

Withdrawal of US Troops from Afghanistan

Why in News

America's latest plan to speed up the withdrawal of more troops from Afghanistan may jeopardize the fragile **peace process** underway in Afghanistan.

Key Points

India's Stand:

- India has been concerned that the Afghan peace process and premature withdrawal of NATO/US coalition forces could leave opportunities for terrorist networks that could target both Afghanistan and India.
- As recently as May of this year, the UN issued a report providing evidence that despite
 assurances from the Taliban to the United States, Al Qaeda is still present and active
 in Afghanistan, harboured by the Taliban.
 - In India, Al Qaeda continues to run a propaganda campaign that seeks to capitalise on differences between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority.
- At a recent <u>United Nations Security Council (UNSC)</u> meeting, convened under the Arria Formula (informally convened at the request of a UNSC member), India called for an "immediate comprehensive ceasefire" in Afghanistan, while welcoming all opportunities to bring peace to the country.
 - India also described its <u>reconstruction and development assistance</u> to Afghanistan over the last nearly two decades.
 - According to India, for durable peace in Afghanistan, there is a need to put an end to terrorist safe havens and sanctuaries operating across the Durand Line (in reference to Pakistan).
 - The Durand Line is the **international 2,670 km land border** between Afghanistan and Pakistan in South-Central Asia.
- India outlined four requirements for peace and stability in Afghanistan:
 - First, the process had to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.
 - Second, there must be zero tolerance for terrorism.
 - Third, the gains of the last two decades cannot be lost.
 - In particular, India is convinced that the rights of women need to be strongly protected. Further, the rights of the minorities and the vulnerable need to be safeguarded.
 - India has invested heavily in various Infrastructure projects in the region, for example Zaranj Delaram Highway, Afghan Parliament etc.
 - Fourth, the **transit rights** of Afghanistan should not be used by countries "to extract political price from Afghanistan".
 - A **reference to Pakistan** obstructing the flow of persons and materials

- outside of Afghanistan, impacting, for instance, India-Afghanistan trade.
- India assured Afghanistan of its support in its quest for peace during India's UNSC term.
 - India's two year term on the non-permanent seat will begin on 1st January 2021.

China's Stand:

- China has called on foreign troops to leave Afghanistan in an orderly and responsible manner, give terrorist forces no breathing space and contribute to Afghanistan peace and reconciliation process.
- China is concerned that the war-torn country Afghanistan, which shares borders with the volatile Xinjiang province of China, could become a breeding ground for <u>Uighur Muslim</u> <u>militants</u>.
 - Uighur is a predominantly Turkic-speaking ethnic group. They are primarily confined in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang and is one of the largest Muslim group in that region.
 - China insists that **Uighur militants are waging a violent campaign for an independent state** by plotting bombings, sabotage, and civic unrest.
 - China has faced international criticism over allegations that it is holding over a
 million people, mostly ethnic Uyghurs, in internment camps in Xinjiang to curb
 religious extremism.
- USA's withdrawal also coincides with its move to lift the ban on the Uighur militant group - the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).
 - China is averse to ETIM, an al-Qaeda backed militant group regrouping in Afghanistan to carry out attacks in Xinjiang.
 - ETIM was designated as a terrorist organisation by the <u>UN's 1267</u> counterterrorism committee in 2002 for its alleged association with al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden and the Taliban.

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