

'NO INTENT TO EXCLUDE INDIA FROM AFGHAN DIPLOMACY'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Afghanistan

China on Monday sought to reassure India that it does not intend to “exclude” New Delhi from international diplomacy on Afghanistan, following last week’s quadrilateral talks in Beijing among China, Russia, the U.S. and Pakistan.

Fresh from his visit to Qatar where he held talks with the Taliban and Afghan government officials, U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad first joined his counterparts from Russia and China for the third trilateral mechanism on Afghanistan. This was followed by the first quadrilateral meeting on Afghanistan, in which Pakistan was also present.

“Last week, the U.S. special envoy Khalilzad attended the third trilateral consultation of Afghan issue between China, Russia and the U.S. in Beijing. He also attended the first China, Russia, the U.S. and Pakistan meeting,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said.

'Early settlement'

Asked why India, which also has high stakes in Afghanistan, was not invited, Mr. Geng said there was no deliberate intent among the participants to exclude India from discussions.

“I think just like you said, China has been in close communication and coordination with all parties including India. You said that (at) the trilateral meeting and the China-U.S.-Russia-Pakistan meeting, these countries, they have decided to hold such meeting based on mutual understandings. I believe China, the U.S. and Pakistan, we do not exclude India in discussing and helping the early settlement of the Afghan issue.”

However, analysts say that with the institutionalisation of the quadrilateral mechanism, India is not on the table where key decisions on Afghan reconciliation will be taken.

A joint statement issued at the end of the meeting points out that a broader group that includes “other stakeholders” will meet only after an internal dialogue among Afghans has begun.

“The four sides agreed to maintain the momentum of consultation, will invite other important stakeholders to join on the basis of the trilateral consensus agreed on April 25, 2019 in Moscow...”

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