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THE IMPACT OF DOHA PEACE AGREEMENT ON PAKISTAN

¹Samiullah, ²Dr. Mazhar Islam, ³Sanaullah, ⁴Shakeel Iqbal, ⁵Rafeed Ullah Khan

¹Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Peshawar University, Pakistan.
Sanavip87@gmail.com

² Lecturer of Sociology, Department of Social Work & Sociology, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), Kohat- Pakistan. Email: mazharislam@kust.edu.pk

³ Department of, Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.
Ipcslcsp@gmail.com

⁴Lecturer of Sociology, Islamia College University Peshawar- Pakistan, shakeel@icp.edu.pk

⁵ PhD Scholar, University of Peshawar. Email: hilalkhanbannu1@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Americans and the Taliban signed a deal, for Bringing Peace in Afghanistan, in Doha on 29 February 2020 to end the war in Afghanistan which Afghans have suffered for two decades. This study aims to find out the overall impact of the Doha agreement on Pakistan. The study is qualitative in nature by using an exploratory method. On contrast, there are certain spoilers within Afghanistan and in the region that are against peaceful Afghanistan, which could reduce the success chances of this agreement. The Doha peace agreement has very positive repercussions for Pakistan, particularly on its security and trade. Pakistan should continue their support of this peace deal because peace in Afghanistan means peace in Pakistan.

Introduction

According to Robert Malley "No agreement is perfect, and the US-Taliban deal is no exception". The agreement was signed between America and the Taliban on 29 Feb in Doha the main objective was to bring peace to Afghanistan and to end the longest war in the history of the US. The deal central points are; the soil of Afghanistan will not use in the future by any group against the US and its allies, a timeline of 14 months for pull-outs of all US and NATO troops from Afghanistan, and once these both terms completed, the intra-Afghan dialogue will launch on 10 March to discuss

various issues such as the future set up of Afghan government and power-sharing process in Afghanistan. There are certain hurdles in the way of this agreement that decrease the probability of triumphing in this deal in the future. Firstly, the Afghan government was not part of this peace deal. Secondly, there were some groups in the leadership of the Taliban certain were in favour of this agreement, while a few were against this deal. They say that we will not give up the fight and lay down our arms (Grant, 2020). Moreover, the hasty US withdrawal gives space to the Taliban to target the Afghan army and it is difficult for them to secure themselves because they do not have the capability to fight against the Taliban because the Americans are providing training to Afghan security forces, advanced weapons and air support to them. Once US forces depart from Afghanistan, the Afghan forces will be automatically weak and will not have the power to fight against the Taliban. So, the abrupt withdrawal of all American forces from Afghanistan will restart the civil war-like situation. Finally, there is also a tussle between Dr Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani about who will be the next president of Afghanistan. This will also negatively impact on intra-Afghan negotiations as well.

Literature Review

The 9/11 assaults on US territory nearly killed 3000 people. In a response, America blamed al-Qaeda for these attacks. America said at that time that the Taliban were providing shelter to the leader of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan when the Taliban refused to give Osman bin Laden when U.S-led coalition forces invaded on 7 October 2001. The US forces and their allies entered Afghanistan first. They toppled the Taliban regime, which had been in power since 1996 in Kabul. The US increases the forces from time to time. Barack Obama took his first military decision in 2009. The Obama administration deployed an additional 17,000 US troops to Afghanistan to reduce insurgency (Reuters Staff) and raised American soldiers to 100,000 in 2010 and overall forces were 150,000 in Afghanistan (Aljazeera).

The first negotiation started when the former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, offered the Taliban a peace talk in 2007, but the Taliban rejected it and said when there are foreign troops present in our territory, there is no place for negotiation. Furthermore, Karzai gave the offer of loyal Jirga to the Taliban that we could resolve all the issues in loyal Jirga, but the Taliban did not agree. In May 2010, for the second time, Hamid Karzai at the United States Institute of Peace stated that "peace talks would be with the Taliban and other militant groups who are not part of the terrorist group al-Qaeda. In 2010, the Obama regime also changed its mind and allowed political negotiation to resolve the war in Afghanistan. Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, and the US came to an agreement in 2016 to eradicate the war in Afghanistan between Afghans and the Taliban. The first round of negotiations started in Pakistan and the Taliban were also part of that deal, but the death of Mullah Mansoor

by drone strike by the US in 2016 annulled that peace process in Islamabad. Besides, in 2018, Trump entered into a direct dialogue with the Taliban without including the Kabul regime. Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as envoy, as a special representative for reconciliation for Afghanistan. Khalilzad had a lot of meetings with the Taliban, Pakistan, and other regional governments about the resolution of the Afghan war. After many visits by Khalilzad to Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Russia, India, Turkey, and Qatar, some success on February 14, 2020, when the Taliban finally agreed to reduce violence in Afghanistan. After two weeks of de-escalation in Afghanistan, both the Taliban and the US signed a deal on 29 February 2020 in Doha.

Objectives

1. To analyse the Doha peace deal's impact on Pakistan's security, trade, smuggling, refugees.
2. To Probe the Doha Peace deal on India's influence in Afghanistan

Research Methodology

The nature of the study is qualitative to learn about the effects of the Doha peace deal on Pakistan and the future of Afghanistan when American and NATO forces exit Afghanistan. Data was collected through face-to-face and telephonic interviews with famous politicians, NGO representatives, media people, defence analysts, and different journals, articles, reports, editorials, and academic papers. Journalists, defence analysts, and professors were the sampled in the study. Interviews scheduled were followed regarding the aforementioned objectives.

Results and Discussion

Impact on Bilateral trade

Afghanistan is a landlocked country. The trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan has major geopolitical and economic importance for both countries. Pakistan remained Afghanistan's largest trading partner until 2015, when the trade volume totalled approximately \$3 billion. Due to political turmoil as well as the rising Indian influence, the trade declined to around \$8 million. Both countries are also famous for their beautiful tourist spots and their natural resources. According to US Geological research, about \$1 trillion worth of natural raw materials are present on Afghan soil. Pakistan can invest and also assist in exploiting these natural resources and even combine them with its own mineral resources to take advantage of a larger scale of production. Pakistan can also develop the hydroelectricity and irrigation potential of the Kabul River as another mutual benefit. However, for sustainable trade, some conditions are important, such as visa policies for business cannot be strict, investment-friendly visas and people-to-people

contact are also necessary. Pakistan and Pakistan can sign free trade agreements which will help businessmen and Pakistan boost exports to Kabul, which will have a very positive effect on both countries' economies. Afghanistan is totally dependent on foreign funding when the US leaves, so the economy will collapse (US watchdog). At that time, Pakistan has the best opportunity to boost trade relations. Pakistan can also supply various commodities through Afghanistan to Central Asia and then Europe, which was the dream of Pakistan for a long period of time. Once these goods reach European countries, then Pakistan can export different products every year, which can stabilize the fragile economy of Pakistan.

Security Impact

In 2001, when the US and their allies forces invaded Afghanistan, the country which most suffered was only Pakistan in terms of the economy and security. Pakistan lost 65,000 people, both soldiers and civilians, in the last 17 years in the so-called war on terror (Dawn News) and Pakistan also lost \$123bn in terms of the economy (the news, Mar 2021). Pakistan not only lost individuals and revenue, but Pakistan's image also deteriorated throughout the world. Few foreign tourists and cricket players came to Pakistan because of security threats. It was because of the war on terror that the Pakistan government was facilitating the US in the Afghan war. Currently, there are various extremist groups involved in state-sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan and they use Afghan soil against Pakistan. These groups not only attack the Pakistani army but they also attack innocent civilians. When US forces leave Afghanistan, the government of Pakistan can work with the new regime in Kabul and terminate different insurgent groups like TTP, IS, and Al-Qaida. Pakistan will face multiple national security challenges once the US exits from Afghanistan. Moreover, the withdrawal of foreign forces gives an opportunity for these militant groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other regional countries to try to increase their influence in the region. However, if Islamabad and Kabul regimes can work together to abolish these groups who are present in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, it will not be possible until and unless with the help of sharing intelligence information between both countries. So, in this way, the national security situation will be improved, which could have a positive impact on Pakistan's economy, which means that people from different countries will come to Pakistan for tourism as well as for sports, and Pakistan can generate a lot of revenue alone from tourism.

India Can No Longer Use Afghan Territory against Pakistan

India's influence will be reduced in Afghanistan because India uses both the current Afghan government and also Afghan land against Pakistan for terrorist activities. So, once the US leaves Afghanistan, the influence of India will be reduced and the state sponsor of terrorism will also decrease in Pakistan because India is supporting different terrorist groups like the

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State (ISIS), which operate in Afghanistan against Pakistan. India provides funding, training, and weapons to these extremist groups. ISIS attacks in Baluchistan killed 11 Shia Hazara people who were working on a coal mine. ISIS claimed responsibility in January 2021. The Pakistan Prime Minister 'blamed India for backing ISIS for spreading terrorism in Pakistan'. When the US pulls out of Afghanistan, it will be the best opportunity for Islamabad to work with the new government of Afghanistan to eradicate terrorism in both countries with the help of sharing intelligence information with each other. So, in these circumstances, the existence of these insurgent groups that India is supporting against Pakistan will be very challenging for these insurgent groups. As a result, India cannot use Afghan soil against Pakistan.

Impact on Afghan Refugees

Pakistan is hosting 1.4 million Afghan refugees, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency (2021). Most of these refugees have settled in Peshawar and Baluchistan. There are some 100,000 Afghan refugees living in Islamabad, according to the interior ministry. Pakistan is an underdeveloped country; these refugees are creating many complications day by day and also having some negative impacts on Pakistan's economy as well. There is a strong social-economic effect on the Pakistan economy of these Afghan refugees. In contrast, most of them have settled, so they put a lot of burden on the revenue-generating capacity of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). The support of these refugees from the government of Pakistan and international aid organizations is not enough to satisfy their basic needs. They captured many labor markets, shares in transportation, purchased land, and opened various types of shops, especially in KPK, which increased unemployment in Pakistan. These refugees are also involved in illegal weapons and drugs sent from Afghanistan to Pakistan. This has become a major beneficial business for most of these Afghan refugees. As a result, a large number of Pakistani youths have become addicted to opium and heroin. Pakistan's government can talk with the new regime in Kabul about the return of these refugees to Afghanistan. When these refugees go back, it will eradicate the drug culture, unemployment, and smuggling, which will decrease the extra burden of refugees on Pakistan's economy.

Reduction in Smuggling on the Torkham Border

The Torkham border is a cross-border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, smuggling millions of rupees of goods daily into Pakistan, and to transfer these goods they use small kids, girls, and old people. So, these illegal items are transferred to Pakistan from Afghanistan without paying any tax to the Pakistan government. As a result, the government of Pakistan lost billions of rupees every year. When these illegal goods are moving into Pakistan, they give some bribes to these Khassadar personnel. The smugglers use these main

routes: Gandab Torkham, Angoor, Ada Chaman, and Parachinar, through which goods are smuggled from Afghanistan's border to Pakistan. Sometimes, Indian and Israeli spy agents also use these routes to spread terrorism in Pakistan. After this peace deal, when the new regime comes in Afghanistan, both governments can work together and reduce the border smuggling issues because it is not in the favour of both countries. If both governments legalize these illegal goods in the form of trade, in this way, no government can lose millions of dollars in the form of illegal trade, which could affect the economies of both countries.

Conclusion

Peace in Afghanistan is linked with the whole region, specifically in Pakistan, because if there is peace in Afghanistan, there is peace in Pakistan. Firstly, no country can use their proxy in Afghanistan against each other. Secondly, the location of Afghanistan is very important because it connects three regions: the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. So, when there is peace in Afghanistan, this region can go on a development slide and these regions can work with each other on different main issues like terrorism, poverty, trade, health, research, education, human rights, border conflict, and internal conflicts, which can improve the lives of their people who have suffered for decades, specifically Afghanistan and Pakistan. Furthermore, the government of Pakistan can go to every extent to bring peace on Afghan soil, because if there is peace in Afghanistan, there will be peace in Pakistan. Islamabad can improve trade relations, internal security will be improved, terrorism will also be reduced because most of it is operating from Afghanistan, and the refugee burden on the Pakistani economy will also be lifted. As a result, these indicators can improve the fragile economy of Pakistan, which was affected by the war on terror. However, India is playing a very negative role. India does not want peace in Afghanistan because if peace comes in Afghanistan, they can no longer use Afghan soil and the Kabul regime against Pakistan. India supports terrorist groups by providing weapons, intelligence information, training on Afghan soil in Indian consulates, and other sophisticated equipment as well.

Recommendations

1. All the neighboring countries and external forces should not use their proxies in Afghanistan for their own benefit. As a result, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is always tense.
2. All the stakeholders (Taliban, the Afghan government, and warlords) within Afghanistan should unite for the sake of the people who have been suffering for almost three decades and decide their future themselves, not by some external countries. They should also stop fighting with each other and not give space to other countries to intervene in their land.

3. The Taliban should not allow any terrorist groups in the future to threaten the soil of Afghanistan.
4. The Kabul regime has to release all the prisoners of the Taliban and the Taliban has to release the Afghan security and decide on a ceasefire for a couple of months. This will help build confidence between both parties.
5. In Afghanistan 80% of the budget is assistance by the US and other international donors. The international community, especially America, financial institutions, and other countries, should arrange an economic package for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.
6. Neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia, and China should improve their relations with the new government which will be formed. There are a lot of natural resources in Afghanistan, so these countries should invest, give scholarships to Afghan students, work visas, and improve trade ties with the future regime of Afghanistan.
7. UN Peace Building should also start their operations for the reconstruction of schools, universities, hospitals, roads, and infrastructure. These missions have to observe human rights violations, especially women's rights, political setup, and security.
8. America should withdraw all private security contractors, especially Blackwater, which is one of the largest private armies in the world, and it was also the demand of the Taliban as well.

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