



USA-Taliban Peace Deal

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Why in News

The **United States has signed a historic deal with Taliban** insurgents that could pave the way **for ending the 18-year-war in Afghanistan.**

- The deal was signed in **Doha (Qatar)** and thus termed as **Doha Agreement.**
- India has **welcomed the signing of the U.S.-Taliban peace deal** by **accepting** an invitation to attend the ceremony for the same in Doha.

Key Elements of the Deal

- The agreement set out a course for the **next 14 months.**
- **Comprehensive Ceasefire** between the Afghan Government and Taliban.
- Timeline for the **withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan will be carried out**, provided the Taliban adhere to their security guarantees and ceasefire.
- The **prevention of the use of Afghanistan by any group or individual against the security of the United States and its allies.**
- The facilitation of an **intra-Afghan dialogue.**

The participants of intra-Afghan negotiations will discuss the date and modalities of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, including agreement over the future political roadmap of Afghanistan.

- In turn, the Taliban has demanded the **release of 5000 fighters from Afghan-run jails.**

Peace Deal and the Possible Consequences

- Taliban has the **ultimate goal of imposing Sharia in their respective regions.** This is in conflict with what the people in Afghanistan want.
- Afghanistan has its own **Constitution and people want to be governed as per the Constitution.** This will make **any peace deal that they would have, unsustainable.**

- The Taliban will **hardly share power with the Afghan Government**. Thus it is quite possible that even after the peace deal, the country will be **back to civil war again**.
- Then, the world will face **twin challenges in Afghanistan: ISIS and Taliban**.

India's Stand

- **India has been always supportive of the inclusive peace process**, specifically **Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled**.
- The **participation of the Afghan government's delegation during the Doha agreement** as well as the **upcoming intra-Afghan peace negotiations** would be following the path desired by India.
- The deal has reiterated India's commitment to Afghanistan's pursuit of **"sustainable peace and reconciliation"**.
- Thus, India has **accepted** the Doha Agreement(2020).

Possible Issues for India

- **Security of India:**
The deal mentions about prevention of the use of Afghanistan by any group against the security of the **United States and its allies**. However, it is **unclear whether India, which is not a U.S. ally, is included in this clause**, and whether Pakistan-backed groups that threaten India, would still operate in Afghanistan.
- **Benefit for Pakistan:**
The deal also promises to take Taliban leaders off the **UN Security Council's** sanctions list, which could considerably bring down the number of terrorists harboured by Pakistan. This might **benefit Pakistan during the June 2020 FATF Plenary**.
- **Sidelining of Intra-Afghan Dialogue:**
The U.S. has committed to clear five bases and withdrawal of troops and it intends to submit to the Taliban-led government. Thus, priority to future Taliban led government may **sideline the "Intra-Afghan" dialogue and India's support for the election process for leadership in Afghanistan**.
- **One-sided Deal:**
The deal is more burdened with the **Taliban demands**, while the actual terms of the 'peace deal' are yet to be negotiated between the Taliban and the Afghan side, facilitated by the U.S. and thus deal seems to be a one-sided deal.

Background



- The war in Afghanistan was launched by the **US in 2001 after the 9/11 attack**. The US-led coalition aimed to overthrow the Taliban.
- However, the **war in Afghanistan got derailed** as the U.S. shifted focus and resources towards **Iraq from 2003 onwards**.
- The end objective of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan began to recede as the **Taliban launched their insurgency in 2005** after they had recovered, regrouped and refinanced themselves from their sanctuary in Pakistan.
- Since then, the insurgency has gathered momentum and also exposed the U.S. 's policy weaknesses.
- After taking over in 2009, President Barack Obama authorised a **surge in U.S. troop presence** with the objective **to gain a decisive victory over the insurgency**. He simultaneously announced the drawdown of forces would commence in 2011, and by 2014 the Afghan security forces would take charge of all combat operations.
- However, this only encouraged the Taliban insurgency and exposed the shortcomings of the Afghan army and the police forces, in terms of numbers, training and equipment to deal with the post 2014 situation.
- In **2014**, the U.S. announced the **withdrawal of the bulk of soldiers** but a **few thousand U.S. soldiers were to stay behind to “advise, train and assist”** the Afghan security forces under **Operation Resolute Support**.
- In 2017, the U.S. President Donald Trump laid out a strategy for **“Afghanistan and South Asia”**.
- His policy was different from those of his predecessors as it stated that American involvement in Afghanistan was “not for nation building” but **was limited to “killing terrorists.”**
- He called this policy **“Principled Realism”** - with a **shift from a time-based approach to one based on conditions**. This policy was based on two pillars:
 - **Military Involvement:** The additional troops which would serve two roles: **counterterrorism missions** and **training the Afghan forces**.
 - **Political Involvement:** A **negotiated political settlement** with the Taliban, if the situation moves in that direction.

- Since October 2018, Taliban representatives and US officials have been meeting to chalk out a peace treaty.

Way Forward

- Achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan will require **patience and compromise among all parties**. And thus talking **only** with the Taliban is a **short-sighted policy**.
- To resolve conflict within Afghanistan, the battlefield needs to be **isolated** i.e. external support to the terrorist activities needs to be abandoned. Also, the countries need to keep their respective interests aside, to build peace in the region.
- The US needs to make its **policy vis-a-vis Afghanistan clear**.
- India and Central Asian Republics can help in establishing peace in the region.
- More militancy is witnessed in the region where the state fails to deliver. Thus, **administrative reforms within Afghanistan** are the need of the hour.

Source: TH