

The signing of a peace accord between the Taliban and the United States doesn't augur well for India but is highly beneficial for Pakistan

Peace deal- Advantage Pakistan

There seems to be an air of uncertainty in Afghanistan, the US and Taliban are all set to tie the knot by signing the historic [peace accord](#) on February 29 following a ceasefire in hostilities for Reduction In Violence (RIV) for a period of seven days. However, the proposed "peace deal" to be agreed upon by the US and the Taliban is a pact fraught with a nightmare for India and the common Afghan people.

The conclusion of the peace accord comes at a time when the Taliban is not only at their zenith when it comes to their ability to launch large scale attacks inflicting mass casualties to the Afghan forces and the US-led forces but over half of the country is under Taliban control. On top of that the US requires Pakistan to "extricate" itself in the landlocked country, the campaign has cost the US taxpayer nearly \$1 trillion and over 2,400 personnel lives. Pakistan will invariably look to bolster its "strategic depth" in the country as the powerful Pakistani spy agency ISI is the ideological and military godfather of the Afghan Taliban. The peace deal will play right into the hands of the Pakistani spymasters who want to make the fullest use of the proxies in Afghanistan as a fertile zone for launching jihadist attacks on vital Indian project installations and to further destabilize India.



Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar with Zalmay Khalilzad at Munich Security Conference 2020.

India-intensifying steps to remain relevant

India has a lot at stake when it comes to the proposed peace deal, at a time when the Afghan security forces are finding it extremely difficult to contain the Taliban, it is necessary for New Delhi to make some tough but necessary calculations to contain the fallout of the agreement and possibly thwart Pakistan's attempts to scuttle Indian presence and to prevent the war-racked country from being exploited for nefarious designs of Pakistani proxies.

Firstly, it is imperative for New Delhi to intensify its negotiations with the Taliban, New Delhi signalled a change in its approach by sending two retired [career diplomats](#) to a peace summit Russia in November last year, it is just one of the many steps which is in its nascent

stages. New Delhi must try and actively bargain with the Taliban to maintain peace after the peace deal is signed and must undertake a concrete assurance that the country will not be used as a staging ground for jihadist attacks in the future. India's conversation with the Taliban can be much more sharply defined: [communicating](#) to the group that if it comes to power in Kabul, New Delhi would be willing to work with it, under certain circumstances.

Secondly, the whole spirit of the peace deal is meaningless if the Afghan government is excluded from the peace talks, it has largely occurred thanks to the recalcitrance of the US which has toed the Islamist line and agreed to exclude the Kabul based government, what is necessary for India is to sternly ask both the US and the Taliban that they must negotiate with the legitimate Afghan government and sign a separate peace accord with them.

Thirdly, a power-sharing agreement with the Taliban and the Afghan government with both sides having equal representation from the political class, intelligentsia and civil society members and from the moderate side of the hard-line militant group does augur well for the maintenance of the spirit of democracy.

Fourthly, a unique step is to intensify dialogue with the tribal elders which India can do through diplomatic and economic channels. India can also revive the now-defunct Northern Alliance by engineering unity among the anti-Taliban elements, although it looks like a risky step which can plunge Afghanistan into renewed chaos and a prolonged period of instability, that step can be taken if the Taliban reneges on its commitments of the peace deal.

Fifthly, India can strengthen institutional measures to hold Pakistan accountable for its terror financing, besides the FATF sword like a hanging fire, what is necessary for India is to collaborate with China and the western countries to choke the financial areas of operation of the Pakistani ISI which is the principle source of ideological and arms support to the Sunni jihadist group, in this context it is necessary to heed the advice of the Pakistan commentator Tilak Devasher that the only viable way of controlling the Taliban is to destroy the military jihadist nexus which exists in Pakistan. The clock is ticking.

Sixthly, India must step up its development assistance to Afghanistan, while India has emerged as the largest donor to Afghan projects (\$ 3billion), doing more is necessary. At the strategic level, engaging with emerging donors such as India in conflicted-affected states like Afghanistan is also important both for maintaining a development partnership with emerging donors and for sustaining such partnerships in conflict-affected countries. India has realized hundreds of smaller, less visible and harder to trace projects, including

community development ones. There is a lot of lot room where India can bolster its spending be it on defence, textiles, skill-building, pharmaceuticals, Afghanistan is a rare mineral-rich resource country and India is well-positioned to explore and develop such previously untapped areas.



US Troops in Afghanistan/NYT

Conclusion

The times are changing and in the aftermath of ISIS rise and fall; the world understands the devastating effect the Afghan imbroglio can cause to peace and security of the entire region if it left unchecked would entail horrific ramifications for the security of the South Asian region. At this stage, India needs to follow up the giant step it has just taken and reclaim its rightful place in the Af-Pak region to emerge as a regional behemoth. At the same time care needs to be taken to ensure that India can collaborate with the regional stakeholders to ensure lasting peace and amity in Afghanistan.

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