afghan reconstruction than the cost of the Marshall Plan that helped rebuild Europe after the Second World War.

It is also clear that since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 the economy has not been diversified enough from drug exports such as opium and heroin, despite Afghanistan’s abundant natural resources — gas, minerals and oil with an estimated value of \$3 trillion.

Despite this difficult picture, there remains some cause for optimism, especially if a sustainable peace deal can be agreed with the Taliban. For example, the national unity government has survived for seven years. Its creation in 2014 to succeed President Hamid Karzai’s post-9/11 administration was the first democratic transfer of power in the country’s history. While there have been significant tensions, the government has consolidated the legitimacy of the new post-Taliban political system.

Other gains are Afghanistan’s accession to the World Trade Organization and wider moves to revive economic links with the outside world, including the modern Silk Road, a new rail route connecting Afghanistan to China and Central Asia. There are more children, including millions of girls, enrolled in schools, greater recognition of women’s rights, and a spread of technologies such as the internet and cell phones.

Nevertheless, these reversible gains remain in jeopardy, depending upon the outcome of the intra-Afghan peace process. While a sustainable peace breakthrough remains possible subject to Taliban acquiescence, there is a growing prospect of intensified political, security and economic instability if the reconciliation process breaks down, plunging the country into new uncertainty.

By BySAJJAN M. GOHEL, VICTORIA JONES

America Is Going the Same Way as the Soviets in Afghanistan

The bipartisan Afghanistan Study Group report released Feb. 3 has painted a bleak picture of what will happen to Afghanistan if the United States withdraws its remaining 2,500 troops prematurely. It warns that transnational terrorist groups will rebuild capabilities that were destroyed following the U.S.-led invasion and be operational again to attack U.S. soil within two to three years.

Under the flawed 2020 Doha agreement, the Trump administration promised to remove all U.S. troops in return for the Taliban’s pledge to enter into meaningful peace talks with the Afghan government—but without any promises by the Taliban to cease violence. Ironically, even though Pakistan played a pivotal role in the Doha deal, the Afghan government was left out entirely from the discussions. The deal also required the Taliban to ensure Afghanistan would not be used by al Qaeda or other terrorist groups to target the United States or its allies. Unsurprisingly, the Taliban flagrantly disregarded these conditions. The

Taliban have not ended ties with al Qaeda, and the groups continue to collaborate. A United Nations Security Council report even indicates that the two were consulting during the Doha talks. Violent attacks are on the rise in Afghanistan, with an increase in targeted killings of government and military officials as well as an indiscriminate murder of journalists and civil-society activists. Almost two decades after the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban are stronger than they have ever been since their overthrow in December 2001.

There is a real concern that Afghanistan could revert back into the breeding ground for extremism that it was in the 1990s. Much will depend on the next steps the Biden administration takes this year. Withdrawing U.S. forces too soon could trigger civil war, hand the Taliban victory, and spur the reemergence of terrorist groups that could threaten the West.

Though only mentioned fleetingly in the Afghanistan Study Group report, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 offers important

lessons—and warnings—for the United States. Although the present conflict with the Taliban has lacked the bitter intensity of the Soviet occupation, it has lingered far longer. And although the scale is different, understanding the experiences of the Soviet Union leaving Afghanistan, and the withdrawal’s aftermath, provides important lessons on exit strategies for the United States.

U.S. and Soviet challenges and uncertainties bear a striking resemblance on several levels: the question of how quickly foreign forces can exit Afghanistan without undercutting security, the ability and capacity of Afghan forces to protect the population, and the perseverance and functional ability of the Afghan government once the foreign troops are gone.

Soviet withdrawal was formalized as part of the 1988 Geneva Accords between Afghanistan and Pakistan, undersigned by the United States and Soviet Union. Although Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to respect each other’s sovereignty, Moscow had difficulty enforcing Islamabad’s

cooperation—just like Washington would witness post-9/11. In 1989, Soviet leaders discussed Pakistan’s problematic role: “Pakistani border troops are actively participating in military operations on Afghan territory,” a Politburo official was noted to have said, according to the meeting’s minutes. “[Pakistan] is the source of a continuous flow of weaponry, and armed bands also cross over unimpeded from there.” The Biden administration has seen that reconciliation efforts among Afghan factions is not straightforward. The Soviets experienced this too. At a Politburo meeting in 1986, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev remarked, “there is a reconciliation concept, we approved it, but in practice the problem is not being solved.” Moscow remained eager to pull all its troops out of Afghanistan while leaving the nation secure to manage internal and external threats. Its plan focused on the endurance of a friendly Afghan regime and a political settlement.

Soviet leaders understood that the years following their withdrawal would determine Afghanistan’s future and define the legacy of their intervention. Disclosed Politburo meetings acknowledged this: “Everybody understands that the

main fight is still ahead.” There was also a prophetic warning: “In case of [our] Afghan friends’ misfortune, Islamic fundamentalists are most likely to come to power.”

Between 1989 and 1991, Moscow supplied the Afghans with significant financial backing earmarked for capacity-building efforts along with a vast array of weaponry, some of which were used in the struggle against the mujahedeen—an Afghan-Arab amalgamation of Islamist fighters supported by the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia with the goal of driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan, with little oversight of how the movement would evolve. It was from within these groups that the Taliban later emerged. The goal was to ensure a viable Afghan military. Six months after the withdrawal, a wishful and premature assessment by Soviet leaders documented significant progress in 1989: “Clearly visible is the growth of [Afghan] self-sufficiency, self-confidence, ability to evaluate the situation correctly ... which they lacked during our military presence in Afghanistan.”

In an unusual step for the centralized, all-controlling Soviet state, Moscow supported the devolution of power from Kabul to stabilize ...

MoIC Incomes Reach to 252 Million AFG in 2020: Minister

Mohammad Tahir Zuhair, Acting Minister of Information and Culture in state accountability to the nation program held yesterday with participation of deputy ministers, advisors and directors of information and culture and journalists by briefing related the Ministry's works and achievements in the past one year and future programs said the Ministry of Information and Culture was operating towards promotion of culture and art, protection of cultural heritages, supporting the freedom of expression, freedom of mass media activities, improvement of tourism industry and supporting the rights of youth in the country. Summarizing the MoIC works and achievement of the 2020 into four principal categories as culture and art, youth affairs, tourism and publications, acting minister of information and culture added the ministry of information and culture was committed to promotion and strengthening of the country's national

culture, protection and supporting the cultural heritages and promotion of cultural varieties, development and strengthening of media, public awareness and monitoring works of government and private media, promotion of tourism industry and absorption of tourists to introduce them the Afghan culture and increase the country's revenue as well as supporting youth in various political, social, economic and cultural fields. Meanwhile, acting minister of information and culture by pointing to the ministry's structure and budget said the ministry has been able to collect 152.5 million AFG revenue from its relevant resources in 2020. Pointing to future programs of the ministry, acting minister of information and culture said based on instruction of the country's President, renovation, repairing, preservation and protection of the country's bal-e-hesars, historic monuments and cultural heritages would be in top working priorities of the ministry during 2021.



He further said that holding a 100-program in various cultural sections, reviving and highlighting the country's untouchable arts, renovation of historic and cultural figures' mausoleums, attention to protection of all historic monuments, places, cultural heritages and investments would include the future programs of the ministry of information and culture. Mohammad Tahir Zuhair stressed that the ministry of information and culture was working to bring the culture from side

to the text, highlighting elements of the country's national culture and change the ministry to an income-making organ. In this program, deputy minister of information and culture for publication affairs Abdul Manan Shiwayee Sharq, deputy minister of information and culture for finance, administrative and tourism Sayeda Mojgan Mostafavi and deputy minister of information and culture for youth affairs Dr. Edris Alokozay delivered their deputy ministries' works and achievements to the media.

U.S Supports...

an end to the US military involvement in Afghanistan hinges on a reduction in Taliban attacks. "The violence must decrease now," he told reporters in his first press conference as Pentagon chief. Austin said there would be no "hasty" withdrawal. "We want to do this methodically and deliberately," he said as quoted by The Hill. Under the Doha agreement, the Taliban is expected to deny safe haven to terrorist groups, including al Qaeda, in addition to engaging in talks and reducing violence. Austin said that he is "mindful" of the looming May deadline but indicated that it would not be reached as long as the Taliban are not meeting commitments. "Clearly the violence is too high right now and more progress needs to be made in the Afghan-led negotiations. I urge all parties to choose the path towards peace," he said. Austin stressed that the United States will consult with allies and partners in the country and "there will be no surprises" as to Washington's decision. He noted that he expressed the same sentiment to NATO allies at the two-day virtual NATO defense ministers meeting earlier this week. This comes a day after NATO Defense Ministers concluded a two-day meeting in Brussels with no final decision taken about troops pullout from Afghanistan. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg at end of the two NATO Defense Ministers meeting in Brussels on Thursday said that the military alliance will only leave Afghanistan when security conditions on the ground allow it. Stoltenberg said that at this stage, the alliance has not made a final decision about a troop presence in Afghanistan.

America Is Going...

Afghanistan, with the Politburo creating autonomous alliances of ethnic factions. Much like post-9/11 Afghanistan under former President Hamid Karzai, then-President Mohammad Najibullah also reinstated the Loya Jirga, a traditional council of Afghan political leaders, tribal elders, and religious figures. Although it was not an official decision-making body then and is not now, its decisions—based on consensus—are seen as final and binding. The decaying Soviet Union provided financial and military support to Najibullah's government for three years. It was only after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 that support from Moscow dwindled and Najibullah's government also began to fall apart. In 1992, the mujahedeen captured Kabul. This was seen as a victory for the United States, since the Soviet-supported Najibullah was seen to have been on the wrong side of the Cold War. However, competing interests among Afghanistan's ethnic groups—mainly the Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks—soon grew, and they began to carve up Afghan territory among themselves while simultaneously trying to take power from one another. Major cities, including Kabul, were reduced to rubble. In the meantime, a Pashtun cleric, Mullah Mohammad Omar, emerged as the leader of the Taliban, a cohort of militants trained in Pakistani madrasas that preached violent jihad. The Taliban presented themselves as religious students seeking to end Afghanistan's lawlessness and warlordism. Within just two years, they had captured major towns and cities before advancing on Kabul in 1996, where they publicly castrated and hung Najibullah. By 2001, they controlled around 90 percent of the country. Their brutal five-year regime represents one of the darkest times in Afghanistan's history and brought horrific human

rights atrocities, particularly against women. Their misogyny has remained a constant to this day. Afghanistan was also turned into a playground for terrorist groups such as al Qaeda to plot attacks. The Taliban strategy in seeking to kill Afghan politicians and anyone who questions their agenda has continued unabated. Vice President Amrullah Saleh, who warned that the United States conceded too much ground to the Taliban in Doha, has survived numerous assassination attempts by the Taliban. Saleh has also drawn direct comparisons between the Taliban's tactics and those of the Islamic State and noted that both entities are cooperating in Afghanistan with the shared goal of forcing Western troops out. Though Soviet and U.S. interventions differed, they encountered similar challenges. Both faced insurgent threats, limitations on the reach of the central government in rural areas, and the conflicting influence of Pakistan, where both the mujahedeen and Taliban enjoyed safe havens. Despite initially pursuing ambitious goals, the Soviets were obliged to reduce their policy objectives to disengagement and the ultimately failed attempt to prevent Afghanistan's collapse and takeover by radical extremists. Today, Washington faces a similar dilemma with a lack of political and military will to sustain the Afghanistan mission. It is often forgotten that Afghanistan experienced a period of relative security after the Taliban's defeat post-9/11 and that a Taliban-led insurgency did not emerge until 2005. However, by mid-2002, the George W. Bush administration was turning its attention to Saddam Hussein's Iraq. With Afghanistan neglected and the United States distracted by the ill-fated Iraq War, the Taliban reorganized with the Pakistani

military's support. If the Biden administration orders a complete departure from Afghanistan, the country could follow its post-Soviet trajectory, plunge into a full-blown civil war again, and become the terrorist sanctuary it was when the 9/11 attacks were planned. The Taliban are far from defeated and have shown repeated bad faith. With several terrorist organizations—including al Qaeda and the Islamic State—retaining a presence in the region, these entities are likely to subject the Afghan people to a degree of brutality, misogyny, and oppression that rivals pre-2001 levels. A U.S. exit from Afghanistan must be contingent on the Taliban ending ties with terrorist groups and ceasing their violence against the Afghan people. At the same time, it is critical that Washington hold Pakistan accountable for how it meddles in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Washington also needs to better engage with its NATO allies that have a presence in Afghanistan and play a crucial role in developing the Afghan military, including Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, especially since previous rapid troop reductions under the Trump administration took place without consultation or coordination. In a positive development, U.S. President Joe Biden is seeking to restore the United States' credibility with its European allies and seems intent on reestablishing a dialogue. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg recently underlined the push for greater multilateralism when he said that the alliance would not leave "before the time is right." No one wants "forever wars," but an irresponsible exit is just as inadvisable. We must pause, look to history, and move forward with caution instead of sleepwalking into another disaster.

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Russia-EU Break Possible but Unwanted: Analyst

Pressures in relations between Russia and the West have recently become so strained that Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned of the possibility of a complete break in ties.

In an interview with Anadolu Agency, Andrey Kortunov, head of the Russian International Affairs Council, a Moscow-based academic and diplomatic think tank established upon a presidential decree, assessed how real the threat is and what consequences it could lead to.

It is necessary to make it clear what "a possible break with the EU" means – whether cutting relations with individual European countries or with European Union structures, said Kortunov. "If we talk about EU countries, we shouldn't forget that they now account for more than 40% of Russia's trade turnover, they are the main source of investments and technologies that go to Russia. No one is ready to give up on this, and

no one will," he said.

As for structures of the EU bloc, in general, a break would be possible, but it would be both unwanted and unwelcomed, he said.

Kortunov noted that cooperation between Russia and the EU shrank in recent years, and a great many of the structures established to build bilateral ties have been closed.

"For example, in the past, we regularly held EU-Russia summits twice a year – in the first half of the year in Russia, in the second half in the EU presiding country or in Brussels," he explained. "Now such summits do not take place. The number of working groups that work in specific areas has decreased."

Following this logic, breaking or freezing the remaining ties is possible but it is an extremely unwanted scenario because it is impossible to have good relations with European countries – EU



members – and not have any relations with the EU itself, Kortunov said.

"A number of important issues lay within the competency of the European Union, including

but not limited to trade and scientific and technical cooperation," he said.

He warned: "Sooner or later, our projects with individual countries will run into ... **P2**

A look at the world

Turkey, Pakistan Joint Military Exercise Ends

A three-week joint military exercise involving Turkish and Pakistani special forces ended on Saturday.

The closing ceremony of the drill ATATURK-XI 2021 was held at the Pakistani military's Special Service headquarters in Tarbela, northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkwa province, which borders neighboring Afghanistan, said a statement from the Pakistan Army.

The Pakistan Army's Inspector General Training and Evaluation Lt. Gen. Syed Muhammad Adnan and a high-level military delegation from Turkey headed by Maj. Gen. Emre Tayanc attended the closing ceremony.



Turkish Special Forces and troops of Pakistani military's elite Special Services Group participated in the drill.

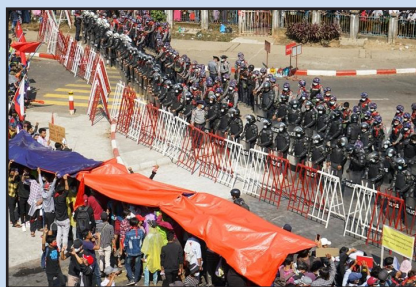
The exercise focused on counter-terrorism, close quarter battle, cordon and search, rappelling, fire and move techniques, helicopter rappelling, compound clearance, hostage and rescue, and free fall operations. Ankara and Islamabad have increased defense and military cooperation in recent years.

In July 2018, the Pakistan Navy signed a contract with Turkish state-owned defense contractor ASFAT for the acquisition of four Turkish-built MILGEM corvettes. According to the plan, two corvettes will be built in Turkey and the next two will be built in Pakistan, which also involves technology transfer.

In October 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan along with then Pakistan Navy Chief Adm. Zafar Mahmood Abbasi had cut the first metal plate of the first MILGEM Ada class corvette during a ceremony in Istanbul.

Turkey is one of the 10 countries in the world which can build, design, and maintain warships using its national capabilities.

At Least 3 Civilians Killed in Myanmar Protest



At least three people were killed Saturday by security forces during a protest, according to sources and media reports.

Police and soldiers opened fire into a crowd in the second city, Mandalay, after 1,000 government employees refused to return to work at a major jetty site.

Witnesses said the shooting occurred after hours of a tense face-off between security forces and protesters.

A volunteer medic was among those killed, according to a colleague who asked not to be named.

"My friend was sitting in an ambulance while she got shot," he told Anadolu Agency.

A male died when he was shot in the head by police in Yangon's Shwe Pyi Thar township, said witnesses.

"As a police vehicle entered into the street, we tried to stop them. Police suddenly shot a man in the head and then drove away," said Myint Myat Thu who witnessed the shooting. However, Thousands of demonstrators in Berlin marched Saturday to commemorate victims of a 2020 racist attack in Hanau, Germany.

Protestors marched from the Hermannstrasse Train Station to Kreuzberg district while carrying photographs of the victims. They also carried banners that read: "Hanau is everywhere," "Stop the arsonists" and "Never forget, Hanau, 19.02.2020."

The crowd observed one minute of silence for the victims and read the names of those who were killed in the attack.

Police estimated 6,000 demonstrators attended the march but organizers put the number at 20,000.

Nine people, including four of Turkish origin, were killed by German far-right extremists who attacked two cafes Feb. 19, 2020, in Hanau.

Germany has witnessed growing racism and xenophobia in recent years, fueled by the propaganda of far-right and anti-Muslim groups.

At least 184 people have been killed in Germany by far-right extremists and neo-Nazi groups since 1989, with more than 50 victims being members of the Turkish community.

Iran Says Studies EU-proposed Informal Meeting with U.S.

Iran is studying a European Union proposal for an informal meeting between current members of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal and the United States, but has yet to respond to it, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Saturday.

Iran and the United States have been at odds over who should take the first step to revive the 2015 accord. Iran insists the United States must first lift former President Donald Trump's sanctions while Washington says Tehran must first return to compliance with the deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif suggested earlier this month a way to overcome the US-Iranian impasse over who goes first in returning to the nuclear deal, saying EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell could "synchronize" or "choreograph" the moves.



"We are studying Josep Borrell's proposal to hold an informal meeting of the 4 + 1 (nuclear deal members) with the United States and Iran, and we are consulting with our partners, including Russia and China, and we will respond to this proposal in the future," Araqchi said in an interview with state TV.

"However, we believe a US return to the nuclear accord does not require a meeting and the only way for it is to lift the sanctions," Araqchi said.

The White House said on Friday the United States plans to take no additional actions in response to pressure from Iran before potential talks with Tehran and major powers about returning to the deal.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the EU had floated the idea of a conversation among Iran and the six major powers that struck the nuclear accord. "The Europeans have invited us and ... it is simply an invitation to have a conversation, a diplomatic conversation."

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi, arrived in Tehran on Saturday, weeks after Iran's hardline parliament set a deadline of Feb. 23 for Washington to lift the sanctions, or Tehran would halt snap IAEA inspections.

"Grossi's trip has nothing to do with Iran's decision and Iran's decision shall ... **P2**



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