

# Will There be Peace in Afghanistan Under Biden?

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*While it is well known that international treaties and agreements signed are not a personal contract between political leaders, but rather certain obligations between states, the United States has repeatedly shown the world that it does not care about such norms of international law. Hence the entire structure of the international legal framework, be it the international agreements limiting the arms race, the nuclear deal with Iran, or other agreements to resolve recent armed conflicts, is collapsing through the USA's fault. The activity of international organizations suffers as well, with Washington giving notice of withdrawal from UNESCO, WHO or some other international institution only at its whim, thereby openly blackmailing them.*

All of Washington's policies in recent years are evidence that the United States has long ceased to be a treaty-minded country.

Therefore, international efforts, in which the United States participates, to resolve conflicts, to reduce armed confrontation in different regions or to establish denuclearization zones, in particular on the Korean Peninsula, have ceased to bring results. Not believing the official signatures of one of the main international actors — the US — countries continue arms race, accumulating a dangerous potential of various weapons, creating their own military alliances, increasing the level of danger of another war in one region or another.

A good example of this is the development of the situation in Afghanistan, where, during “Trump's short era,” certain steps were taken to end the armed conflict in the country and to reduce the foreign military presence there, as one of the main conditions for resolving the situation. Recall, in particular, how on October 7, 2020, Donald Trump wrote on his Twitter page that all US troops still remaining there should return from Afghanistan by the end of 2020. This was due to the peace agreement signed on February 29, 2020 in Doha between the US administration and the radical Taliban movement (an organization banned in Russia), under which the United States, its allies and the coalition declared their intention to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan within 14 months. Then, in mid-January, the United States announced a partial, though not total, reduction of its military contingent in Afghanistan to 2,500 people. Nevertheless, there was still time for the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan at the end of April this year, as stipulated in the Doha agreement...

To say the least, the process of the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, where they have been for 19 years, wasted \$2 trillion of US taxpayers' money, lost over 2,300 soldiers, and more than 20,000 soldiers and officers of the US army paid for this adventure of American politicians with their health and injuries, was not easy.

There have been periodic disputes and incidents between the signatories to the Doha Agreement. In an attempt to substitute the withdrawal of US troops and to prevent its actual reduction of military presence in the country, Washington has been actively replacing US soldiers by PMCs, which have recently been actively increasing in number, and this was very critically perceived by the Taliban, to the point of escalating armed clashes.

Trump's plans to reduce the US military presence in Afghanistan were also opposed by Democrat-supported political forces, not only in the United States but also in Western Europe. And a clear manifestation of this was the statement of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in mid-November 2020 about the "concern" of the North Atlantic bloc about such intentions of Trump, because, according to Stoltenberg, in such a development NATO, whose contingent in Afghanistan is 50% composed of American troops, will have to make "a difficult decision." The NATO countries have decided to take the decision on the continued presence in Afghanistan in February 2021, after the inauguration of US President-elect Joe Biden, to orient themselves to the new course of Washington, Alliance Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on December 1.

And now, the new US President Joe Biden has already begun his duties, starting "his era" with a fundamental review of the policies of the previous US president, in the first hours after his inauguration repealing five of Trump's executive orders. As part of "adjusting" Trump's policy, the new president will certainly make some changes to the US strategy in Afghanistan, which, despite Joe Biden's multiple campaign declarations, is not yet clear.

For instance, Joe Biden has said that his first priority after winning the presidential election would be to get US troops back from Afghanistan and negotiate with the Taliban, leaving only a small contingent of special forces in the Central Asian country "to counter potential threats" - in case the United States cannot come to "a sufficiently acceptable agreement on combating terrorism." However, Trump's decision to completely withdraw US troops from Afghanistan was critically received not only in US political circles, but also in Europe. In this regard, through Afghan lawmakers — supporters of US policy — a call has already been prepared for Biden to reconsider the agreement made by the Trump administration with the Taliban, including the clause requiring the full withdrawal of coalition troops. However, this would mean that the US would not only have to break the Doha Agreement, but would also have to resume the war.

This position on the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan is actively promoted by the US industrial circles, given the fact that the country occupies an important geostrategic position, and in addition to the United States, a number of countries, including China, Iran, Russia and Pakistan are interested in it. In particular, China is already demonstrating its willingness to fill the vacuum after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, to monopolize commodities and rare earth elements, and to invest in Afghanistan, something the US has never done. Back in 2008, Beijing signed an agreement with the Afghan authorities to develop the Aynak copper deposit, the value of the non-ferrous metal reserves in which can be up to \$50 billion, and also obtained the right to develop oil deposits in the Amu Darya River basin, which was suspended in 2013.

Under these circumstances, and clearly unwilling to let go of Afghanistan's natural wealth, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan held telephone conversations with his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib on January 23 and made it clear that the United States intends to revise the 2020 Doha agreement with the Taliban. This includes assessing whether the Taliban (a movement banned in the Russian Federation) are fulfilling their commitments to sever ties with terrorist groups, reduce violence in Afghanistan, and engage in constructive negotiations with the Afghan government and other stakeholders. In general, he made it clear that if Biden's concerns about Taliban links with other terrorist groups are not resolved, the US will insist on maintaining a limited US military contingent on Afghan territory.

But this will certainly cause serious disagreements in US relations with the Taliban, who will continue to push for a full withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, including by escalating the armed confrontation in that country...

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*Vladimir Danilov, political observer, exclusively for the online magazine "[New Eastern Outlook](#)".*

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