

# The Extended Troika—U.S. Cooperation with Russia, China, and Pakistan

by Mike Billington

Sept. 25—Although the citizens of the United States have been denied more than an occasional footnote reference to its existence, a functioning institutional structure for cooperation between the United States, Russia, China and Pakistan has been in place since 2019.

Called the Extended Troika, this institution was established to develop solutions to the Afghanistan quagmire based on the physical development of the Afghan economy and infrastructure, as the only realistic means to prevent the return of that nation to its earlier role as a terrorist haven and opium factory for the world. Were this effort to succeed, it would be a model for similar cooperation in restoring the war-ravished nations destroyed by the U.S.-UK “forever wars” in Southwest Asia, and even as a model for cooperation between the world’s superpowers in addressing the multiple crises facing mankind—drugs, terrorism, the pandemic, the financial bubble, and the increasing danger of nuclear war.

Why, then, has this clearly critical cooperation gone unreported to the American population? This is yet another question Americans, and Europeans, must ask themselves if we are to avoid the continuing descent into a new dark age.

## Two Scenarios for Afghanistan

With the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO military forces from Afghanistan, welcomed almost universally despite the chaotic withdrawal process, two possible scenarios—of totally opposite character—are presented to the world:

The world could join forces to address the common interest of all nations that Afghanistan should not fall back to its earlier role as a center for terrorism and drugs. This has been the policy promoted by The LaRouche Organization and the Schiller Institute, that the concept of “peace through development” must prevail over depraved indifference throughout the world.

Opposite to this vision, the U.S.-UK military-industrial complex could use the Afghan pullout as a means to reposition and expand military forces to prepare for a military showdown with the nuclear superpowers,

Russia and China. Such madness was clearly advanced with the creation of the U.S.-UK-Australia military alliance (AUKUS—better named “Orkus”), and the effort to use the “Quad” (U.S., Japan, India, Australia) as a political and military “Asian NATO” to contain and confront China.

While the first option may seem impossible to the average American or European, subjected to a daily barrage of hysterical attacks on Russia and China as aggressors, human rights violators, cyber thieves (i.e., projecting the actual practice of the Anglo-Americans upon them), the existence of the Extended Troika demonstrates what is possible if the actual self-interests of the entire human race are taken into consideration.

The Extended Troika was formed in March 2019 by the administrations of Presidents Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, together with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, to address the ongoing plans for the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, following the launch of U.S.-Taliban meetings in Doha, Qatar, in October 2018, to plan for the transition. Sponsored by Qatar, the Extended Troika met in Doha in March, April, July and October of 2019, again in June and November of 2020, and in March, April and August of 2021.

All the meetings were in Doha except for that of March 2021, which was held in Moscow, and addressed by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, with representatives of the Taliban, the U.S.-backed government in Kabul, and representatives of Qatar and Turkey. While the primary focus was to find means for a peaceful transition to an inclusive government and guarantees that any future government would prevent the harboring of international terrorist organizations on Afghan territory, also on the table was the necessity for an economic plan to both reconstruct from the war damage and to transform Afghanistan into a modern industrial and agricultural nation. The records of the proceedings were kept confidential, to allow for open discussion, so no concrete plans were made public.

## The Belt and Road

Nonetheless, all of the participants were also engaged in other public meetings over the past year which addressed specific plans to achieve the intention of transforming Afghanistan from the battleground of superpowers to what it once was—a hub for the ancient Silk Road, the connection between the great cultures of Asia and those of the European side of the Eurasian continent. The entire Central Asian region was once known as “a land of 1,000 cities,” showcasing advanced technologies in oasis cities, including Merv, Balkh, Kabul, and Kandahar, with large-scale underground irrigation systems. Water development will once again be crucial, and the agricultural potential is great.

These plans were [presented](#) in detail in the July 31 Schiller Institute Conference, “Afghanistan: A Turning Point in History After the Failed Regime-Change Era.” Speakers from Russia, China and Pakistan joined Helga Zepp-LaRouche and others to deliberate on the urgency of achieving this transformation.

At the center of the discussion was a plan to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one of the most successful programs of China’s historic Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), into Afghanistan and beyond. The CPEC rail line connecting China and Pakistan, passing through Islamabad to the ports in Karachi and Gwadar, would be extended from Islamabad through Peshawar, then through the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan, to Kabul and on to Mazar-i-Sharif, meeting the rail lines in Uzbekistan.

This project, known as the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor, was approved at a meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in February 2021 among Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, together with representatives of leading international financial institutions. It includes a four-lane highway and a nearly 600 km rail line. The World Bank subsequently agreed to finance a major part of this nearly \$500 million project.

In July of this year, the U.S. government participated in a conference focused on the urgent necessity of a development program for Afghanistan and the entire region: “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity—Challenges and Opportunities,” held in Tashkent, July 15-16. Here, the participants from across the region and beyond emphasized that a development corridor through Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan would, for the first time, allow all of the Central Asian countries (the “stans”) access by rail to South Asia and the sea, namely the Arabian Sea, at the Pakistani ports of Karachi and Gwadar. The statement released by the

U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan following the conference was quite explicit, and even optimistic:

The C5+1 countries [the five Central Asian countries plus the U.S.] affirm their commitment to enhancing engagement through our regional diplomatic platform and seeking opportunities to strengthen connectivity between the Central and South Asian regions via trade, transport, and energy links. The C5+1 recognizes that increased connectivity supports its shared goal of a prosperous and secure Central Asia. Visionary ideas for Central Asia’s economic growth and closer ties to the economies of South Asia also reinforce the C5+1’s commitment to strengthening the region’s security and stability, including through Afghan peace negotiations.

Among the list of goals of the C5+1 was this statement: “Ease trade, transport, and communication between South and Central Asia, including through Afghanistan.”

It is also of note that the U.S., on the sidelines of the July meeting in Tashkent, established a “Quad” relationship with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan—the three countries on the emerging Khyber Pass Economic Corridor—focused on the rail project.

## India and the Extended Troika

Lyndon LaRouche, following the financial collapse in the West in 2008, asserted that the U.S. could no longer recover from its extended financial and economic crisis on its own, that a coming together of what he called “the Four Powers”—the U.S., China, Russia, and India—was the minimum association of nations which could bring about a “New Bretton Woods” conference to replace the broken financial system with one based on development rather than speculation and bailing out bankrupt financial institutions. As is apparent, the Extended Troika is essentially this very “Four Powers,” except it includes Pakistan (once part of India) rather than India, due to the importance of Pakistan in the Afghanistan situation, and due to the chronic India-Pakistan conflict.

The meeting of the Extended Troika in Doha on August 11 of this year brought up the important issue of India’s role in the future of Afghanistan, and also in the Extended Troika itself. The *Hindustan Times* of August 5 noted that India had been “kept out of a key meeting on Afghanistan [the August 11 meeting of the Extended

Troika] convened by Russia that will see the participation of Pakistan, reflecting certain divergences between New Delhi and Moscow on the rapidly evolving situation in the war-torn country.”

India has contributed to many development projects in Afghanistan during the U.S./NATO occupation, and has strongly opposed the Taliban, which it asserts is run by Pakistan. The *Times* notes that the Russian special envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, told the media that Russia sees a role for India only in “Afghanistan’s post-conflict development,” because they have no relationship with the Taliban, adding: “Only countries that have an unequivocal influence on both sides” can participate in the Extended Troika. This is an issue which must be resolved if the connectivity so essential for all of Asia is to be achieved.

### Will the Extended Troika Meet in Kabul?

When the Taliban occupied Kabul without firing a shot on August 15, just days after the last Extended Troika meeting in Doha on August 11, the question arose as to whether a meeting of the four nations could be held within Kabul. On September 1, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov told Sputnik:

We believe we should contribute to urgent stabilization jointly with other International partners. To that end, we plan to convene a new meeting of the Extended Troika ... in Kabul as soon as there are conditions. I mainly refer to the resumption of the Kabul airport operation for commercial aviation flights.

China quickly gave its support to the proposal.

On September 21, a meeting was indeed held in Kabul between Russia, China, Pakistan and the Taliban, i.e., without any U.S. participation. The Russian Foreign Ministry reported: “An agreement was reached to maintain constructive contacts in the interests of Afghanistan’s peace and prosperity, and regional stability and development.”

It is potentially a tragic mistake for the U.S. to fail to participate in this effort. Worse, the U.S. Treasury has sequestered nearly \$8 billion which belongs to the people of Afghanistan, leaving the population, battered by forty years of war, without adequate food, medicine, electricity, or even funds to pay the work force.

On July 11, Schiller Institute President Helga Zepp-LaRouche issued a statement titled, “Afghanistan at a Crossroads: Graveyard for Empires or Start

of a New Era.” She wrote:

[T]he future development of Afghanistan represents a fork in the road for all mankind. At the same time, it is a perfect demonstration of the opportunity that lies in the application of Nicholas of Cusa’s principle of the *Coincidentia Oppositorum*, the coincidence of opposites. Remaining on the level of the contradictions in the supposed interests of all the nations concerned—India–Pakistan, China–USA, Iran–Saudi Arabia, Turkey–Russia—there are no solutions.

If, on the other hand, one considers the common interests of all—overcoming terrorism and the drug plague, lasting victory over the dangers of pandemics, ending the refugee crises—then the solution is obvious. The most important aspect, however, is the question of the path we as humanity choose—whether we want to plunge further into a dark age, and potentially even risk our existence as a species, or whether we want to shape a truly human century together. In Afghanistan, it holds true more than anywhere else in the world: The new name for peace is development!



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