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## CHINA TO FORM 'CONTACT GROUP' ON AFGHANISTAN

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Tehran Times (25 February 2019)

His remarks came in a meeting with his Kyrgyz counterpart Chingiz Aidarbekov in Beijing on Thursday, according to reports.

We will make the SCO Afghanistan contact group to play a better role so we can speed up the political settlement of Afghanistan internal issues, said Wang.

In recent months, efforts to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table have intensified with many regional countries coming forward and using their leverage over the insurgent group.

China, like other countries in the region, has hosted talks between the Taliban and various other stakeholders in recent past.

Seen as a counterweight to United States in the region, China is an important player in the peace process as it enjoys good relations with both the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Meanwhile, despite Beijings growing interest in regions neighboring Afghanistan, China is unlikely to be interested in replacing the U.S. military's role in maintaining stability in the war-torn country, Sputnik quoted an Afghan expert saying.

Instead of boosting its military presence in Afghanistan, China has opted to play a more active role in peace negotiations in the country, said Mariam Safi, director of DROPS based in Kabul.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/433297/China-to-form-contact-group-on-Afghanistan>

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