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B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D), B6

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	INL-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00
	FBIE-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	MMP-00	M-00
	AC-01	NEA-00	DCP-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	ACE-00	SCT-00
	SA-00	ASDS-01	SNIS-00	NISC-00	DSCC-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

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R 090031Z MAR 01
 FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4008
 INFO UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
 AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMEMBASSY RIYADH
 AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
 AMCONSUL SHENYANG
 AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
 AMCONSUL HONG KONG
 AIT TAIPEI 6741
 AMEMBASSY TOKYO
 AMEMBASSY SEOUL
 AMEMBASSY ROME
 USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
 ZEN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU
 AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
 AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
 AMEMBASSY ALMATY

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 AMEMBASSY BAKU
 AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
 AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 002162

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/11
 TAGS: PREL, KISL, PTER, ETTC, UNSC, CH, AF PK
 SUBJECT: CHINA AND THE TALIBAN: THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL
 FRIENDSHIP?

(U) CLASSIFIED BY A/DCM JAMES F. MORIARTY. REASON:1.5
 (B) AND (D).

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Sharon Ahmad, Senior Reviewer

1. (C) SUMMARY: RECENT DISCUSSIONS HERE INDICATE A GROWING ACCEPTANCE BY THE CHINESE OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TALIBAN RULE, A BELIEF THAT THE TALIBAN ARE PRAGMATIC PEOPLE WHO CAN "MAKE DEALS," AND A CONVICTION THAT INTENSIFIED ENGAGEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WITH THE TALIBAN COULD RESULT IN A POSITIVE OUTCOME FOR AFGHANISTAN. WHILE INITIALLY RELUCTANT TO DIRECTLY ENGAGE THE TALIBAN, DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS BEIJING HAS CARRIED ON A DIALOGUE THROUGH A SERIES OF OFFICIAL AND ACADEMIC EXCHANGES. THE CHINESE APPEAR PREPARED TO TAKE AT FACE VALUE TALIBAN PROMISES THAT NO ANTI-CHINA ACTIVITIES WOULD EMANATE FROM TALIBAN-RULED AREAS. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE WILL NOT LEAD ANY CHARGE TO RECOGNIZE THE TALIBAN OR END THE TALIBAN'S INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION, THEY WOULD BE QUICK TO JOIN SUCH A CONSENSUS IF IT BEGAN TO FORM. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

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CHINA WANTS THE AFGHAN WAR RESOLVED

2. (C) BEIJING'S DESIRE FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO THE AFGHAN CONFLICT AND GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE TALIBAN REFLECTS CHINA'S DESIRE FOR A STABLE BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN. THE STABILITY-OBSESSED CHINESE LEADERSHIP ALSO WORRIES ABOUT THE MISCHIEF THAT AN UNFRIENDLY TALIBAN REGIME COULD WREAK IN THE WESTERN MUSLIM-DOMINATED REGION OF XINJIANG BY SUPPORTING UIGHUR SEPARATISTS THROUGH THE AFGHAN TERRORIST INFRASTRUCTURE. IN LINE WITH ITS OPPOSITION TO INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF COUNTRIES, CHINA PROFESSES TO DESIRE THAT THE U.S., IRAN, RUSSIA, PAKISTAN AND OTHERS STOP MEDDLING IN AFGHANISTAN AND THREATENING CHINA'S ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS. CHINA'S INCREASINGLY "MODERATE" AND "SYMPATHETIC" APPROACH TO THE TALIBAN REFLECTS A BELIEF AMONG OFFICIALS AND ACADEMICS HERE THAT TALIBAN RULE OFFERS THE MOST REALISTIC AND EXPEDITIOUS PROSPECTS FOR RETURNING AFGHANISTAN TO NORMALCY -- AND A HOPE THAT THE TALIBAN WILL NOT SUPPORT UIGHUR SEPARATISM.

DISPROPORTIONATE REACTION TO XINJIANG INCIDENTS

3. (C) MFA OFFICIALS AND THINK TANKERS NOTE THAT CHINA'S VIEWS ON AFGHANISTAN HAVE EVOLVED DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS. WHILE THE EXTENT OF TALIBAN CULPABILITY

IN THE SPORADIC SEPARATIST INCIDENTS IN XINJIANG OVER
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THE YEARS IS HARD TO QUANTIFY, SOME UIGHURS HAVE
PARTICIPATED IN THE AFGHAN CIVIL WAR, THE CHECHYN
CONFLICT, AND REPORTEDLY IN THE MUJAHIDEEN STRUGGLE IN
INDIAN KASHMIR. THE REACTION BY THE CHINESE TO THE FEW
INCIDENTS THAT DID OCCUR IN XINJIANG APPEARED
DISPROPORTIONATE TO THEIR IMPACT, REFLECTING THE
ATTENTION OF BEIJING'S LEADERSHIP. WHILE THE RELATIVE
QUIET IN SEPARATIST ACTIVITIES IN XINJIANG IN THE PAST
YEAR-AND-A-HALF WAS DUE MORE TO HEAVY-HANDED SECURITY
MEASURES THAN TO "GOOD RELATIONS" BETWEEN THE TALIBAN
AND BEIJING, THAT "QUIET" WAS NEVERTHELESS SEEN AS ONE
OF THE FRUITS OF A STEADILY GROWING SYMPATHETIC APPROACH
TO THE TALIBAN.

TAKING THE TALIBAN AT THEIR WORD

4. (C) NOW, MINISTRY OFFICIALS TELL US BEIJING IS
PREPARED TO TAKE THE TALIBAN AT THEIR WORD THAT NO ANTI-
CHINESE ACTIVITIES WILL BE TOLERATED IN AREAS UNDER
TALIBAN CONTROL.

RECENTLY ASSERTED

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 BEIJING 002162

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/11

TAGS: PREL, KISL, PTER, ETTT, UNSC, CH, AF PK

SUBJECT: CHINA AND THE TALIBAN: THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL
FRIENDSHIP?

THAT THE TALIBAN DID NOT COMPLETELY CONTROL ALL THOSE
AREAS NOMINALLY UNDER THEIR RULE AND THAT THERE WERE
FACTIONS WITHIN THE TALIBAN THAT MIGHT NOT ADHERE TO
SUCH A PLEDGE. HOWEVER, THOSE EXCEPTIONS ASIDE, BEIJING
APPEARED MORE THAN WILLING TO GIVE MULLAH OMAR A STRONG
BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT ON THIS CRITICAL ISSUE.

SUPPORTIVE AND UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDE

5. (C) THIS BUILD-UP OF "TRUST" HAS OCCURRED DESPITE A
SURPRISINGLY SMALL NUMBER OF VISITS BY CHINESE DIPLOMATS
AND ACADEMICS TO KABUL OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. AN MFA
DELEGATION, WITH THE PRIMARY MISSION OF ASSESSING THE
DAMAGE TO THE CHINESE EMBASSY, TRAVELED TO KABUL IN
DECEMBER 1998. LI SHAOXIAN, A RESEARCHER AT THE CHINESE
CONTEMPORARY INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
(CICIR), HEADED A CICIR DELEGATION THAT VISITED
AFGHANISTAN FOR A WEEK AT THE END OF NOVEMBER 2000. THE
CHINESE AMBASSADOR IN ISLAMABAD THEN VISITED IN DECEMBER

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2000. COMING THE OTHER WAY, A FEW TALIBAN DELEGATIONS
HAVE VISITED BEIJING UNDER THE AEGIS OF THINK TANKS.

THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN DIRECT CONTACTS, UNDERTAKEN
ORIGINALLY AT PAKISTANI URGING, VIA THE CHINESE EMBASSY
AND THE TALIBAN IN ISLAMABAD. MFA OFFICIALS HERE HAVE
OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED THEY FELT "UNCOMFORTABLE" IN THE
PRESENCE OF THE TALIBAN AND OFTEN "BAFFLED" BY THEIR
BEHAVIOR. [REDACTED] ADMITTED THAT BEFORE GOING TO
KABUL HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES IMAGINED THE TALIBAN AS
"UNCIVILIZED MONSTERS." THEY CHANGED THEIR VIEW,
HOWEVER, AFTER THEIR INTENSE EXPOSURE TO THE TALIBAN
LEADERSHIP AND TO WHAT THEY SAW OF THE COUNTRY ITSELF.
DESPITE THE DIFFICULTY IN ADAPTING TO THE TALIBAN STYLE,
BOTH ACADEMICS AND OFFICIALS HERE HAVE COME TO BELIEVE
THAT THE TALIBAN ARE "PRAGMATIC" PEOPLE WHO CAN MAKE
DEALS, HAVE A PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTING THE COUNTRY, AND
HAVE RULED AFGHANISTAN EFFECTIVELY.

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INCREASING ECONOMIC TIES

6. (C) RELATIONS BETWEEN BEIJING AND KABUL HAVE ALSO
DEVELOPED IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE. CHINESE COMPANIES
HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN'S
TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR, HAVING SECURED THE CONTRACT TO
UPGRADE AFGHANISTAN'S TELEPHONE SYSTEM. CHINESE
OFFICIALS ASSERT THAT THIS PROJECT COMPRISES MOST OF THE
CONTRACTS GRABBED BY CHINESE COMPANIES IN THEIR
COMPETITION WITH OTHER FOREIGN COMPANIES.

READ THE FACTS

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7. (C) BEIJING HAS CONSISTENTLY MAINTAINED THAT ONLY A
POLITICAL SOLUTION, BASED ON A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT
COALITION, NOT MILITARY CONFLICT, WILL RESOLVE
AFGHANISTAN'S TURMOIL. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CHINESE
POINT TO THE TALIBAN'S CONTROL OF NINETY-PER CENT OF
AFGHAN TERRITORY AS A COMPELLING FACT WHICH MUST BE
TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN EVALUATING CURRENT
RELATIONS WITH THE TALIBAN AND IN ENVISIONING WHERE THE
DOMINANT POWER IN A FUTURE AFGHANISTAN WOULD LIE. THE
CHINESE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A FINAL AND DECISIVE TALIBAN
VICTORY OVER THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE WOULD NECESSARILY
INSURE STABILITY. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY APPEAR TO
AGREE WITH THE TALIBAN THAT THE INTERNECINE SQUABBLES
WITHIN THE GROUPS COMPRISING THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE ARE
THE CAUSE OF AFGHANISTAN'S CURRENT WOES. TO THE
CHINESE, THE TALIBAN APPEAR THE BEST BET TO LEAD

AFGHANISTAN OUT OF ITS CURRENT CATASTROPHIC SITUATION.

MORE ENGAGEMENT WILL LEAD TO MORE UNDERSTANDING

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 BEIJING 002162

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SUBJECT: CHINA AND THE TALIBAN: THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP?

8. (C) [REDACTED] ASSERTED THAT THE CHINESE BELIEVED THAT MORE CONTACTS WITH THE TALIBAN WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE TALIBAN'S DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S REQUIREMENTS FOR ENDING THE SANCTIONS AND RE-INTEGRATING AFGHANISTAN INTO THE WORLD COMMUNITY. [REDACTED] WHOSE DELEGATION MET WITH THE WHOLE TALIBAN LEADERSHIP EXCEPT FOR MULLAH OMAR, ASSERTED THAT TALIBAN BEHAVIOR HAD BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE DURING THE PAST YEAR. HE CITED A GROWING CONFIDENCE AMONG THE TALIBAN RESULTING FROM THEIR CONTROL OF THE VAST PART OF AFGHAN TERRITORY FOR THIS "FLEXIBILITY". AT THE SAME TIME, HE ASSERTED TALIBAN ANGER AT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR NOT CREDITING NEW POLICIES WHICH LED TO ERADICATION OF THE POPPY CROP, LIBERALIZATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AND A WILLINGNESS TO REACH COMPROMISE REGARDING USAMA BIN LADEN. [REDACTED] BOTH CAUTIONED THAT THE LONGER THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IGNORED THESE "NEW REALITIES," THE DEEPER THE TALIBAN WOULD DIG IN AND THE MORE VICIOUS WOULD THEIR

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REACTION BE. [REDACTED] CITED THE THREAT TO DESTROY THE BAMIYAN BUDDHAS AS A TALIBAN RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION.

UNDERSTANDING EXTENDS TO ARAB FIGHTERS

9. (C) THE "DEEPER" UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND THE TALIBAN APPEARED TO EXTEND TO ARGUMENTS ADVANCED BY THE TALIBAN REGARDING THE PRESENCE OF "FOREIGN FIGHTERS" IN CAMPS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH CHINESE ACADEMICS AND OFFICIALS, THE TALIBAN ARGUED THAT THESE FIGHTERS, LARGELY REMNANTS OF THE WAR AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION, CONSTITUTE A SKILLED AND PROFESSIONAL CADRE OF SOLDIERS THE TALIBAN CAN CALL ON TO BATTLE NOT ONLY THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE BUT OUTSIDE FORCES. ONCE THE COUNTRY WAS UNIFIED, THOSE FORCES WOULD NO LONGER BE NEEDED.

10. (C) [REDACTED] ALSO TOLD US THAT THE CHINESE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT A TALIBAN VICTORY WOULD LEAD TO KHOMEINI-LIKE EXPORT OF REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS. THE TALIBAN, HE ASSERTED, WOULD BE TOO BUSY WITH ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION TO CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO THE REGION.

COMMENT

11. (C) WHILE BEIJING WILL CONTINUE TO ARGUE FOR AN EASING OF SANCTIONS AGAINST AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE OF THEIR HUMANITARIAN IMPACT, THE CHINESE ARE UNLIKELY TO

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FORMALLY RECOGNIZE THE TALIBAN OR TO PUSH FOR THE TALIBAN'S ACCEPTANCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. AT THE SAME TIME, BEIJING WOULD QUICKLY JOIN AN INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS THAT BEGAN TO FORM IN FAVOR OF SUCH A PROCESS. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE CHINESE HAVE OVERCOME THEIR INITIAL RELUCTANCE TO DEAL WITH THE TALIBAN AND HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE TALIBAN PERFORMANCE AND PLEDGES REGARDING THE PROSCRIBING OF XINJIANG SEPARATIST ACTIVITIES FROM AFGHAN TERRITORY. WE SUSPECT THAT ANY INTENSIFICATION OF UIGHUR ACTIVITIES IN XINJIANG THAT COULD BE TRACED TO AFGHANISTAN COULD UPSET WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE BEGINNING OF THIS NEW AND RELATIVELY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND THE TALIBAN.
PRUEHER

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