

# A BIG, BAD DEAL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON U.S.-TALIBAN AGREEMENT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The [deal signed between the U.S. and the Taliban](#) in Doha on Saturday sets the stage for America to wind down the longest war in its history. It [went into Afghanistan](#) in October 2001, a few weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks, with the goals of defeating terrorists and rebuilding and stabilising the central Asian country. Almost 19 years later, the U.S. seeks to exit Afghanistan with assurances from the Taliban that the insurgents will not allow Afghan soil to be used by transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and that they would engage the Kabul government directly to find a lasting solution to the civil war. America's desperation is understandable. The Afghan war is estimated to have cost \$2-trillion, with more than 3,500 American and coalition soldiers killed. Afghanistan lost hundreds of thousands of people, both 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. The war had entered into a stalemate long ago and the U.S. failed to turn it around despite both American Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump 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.

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The fundamental issue with the U.S.'s Taliban engagement is that it deliberately excluded the Afghan government because the insurgents do not 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. Second, the U.S. has made several concessions to the Taliban in the agreement. The Taliban was not pressed enough to declare a ceasefire. Both sides settled for a seven-day "reduction of violence" period before signing the deal. The U.S., with some 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, has committed to pull them out in a phased manner in return for the Taliban's assurances that it would sever ties with other terrorist groups and start talks with the Kabul government. But the Taliban, whose rule is known for strict religious laws, banishing women from public life, shutting down schools and unleashing systemic discrimination on religious and ethnic minorities, has not made any promises on whether it would respect civil liberties or accept the Afghan Constitution. The Taliban got what it wanted — the withdrawal of foreign troops — without making any major concession. Lastly, the U.S. withdrawal will invariably 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 desperate bid to exit the Afghan 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.

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