



## [U.S. Secretary of State Blinken Calls for a Peace Summit to Discuss Afghan Unity Government Prospects](#)

Earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for a United Nations-facilitated conference to discuss the prospects for an Afghan unity government. The recommendation was outlined in a letter to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, which included other proposed steps to help accelerate the stalled peace process between Ghani's government and the Taliban. In it, Blinken also expressed that the Biden administration continues to consider a full withdrawal of American forces from the country by the May 1st deadline negotiated by former President Trump and suggested holding high-level discussions with representatives from the Afghan government and the Taliban in Turkey during the coming weeks in order to draft a revised plan for a 90-day reduction in violence. Afghanistan has witnessed a recent uptick in violence against civilians as peace talks have stalled in the preceding months, and officials fear that the security situation there could deteriorate even further in the absence of quick and effective action.

In his letter to Afghan President Ghani, Secretary of State Blinken advocates for the proposed peace summit to include foreign ministers and envoys from the United States and major regional actors such as Russia, Iran, China, India, and Pakistan. The goal would be for the respective parties to "discuss a unified approach to supporting peace in Afghanistan." In addition to this United Nations-supported conference, Blinken also discussed the need for a meeting in Turkey which would be aimed at finalizing an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The news of Blinken's letter to Ghani emerged a few days after reports surfaced that the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, had suggested a new format for delving into the country's political future during a recent trip to Kabul.

Analysts have pointed out that the situation in Afghanistan presents one of the most significant foreign policy challenges for Secretary of State Blinken and the new Biden administration. On one hand, many American officials and the public at-large have grown increasingly fatigued with the nearly two-decade military presence in the country. However, at the same time, there is also a legitimate worry that a full withdrawal of U.S. troops could embolden the Taliban and cast doubt over the future security of Afghanistan, negating the joint efforts and sacrifices of the past 20 years. Blinken acknowledged the uncertainty in his letter to Afghan President Ghani, stating that "Even with the continuation of financial assistance from the United States to your forces after an American military withdrawal, I am concerned that the security situation will worsen and that the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains...I am making this clear to you so that you understand the urgency of my tone regarding the collective work outlined in this letter." Adding to the uneasiness is the fact that the Taliban has ramped up its attacks against Afghan forces in the time since the withdrawal deal was signed with the previous Trump administration.

In the coming weeks, it remains to be seen what – if any – movement is made on the proposed steps highlighted by Secretary of State Blinken. It will also be interesting to keep an eye on how the upcoming potential May 1st troop withdrawal deadline may factor in as well.