

Afghan Violence Unveils Critical Pinholes in US-Taliban Agreement

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Just over two months into the “[Agreement](#) for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan” between Afghan Taliban and the US on February 29, the conflict-stricken country is witnessing a sharp escalation in violence as the insurgent group has stepped up its attacks on national defense forces.

Between March 1 and April 15, the Taliban militants mounted more than 4,500 attacks in Afghanistan that were 70% more as compared to the same period of last year – Reuters [reported](#) on Friday citing several sets of data.

Armed faction spurned the statistics and claimed that their attacks had dropped 54.7% to 537, killing 54.2% fewer members of Afghan security forces. They also accused the US for jeopardizing the agreement by supporting the Afghan military and delaying the release of 5,000 Taliban’s combat and political prisoners, a key part of the treaty.

Even though Pentagon spokesperson Jonathon Hoffman complained that the surge in hostilities was “unacceptably high” and “not conducive to a diplomatic solution” – the recent escalation of violence identified some critical pinholes in the US-Taliban accord that allowed the militants to kill more than 900 local and national forces, almost double from prior year’s 520.

The agreement rested the key [agenda](#) of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire on the intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations. In so doing, the US left a crucial vacuum in the pact that permitted Taliban to scale up the attacks and upheaval to prevail in the strife-torn Afghanistan.

John Sopko, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in his letter to the US Congress accompanying quarterly report faintly touched the issue.

“Although not all such attacks are expressly prohibited by the text, U.S. officials had said they expected the level of violence to remain low after the agreement came into effect,” Spoko said.

So the “historic” deal, hyped as a gateway to peace in Afghanistan, did not lead the road to an all-inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue. Instead, it constituted a messy environment where neither of the sides was constricted to cut back on violence, the only way to restore stability in the country.

By seeking Taliban to “prevent the use of Afghan soil by any group or individual against the security of the United States and its allies” **ONLY** – the American envoy deliberately undermined the territorial integrity of regional stakeholders – China and Russia in particular – which also wielded intense efforts to make the negotiations successful.

As Washington bartered its security and lives of the US-led NATO troops for providing a timeline for withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan – the deed was bluntly an exchange of guarantees between Taliban and the US.

Right off the bat, it appeared to be a process of extending pledges rather than a course of a political dialogue in which Taliban clearly had the predominant edge and the US was forced to kneel down and capitulate to the armed group for the safety of its assets and forces.

While Taliban intensifies their attacks, the US may dub the [level](#) of strikes against the Afghan military “unacceptably high” and plead for reduction in violence. But it cannot term assaults an infringement of the agreement simply because the arrangement never stipulated the insurgents to cease hostilities.

The key to durable and sustainable peace in Afghanistan was inevitably an all-embracing intra-Afghan dialogue that was scheduled to kick off on March 10 after prisoners swap though yet to kick off. The opacity about the release of detainees has made the prospect of the peace in country much more distant.

In a rare Twitter spat with his Taliban counterpart Zabihullah Mujahid on Saturday, Col. Sonny Leggett of the US military spokesperson in Afghanistan [stressed](#) on the necessity of reducing violence and returning to the political path to stem the spread of the Covid-19. Mujahid rejoined with the demand to implement the Doha agreement.

Peace in Afghanistan is in the interest of Afghan people and region and it cannot be achieved without unswerving political interaction and reduction in violence. But it is a matter not to be discussed between the military spokespersons on a social media platform; it should have been deliberated earlier and incorporated in the agreement too.

After shielding its interests, the US signed the covenant in haste to dispense with the Afghan impasse. It didn’t really make a serious effort to persuade Taliban on moderating attacks on Afghan forces that was essentially required for triggering peace in the country.

The typical display of the US behavior, to turn its back on international community or allies after meeting its objectives, had raised doubts over its integrity before and questions its plausibility again as it [urges](#) Taliban to pay heed to global call to end violation and focus on the Covid-19.

As Afghanistan sees a [spike](#) in the coronavirus patients and Afghan government and Taliban have shown [readiness](#) to at least partially release the prisoners to accelerate the peace process and contain the spread of the killer bug – both the sides should slowly cap the role of foreign military intervention in their country and move forward with a political will that is indeed the path to any dispute resolution.

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