U.S.-Taliban agreement

Why in News?

A deal has been signed between the United States of America (USA) and the Taliban insurgents in Doha.

What is this deal about?

- This deal could pave the way toward a full withdrawal of foreign soldiers from Afghanistan over the next 14 months.
- This will also represent a step towards ending the 18-year-war there.
- In October 2001, the U.S. went into Afghanistan after the 9/11 terror attacks with the goals of defeating terrorists and stabilising Afghanistan.
- Almost 19 years later, the U.S. now seeks to exit Afghanistan with assurances from the Taliban that,
    1. They will not allow Afghan soil to be used by transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and
    2. They would engage the Afghan government directly to find a lasting solution to the civil war.
- For U.S, the deal represents a chance to make good on his promise to bring U.S. troops home.

What did the war cost?

- For U.S., the Afghan war is estimated to have cost $2-trillion, with more than 3,500 American and coalition soldiers killed.
- Afghanistan lost the lives of many civilians and soldiers.
- After all these, the Taliban is at its strongest moment since the U.S. launched the war.
- The insurgents control or contest the government control in half of the country, mainly in its hinterlands.

What is the issue with this deal?

- The war had entered into a tie long ago and the U.S. failed to turn it around despite U.S. Presidents having sent additional troops.
- Faced with no other way, the U.S. just wants to leave Afghanistan. But the problem is with **the way it is getting out**.
- The fundamental issue with this deal is that it deliberately **excluded the**

Afghan government because the insurgents don't see the government as legitimate rulers.

- By giving in to the Taliban's demand, the U.S. has practically called into question the legitimacy of the government it backs.

What were the concessions made in the agreement?

- The Taliban was not pressed enough to declare a ceasefire.
- Both the sides settled for a 7-day "reduction of violence" period before signing the deal.
- The U.S. has committed to pull out its troops in a phased manner in return for the above-mentioned two assurances from the Taliban.
- But the Taliban has not made any promises on whether it would respect civil liberties or accept the Afghan Constitution.
- The Taliban got what it wanted i.e. the withdrawal of foreign troops without making any major concession.

What would be the impact?

- Security experts have called the deal a foreign policy gamble that would give the Taliban international legitimacy.
- The U.S. withdrawal will weaken the Kabul government, altering the balance of power both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table.
- A weakened government will have to talk with a resurgent Taliban.
- The U.S. in a bid to exit the war has practically abandoned the Kabul government and millions of Afghans who do not support the Taliban's violent, tribal Islamism, to the mercy of insurgents.

Source: The Hindu

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