

Headlines:

- **Tunisia: U.S. Calls On Tunisia to Finalise Negotiations with IMF As Soon As Possible**
- **Afghan Government Facing 'Existential Crisis'**
- **The US and China say They want to Avoid Military Conflict, but no One can Agree on How**

Details:

Tunisia: U.S. Calls On Tunisia to Finalise Negotiations With IMF As Soon As Possible

Deputy Secretary of the US Department of the Treasury for Africa and the MENA Region Eric Meyer called on Tunisia to speed up the finalisation of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the economic crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Received recently by Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT) Governor Marouane Abassi, the American official reiterated his country's willingness to support Tunisia in its dealings with international financial institutions, according to a press release issued Wednesday evening by the BCT. During this meeting held in the presence of US Ambassador to Tunisia Donald Blome and a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad, the BCT governor indicated that he is currently working with all stakeholders to devise an economic rescue plan. He voiced hope that an agreement with the IMF will be reached as soon as possible to set up a new financing programme, underlining that all stakeholders are aware of the "fragile" situation Tunisia is going through and of the importance of restoring the confidence of donors and foreign investors in the Tunisian economy. Referring to the health crisis, Abassi called on Tunisia's "friends" to support it in its efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing out that the acceleration of the vaccination campaign is top priority. [Source Tunis Afrique Press]

America unashamedly uses the IMF to control countries. In Tunisia's case, the US is fully aware that the country faces a political crisis and no doubt Washington will use the IMF as a leverage to remold the political system that is more favourable to its interests.

Afghan Government Facing 'Existential Crisis'

The Afghan government in Kabul will be fighting for its life and could well fall to the Taliban after the United States completes its military withdrawal from the country in August, according to a U.S. government watchdog charged with monitoring events on the ground. Despite a series of cautiously optimistic assessments by high-ranking U.S. military officials and Afghan leaders, a new report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) describes the situation as "bleak" and echoes concerns that Afghan security forces are not ready to mount any meaningful resistance. "The overall trend is clearly unfavorable to the Afghan government, which could face an existential crisis if it isn't addressed and reversed," Special Inspector

General John Sopko wrote in the report, released Wednesday. "The ANDSF [Afghan National Defense and Security Forces] has retaken some districts and the Afghan government still controls all 34 provincial capitals, including Kabul," he added. "But from public reporting, the ANDSF appeared surprised and unready, and is now on its back foot." Ever since U.S. President Joe Biden announced in April that American combat troops would leave Afghanistan, U.S. officials have been careful not to minimize the challenge facing the Afghan government. Just this past Sunday, the commander of U.S. Central Command, General Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, told reporters in Kabul that the Afghan government "faces a stern test." But he added that despite attempts by the Taliban to create a sense of inevitability, "there is no preordained conclusion to this fight." [Source: Voice of America]

It is becoming painfully obvious that the US is allowing the Taliban to gain more control ahead of any political settlement. Added to this, Taliban's pledge not to use Afghanistan to undermine countries like China and the Central Asian states, and one can see the contours of the political settlement emerging. At this juncture, it is important for the Taliban to be politically astute and not to be deceived by America's plan of using Afghanistan in the future.

The US and China say They want to Avoid Military Conflict, but no One can Agree on How

Among the recriminations and accusations, there was one point of consensus when American and Chinese diplomats met in the coastal city of Tianjin earlier this week: no one wants to see the world's most important relationship deteriorate into armed conflict. But there was little consensus on a concrete way to avoid that catastrophe. And that has experts worried. Washington and Beijing have been trapped in a spiral of anger and suspicion for several years, but the situation has deteriorated rapidly since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, amid finger-pointing over the origins of the virus. Meetings between the two sides are few and far between — and when they occur, such as in Alaska in March, they are bitter and confrontational. The US is without an ambassador in Beijing. There have been no moves to reopen the recently shuttered United States consulate in Chengdu or the Chinese consulate in Houston. And the appointment of a new Chinese ambassador to Washington, while a positive step, is unlikely to deescalate tensions in the short term. There's certainly no small amount of antagonism between the two sides at present. Experts point to rising brinksmanship over Taiwan and the expanding standoff in the South China Sea as possible military flashpoints with unpredictable consequences for both sides. Speaking in Tianjin, both sides said despite the current state of relations, they wanted to avoid direct confrontation. US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman underscored that while Washington welcomed "stiff competition," it did not seek conflict with Beijing. Meanwhile, China's Foreign Minister Xie Feng told Sherman the Chinese people "cherish peace." [Source: CNN]

There is unlikely to be a hot war. America's strategy is to aggressively contain China through coercive diplomacy. As for China, Beijing is willing to puncture this containment through bilateral alliances and treaties mainly concentrated on trade.