**Why the US-Taliban deal is in jeopardy?**

[Syed Kashif Ali](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/syed-kashif-ali/)

March 6, 2020

The U.S. and the Taliban have struck a peace deal at the Qatari capital Doha. [Zalmay Khalilzad](https://dailytimes.com.pk/519222/zalmay-khalilzad-calls-on-coas-gen-bawja-fm-qureshi/) – the special U.S. representative for Afghan reconciliation and Mulla Abdul Ghani Brother- Taliban’s political chief- signed the peace deal.

As per the deal: a) the U.S. and NATO forces will completely withdraw from Afghanistan within fourteen months from signing date of the Doha agreement, b) the Taliban will make sure the Afghan soil is not used for launching attacks against the U.S. and its allies; c) the Taliban would take part in the intra-Afghans dialogue along with the Afghan government of Ashraf Ghani, d) a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire will be an agenda item of the intra-Afghan negotiations.As per agreement the U.S. will withdraw 4500 troops within 135 days. Withdrawal of the remaining forces will be conditional to the successful implementation of the agreement by the Taliban. Five thousand Taliban prisoners will be released by 10 March as pre-condition to start of intra-Afghan negotiations.

Permanent ceasefire is not part of the agreement, rather, it will be agreed upon by the parties during the intra-Afghan dialogue. The U.S. and the Taliban had agreed upon a week long ceasefire called reduction in violence(RIV) during the last week of February.

The Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has categorically said that the reduction in violence had ended and their operations will continue as normal. He also said that as per the US-Taliban agreement, Taliban would not attack foreign forces but their operations would continue against the Kabul administration forces.

The Doha agreement is more of a face saving for the U.S. The men and material loses forced the U.S. to capitulate signing the peace deal with the Taliban

Three people were killed and 11 injured in a motorcycle bomb attack at a football match in Khost on March 3, as the Taliban announced an end to a partial truce two days after signing a deal with the US.

The US-Taliban deal seems to be in jeopardy as the Afghan government refused to set free 5000 Taliban prisoners before the start of intra-Afghan dialogue saying the exchange of prisoner should be an agenda item of the dialogue. The Taliban have responded saying there will be no intra-Afghan dialogue before the release of their prisoners kept in Afghan jails by the Ghani government.

Although, the U.S. released a joint declaration with the Afghan government in Kabul the same day it signed off the Doha agreement, the Afghan President’s objection on the prisoner swap shows the Kabul was kept in the dark. President Ghani said that the U.S. doesn’t have the authority to make decisions about the prisoners in Afghan government custody and that it was just a facilitator between the Kabul and the Taliban to bring Taliban to the negotiating table. Ghani government believes the modalities of prisoner swap should be finalized during the intra-Afghan talks.

Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state, brushed off the Afghan president’s rejection of the key clause of the US-Taliban deal saying there have been prisoner releases from both sides before. He also expressed hope that talks would begin in the coming days between Afghanistan’s government and the Taliban, adding that Donald Trump would be actively engaged.

According to a New York Times’ report, the U.S. have spent USD $2 trillion during the past two decades in Afghan war – the longest war of its history. It lost around 2500 soldiers and thousands got injured. Of $2 trillion, 1.5 trillion was spent on war but the U.S. lost almost sixty percent Afghan territory to the Taliban. The U.S. spent $87 billion to train Afghanmilitary and police forces but the Afghan forces can’t support themselves. It spent $24 billion oneconomic development but most Afghans still live in poverty. U.S. spent $30 billion on otherreconstruction programs but much of that money was lost to corruption and failed projects.More than $350 billion has already gone to medical and disability care for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Experts say that more than half of that spending belongs to the Afghanistan effort.$10 billion on counternarcotic were spent but Afghanistan supplies 80 percent of the world’s heroin.The economic and military bleeding has forced the U.S to sign an agreement with a non-state actor,Taliban.

The accord was signed between an occupation force and a non-state actor. After spending two trillion dollars in two decades losing thousands of men and getting many more injured, if a superpower kneels down to sign an agreement with the non-state actor that has bled it militarily and economically, one can safely say the the superpower signed the instrument of surrender.

Also during the election year, Trump wants to make withdraw forces from Afghanistan to fulfill election promise of 2016 and to cash it during the forthcoming presidential election. The Doha agreement is more of a face saving for the U.S. The men and material loses forced the U.S. to capitulate signing the peace deal with the Taliban.

As for the Taliban, they have much to celebrate: a) They have forced a superpower to a deal; have got international recognition as a legitimate political force; c) have taken driving seat in the political settlement of the Afghan issue with a decisive role on the horizon.

The U.S. has a history of abandoning the Afghans causing the infight. AFTER the Soviet defeat, the U.S. didn’t facilitate forming a broad-based, multi-ethnic government in Kabul. IT created a mess and left instead. The way the Washington is handling the Afghan issue, the history could repeat itself. The U.S. is keeping both the Taliban and the Ghani government while only securing its own interest. IT has only sought guarantee from the Taliban of not attacking the U.S. and NATO forces. Afghan forces don’t have such luxury. A comprehensive ceasefire is left to the Afghans. THIS shows the U.S. intentions of managing a safe exit from the war-torn Afghanistan leaving behind the Afghans infighting.

*The writer is a journalist & analyst working at the International Desk of a news channel*