

The U.S.-Taliban Peace Deal: Two-level Game Logic and Actors' Payoffs

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Abstract : This article aims at analyzing the U.S.-Taliban peace deal considering the cross- pressures that both parties (U.S. and Taliban) faced and eventually paved the way for a negotiated settlement to the two-decade-long war. The paper first discusses the peace process initiated by President Obama in 2009 and then explores the factors that compelled both the parties to sign this deal. The study is based on secondary data and interviews done with the leading experts on Afghanistan along with the Taliban Qatar office spokesperson's interview. The theoretical framework is based on the interplay of diplomacy and domestic politics: two-level games logic proposed by Robert D. Putnam. The two-level games suggest that actors involved in negotiations face cross-pressures and are constrained both by the expectations of the domestic audience and their counterpart's zone of possible agreement. This paper will take the cross pressures for both sides as the permissive factors for the entire process of negotiations. However, there will be a slight aberration in the application of Putnam's two-level games. In this case, it is not inter-state negotiations but between an all-powerful state and the unyielding non-state actors. The study concludes that both the parties faced domestic as well as international pressure which compelled them to sign a deal that could lead to an end of the two-decade-long war. Furthermore, it looks at the potential prospects and challenges of the deal following the U.S. withdrawal.

Keywords : neo-Taliban insurgency, negotiations, two-level game, U.S.-Taliban peace deal, U.S. withdrawal

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