Teaching the Taliban the Wrong Lessons

What is the issue?

The statement by the Taliban official that the militant group was well on its way to global acceptance is a sign of all the wrong lessons the Taliban have taken from the reactions of the international community.

What does the statement signify?

- It is a sign of the confidence that the Taliban feels that their takeover of Kabul by force one year ago is a "done deal" for the world.
- Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri's killing in a recent U.S. drone strike on a home in Kabul is proof that the Taliban, including the Haqqanis who reportedly hosted Zawahiri, feel little pressure to keep their end of the bargain the world made with them in August 2021.
- Part of that bargain was the Doha agreement signed between the United States and the Taliban in 2020, which was endorsed by the UN Security Council.
- Out of the four, only one of those conditions was met, i.e., the U.S. and others withdrew all foreign troops from Afghanistan by August 2021.

Doha Agreement 2020

1. *Taliban guarantees that they would prevent the use of Afghan soil by international terrorist groups against the security of the U.S. and its allies*
2. *The U.S. and Coalition forces would provide a "timeline" for the withdrawal of forces*
3. *A political settlement for Afghanistan would arise from Taliban talks with the Afghan (Ghani) government*
4. *The Taliban would announce a ceasefire*

What promises were broken by the Taliban?

- Disregarding the three conditions in the Doha agreement
- Taking Kabul and the rest of the country by force
- Giving key portfolios to those still on the United Nation's designated terrorist list (for example, Sirajuddin Haqqani is Afghanistan's Acting Interior Minister)
- Refusing to form an inclusive government that brought in women, minorities, or even members of non-Taliban groups
- Keeping women out of an education, out of jobs, and out of sight in particular

What lessons were learnt by the Taliban?

- The first lesson the Taliban learnt was that they did not need to keep any promises to the U.S. or to the international community.
- The second lesson the Taliban have learnt is that stability and the lack of violence gives rise to international complacency.
- The next lesson the Taliban have learned is that the U.S. and its allies have bigger problems to deal with now.
- It is clear that concerns about human rights, democracy and the will of the people hold diminishing sway, even as global leaders pay lip service to democracy summits, religious freedom conferences and UN Security Council resolutions.

What is India's record on the Taliban government?

- In 1996, the government had formulated a three-pronged policy
    1. India would have no truck with the Taliban
    2. India would support the Northern Alliance forces led by Ahmad Shah Massoud by allowing their leadership to come to India with their families
    3. India extended shelter to more than 12,000 Afghan refugees who were able to flee Taliban rule
- This policy held India in good stead for the post-Taliban period 2001-2021.
- India was able to build a strong relationship with Afghanistan,
    - Became its first strategic partner,
    - Crafted a series of important infrastructure initiatives including Parliament, the Afghan-India Friendship (Salma) dam and the Zaranj-Delaram highway
    - Educated thousands of Afghan students, doctors and military cadets
- Two days after the Taliban takeover, India ratified the decision to shut down the Indian Embassy in Kabul
- India sought to extend help to Afghans who are looking towards India for assistance but has allowed only citizens and minorities with pre-existing long term visas to enter India, while closing the door to all others.
- It is particularly perplexing that India has opened talks at the highest levels with Taliban leaders, given its refusal for talks with Pakistan over the terror issue.
- India has joined the list of countries opening missions under the Taliban regime, but has yet to post a diplomat who can restart the process of consular and visa operations.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/teaching-the-taliban-the-wrong-lessons/article65724209.ece



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