

## **US-Taliban Deal and India**

### **Why in News?**

The recently negotiated peace deal between the United States and the Taliban is geopolitically disadvantageous for India.

### **What is this deal about?**

- The deal provides an honourable exit route for the U.S. from its military campaign in Afghanistan than about ending violence in the country.
- It will have serious implications for India's national security.
- Afghanistan is on the verge of yet another long-drawn out battle as,
  1. The Taliban negotiated from a position of strength,
  2. The Trump administration from weakness and little political will,
  3. The Afghanistan government was a bystander in all of this.

### **Why the Taliban was negotiated for the deal?**

- When the Taliban came to power in the mid-1990s in Afghanistan, it had few backers in the world.
- But today, it has learned to deal with the international system and play the game of balance of power.
- Most of the key players in the region have been in negotiations with it, which had lent the terror group certain legitimacy in the process.
- This is due to the war fatigue and the geopolitical stakes in Afghanistan.
- Taliban has many suitors because the U.S. withdrawal by and large suits everyone there, be it China, Pakistan, Iran, or Russia.
- Most of the countries see the U.S. as their bigger challenge than the Taliban, so the Taliban have been forgiven for its sordid past sins.

### **Why India seems to be at the losing end?**

- The earlier Taliban regime was anti-India because India had militarily supported the Northern Alliance that kept up the military pressure against the Taliban.
- Today's Taliban does not share the same animus for India.
- So, India could've rearranged its approach to Taliban this time around.
- However, India did not reach out to the Taliban because,
  1. It didn't want to irk the elected government in Afghanistan and

2. It adopts a moralistic approach in dealing with extremist groups.
- This moralistic attitude that India would only talk to the legitimate government in that country, is a self-defeating position.
  - As a result, India's relations with Afghanistan will take a hit in the immediate aftermath of the deal.

### **Why will India be hit?**

- China is deeply involved in the geopolitics and geo-economics of the region including in Afghanistan.
- So, India's traditional ability to influence the region's political and security outcomes will be severely limited.
- This will be further exacerbated by the U.S. withdrawal from the region.
- Other regional actors in Afghanistan are also less friendly towards India than ever before: like Iran, Russia, Pakistan, etc.
- Unless India carefully envisages a counter strategy, these factors will increasingly push it into a geopolitical tough spot in the region.

### **What is the Kashmir angle?**

- The direct physical impact of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan on Kashmir will be negligible.
- But, there is going to be more psychological impact on the disenchanted Kashmiri youngsters.
- They may pick up guns drawing inspiration from this Afghan situation where US leaving the country in the hands of an extremist group.

### **How will Pakistan influence?**

- The U.S.-Taliban deal can't survive without Pakistan's assistance towards ensuring its success, and the U.S. and its allies recognise that.
- Using this, the Pakistan may put up a gamble in Kashmir.
- India's official statement which describes Afghanistan as a "contiguous neighbour" will make Pakistan and China sit up and take notice.
- [Contiguous neighbour - India considers Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) a part of its sovereign territory]
- Erstwhile rhetorical claims on PoK and Aksai Chin have suddenly assumed lot more geopolitical significance today.
- This has made conciliatory approaches to conflict resolution ever more difficult.

**Source: The Hindu**



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