

US re-engagement in Afghanistan

What is the issue?

Though it seems that US troops are set to withdraw from Afghanistan, but US will re-engage in the region due to security concerns.

What has happened in Afghanistan?

- The US has led a global counter-terrorism (CT) campaign-a multi-theatre war on terror- in response to 9/11 attack.
- The US-led airstrikes removed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 and helped in creating, training, equipping and assisting local security forces.
- As an outcome, Afghanistan wrote new democratic constitution and invited the UN missions.

How was local troops raised in Afghanistan?

- The earnest build-up of the Afghan forces started around 2009, when the Taliban posed a serious threat across Afghanistan.
- In the same year, the US declared a surge of troops and promised withdrawal by 2014.
- By January 2015, all security responsibilities were handed over to Afghan forces and US troops reduced to 10,000.
- But the war did not end as Afghan forces were still ill-experienced and ISIS was expanding its footprint across the globe.
- Hence a NATO-led Train-Advise-Assist Mission commenced for Afghan forces, while the US CT mission also continued in partnership with Afghan Forces.

Why US reduced its forces in the Afghanistan?

- The US has correctly assessed that AQ in Afghanistan stands degraded and ISIS and AQ networks are scattered across the globe.

- The threat of the caliphate is over and the threat of genuine ISIS taking root in Afghanistan has been reduced due to the US-Afghan partnership.
- Over the last seven years, Afghan forces got evolved and they started to conduct most operations on their own.
- So US signed the Doha agreement in February 2020, for a full withdrawal, hoping that Taliban would agree to be part of an interim government.
- As new players are in the peace process, including Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, and Qatar, the US made the smart move to approach the UN to broker peace.
- However, it appears unlikely that China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran will send troops to fight the Taliban under a peacekeeping mission.

Will there be a shadow of US presence in the region?

- Due to the current geopolitical compulsions-US-China competition, China-Pakistan embrace, China-Russia strategic partnership, and China-Iran deal- Afghanistan has become strategically important.
- Thus, despite US withdrawal, there will be shadow of US-NATO in the region with a focus on preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven.

Will US influence the national government?

- In the Afghanistan 2.0 engagement, few points are clear — Afghanistan is part of the US-led Coalition against ISIS.
- The Afghan government will take a sovereign decision to ask for training or operational support and the US has sufficient resources in the Central Command theatre on land, sea, and air.
- It will provide immediate support on request and has the option of drone strikes in Afghanistan and beyond.
- Also US will retain its soft power over Afghan institutions and personalities.

What can we infer from this?

- The UN-led peace process is expected to be slow, it is certain that the

Taliban-ISKP-Pakistan will unleash much more violence.

- This chaos would create more ungoverned spaces strengthening the terror infrastructure.
- Hence, the developments in Afghanistan will continue to raise security concerns, far beyond South Asia.

Source: Indian Express

