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Qatar's triangle diplomacy with Turkey and Taliban (Afghanistan)



In Afghanistan, the United States withdrew and the Islamic fundamentalist organization Taliban grabbed power. The United States decided to withdraw in March 2020 by the Trump administration¹. The Taliban opened an office in Doha, the capital of Qatar, in 2013². The United States negotiated with Taliban through its office. The Trump administration planned that the US would withdraw peacefully by

the end of 2021 when the Taliban and the current government would form a transitional administration. President Biden announced that the withdrawal deadline would be advanced by the end of August, 2021. It was just few days before the 20th anniversary of 9/11.

However, the Taliban defeated the government troops overwhelmingly earlier than expected. They invaded the capital city of Kabul before the US military withdrew safely. As Afghan government troops collapsed, the United States had to secure the Kabul International Airport by itself to carry out emergency evacuation. Major Western countries such as Britain and Germany also sent military aircraft. They also urgently transferred not only their own nationals but also foreign diplomats and civilians including Japanese people. Many foreign governments promised that local staff of the embassy and their families could be safely escaped. However, the Taliban invaded into Kabul so swift that most of the staff and their family were left behind.

Turkey and Qatar showed a strong presence in the turmoil. Turkey was part of the NATO army in maintaining security in Afghanistan. They agreed to continue the operation of Kabul Airport at the request of NATO allies³. Turkey is the only one Islamic State in NATO. They can communicate with the Islamist Taliban. The United States also urged Qatar to maintain commercial flights between Kabul and Doha⁴. If Qatar Airways continues its flight, it will be possible to secure an escape route for foreigners left in Afghanistan or Afghan people who wish to leave the country. (Though it is a question whether the Taliban government allows their citizens to leave the country or not.).

The Taliban also requested both countries to retain Turkish troops for airport operation and continue Qatar Airways in service⁵. The Taliban intend to make Afghanistan open to foreign countries rather than leaving it completely isolated. They regretted that the first Taliban

administration having Islamic extremism from 1996 to 2001 resulted in the isolation of Afghanistan from the world. Qatar, Turkey and the Taliban (Afghanistan) formed a diplomatic triangle.

The relationship between Qatar and Turkey has been deepened since 2017 when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain severed the diplomatic ties with Qatar. They blamed that Qatar maintained diplomatic relations with Iran and supported the Muslim Brotherhood. Four countries have designated the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist organizations. Then Qatar depended on Turkey. Qatar asked Turkey to increase the number of Turkish troops to tighten the security. Qatar also switched the importation of necessary foods and goods from GCC countries to Turkey. The relation enabled two countries to cooperate smoothly in the emergency of Afghanistan.

In addition, the United States has strong relationship with Turkey and Qatar respectively. Turkey is the ally of NATO with the United States. The United States relied on Turkey when all of Western troops withdrew from Afghanistan. In fact, Turkey is not always reliable for the United States taking into consideration that they introduced a missile system from Russia⁶. The United States got angry, but US had no alternatives.



Regarding the relationship between the United States and Qatar, the US has Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the largest air force base in the Middle East. When US troops evacuated from Afghanistan, military aircrafts made a frequent round trip between Kabul International Airport and Udeid air base. The US air force base in Qatar is as important as the its naval base in Bahrain to watch Middle East.

Western countries closed the embassy in Kabul, and opened a temporary one in Doha. Japanese Embassy in Kabul has also moved from Kabul to Doha via Istanbul. Japanese Government also dispatched a high-ranking diplomat, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, to Doha. Following the visit by US Secretary of State, German Foreign Minister and British Foreign Minister visited Qatar one after another. French President Emmanuel Macron met with Emir of Qatar at the Iraq Summit in August, 2021.

It is necessary to keep an eye on Qatar related to the future of Afghanistan.

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¹ US, Taleban sign historic deal to withdraw troops

2020/2/29 Kuwait Times

<https://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/us-taliban-sign-historic-deal-to-withdraw-troops/>

² Gulf Times

<http://www.gulf-times.com/qatar/178/details/356681/taliban-%e2%80%98set-to-open-office-in-doha%e2%80%99>

Taliban 'set to open office in Doha'

³ Turkey offers to guard, run Kabul airport after NATO withdrawal

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-offers-to-guard-run-kabul-airport-after-nato-withdrawal>

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⁴ US, Qatar and Turkey discuss operation of Kabul airport

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1924216/middle-east>

2021/9/7 Arab News

⁵ Qatari FM Al-Thani meets Taliban's Akhund in Afghan capital

<https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/qatari-fm-al-thani-meets-talibans-akhund-in-afghan-capital>

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⁶ Refer to 'Countries sneaking in the political vacuum of the Middle East'

<http://ocininitiative.maeda1.jp/202012PoliticalVacuumInMeEnglish.pdf>