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 reached 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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