

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH TALIBAN LED AFGHANISTAN

Manjeet khasa

Research Scholar, Om Sterling Global University

Hisar, Haryana

Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh

Associate Professor, Political Science Dept (SSH)

Om Sterling Global University

Hisar, Haryana

ABSTRACT

Afghanistan is completely surrounded by land on all sides. Because of its location, Afghanistan plays an important role not only in the area but also in the world. It is primarily its one-of-a-kind geostrategic location that has made it such an important topic on the superpowers' agendas for international politics. It is strategically located at the intersection of West Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia. Afghanistan's stability is important for India's own security but, since 9/11 India was sidelined from many Western-led discussions regarding the country. Following the announcement that 2014 would mark the end of large-scale Western troop deployment many Indian policy-makers have felt somewhat vindicated in their parallel bilateral engagement with Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Taliban are a Deobandi Islamic fundamentalist, militant Islamist, and jihadist political movement. They also refer to themselves by the name of their state, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Taliban also refer to themselves as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Between the years 1996 and 2001, it maintained control over nearly three-quarters of the country before being deposed as a direct result of the invasion by the United States. After years of insurgency, it retook control of Kabul on August 15, 2021, and it is currently in control of the entire country, despite the fact that its government has not yet been recognised by any other nation. The government of Afghanistan under the Taliban has been condemned for its repressive stance towards human rights in the country, particularly the rights of women and girls to hold jobs and receive an education. India's policy has, from the very beginning, had as its primary goal the prevention of Pakistan's re-embedding in Afghanistan's strategic and political landscape.

Keywords: Foreign, Policy, Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is completely surrounded by land on all sides. Because of its location, Afghanistan plays an important role not only in the area but also in the world. It is primarily its one-of-a-kind geostrategic location that has made it such an important topic on the superpowers' agendas for international politics. It is strategically located at the intersection of West Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia. Its northern border is

shared with Central Asia, its eastern border is with the province of Xining in China, its western border is with Iran, and its southwestern border is with Pakistan. The unique geostrategic position that Afghanistan holds in the South Asian region is a significant factor that has contributed to the formation of the country's history, economics, ethnic diversity, and political situation in the region. Afghanistan occupies this position. Afghanistan is still very important for India's security and power domination in the area, despite the fact that India does not share borders with Afghanistan. This is especially true given the fact that Pakistan has played a politically active role in Afghanistan. In September 1996, India evacuated its diplomatic post in Kabul because the city was under the control of the Taliban at the time. India, much like the majority of other nations, did not recognise the regime of the Taliban. The Taliban rule was recognised by only three nations: Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. The other countries did not recognise the Taliban. After the Taliban consolidated their control over most of Afghanistan in 1996, India, along with many other powers, was marginalised. As a result, India began to support the Panjshir-based Northern Alliance, which was the only significant challenge to the Taliban. Other regional actors such as Iran, Tajikistan, and Russia also joined India in this support. During the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Flight IC 814 on 24 December 1999, which was forced to land in Kandahar by the Pakistan-based militants, India had a brief engagement with the Taliban. The hijackers forced the plane to land in Kandahar. The subsequent eight-day hostage crisis of Indian Airlines was resolved when Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh personally delivered three militants jailed in Indian prisons to the Taliban in exchange for the passengers. Maulana Masood Azhar, who was one of the released militants, would later found the Jaish-e-Mohammad. This is an interesting side note (JeM). It is believed that the JeM was involved in a number of militant acts in Jammu and Kashmir and other areas as well, including the attack on the Indian Parliament in December of 2001.

An interim government was established in Afghanistan in accordance with the terms of the Bonn Conference⁴ in 2001 after the Taliban were deposed as a direct result of the military action that was initiated in response to the 9/11 attacks by the US-led Coalition forces. The current president of Afghanistan is Hamid Karzai. India was able to respond quickly enough to become a part of the new political system that was building in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban administration. India did not want to be perceived as a regional actor that was reluctant and did not want to be left out of the things that were taking place in Afghanistan. Since that time, India's connection with Afghanistan has expanded to encompass multiple facets. India has resumed diplomatic relations with Kabul and has reopened its mission in the Afghan capital as well as its four consulates in the cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat. The task of rebuilding Afghanistan was approached through the lens of soft power by this organisation. This includes revitalising the country's humanitarian, historical, social, cultural, and civilisational ties for the purpose of achieving a more permanent state of peace in the conflict-torn nation. The fundamental focus of India's approach in Afghanistan has been to provide assistance to the newly established democratic system, with the goal of preventing anti-Indian militant organisations from gaining any ground. ⁸ Its involvement in Afghanistan is driven by four primary considerations, which are as follows:

First, Pant contends that India views Afghanistan as a prospective market for its goods and services. India has made a substantial investment in the improvement of Afghanistan's infrastructure with the goal of hastening the consolidation of a newly developing local market and setting its sights on the 300 million Afghan consumers with low to middle incomes.

Second, Scott contends that Indian participation in Afghanistan is driven by the country's desire to diversify its energy supply. To this end, India is working to improve Afghanistan's geostrategic location so that it may more easily access the oil and minerals of Central Asia. Afghanistan is referred to as the "land bridge" between South Asia on the one hand and Central Asia on the other, and this is something that Partha Pratim Basu emphasises as having a significant impact on Afghanistan's strategic importance.

The third and critically significant goal has been to limit Pakistan's space and influence. Pakistan's goal in Afghanistan has always been to gain strategic depth in relation to India's presence there. According to Barnett Rubin, "Pakistan's military establishment has always approached the various wars in and around Afghanistan as a function of its main institutional and national security interests: first and foremost, balancing India." (Pakistan's military establishment has always viewed the various wars in and around Afghanistan as a function of Pakistan's main institutional and national security interests.)

The fourth goal is to prevent the Taliban from gaining control in Afghanistan and to put a stop to operations that are hostile to India that are taking place along the extremely sensitive border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Therefore, India has a significant amount of cause for concern regarding Pakistan's support for the Taliban, the Taliban's connections with a number of Pakistan-based anti-India militant groups, and the possibility of the Taliban regaining power in Afghanistan. In addition, Scott emphasises that India's policy toward Afghanistan is driven by two primary goals: (i) undermining the influence of Pakistan-backed groups such as the Taliban and other organisations that are antagonistic to Indian interests in the region; and (ii) preventing the proliferation of drug trafficking, which represents a potential risk to India's national security. Both of these goals are central to India's approach to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has come to have a prominent position in India's policies for its "extended neighbourhood." Indian foreign policy and strategic analysts view Afghanistan's geostrategic location to be an important link between India and the Central Asian region, which is rich in natural resources. India and Afghanistan have had historical ties, as well as trade and cultural ties, for a significant amount of time. On the other hand, Indian policymakers are continuously focusing on commercial and strategic interests in Afghanistan and central Asia, while at the same time always working for the regeneration of the old multi-facet relationship. In 1951, India signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the United Kingdom in order to formalise the historical relations between the two countries. After the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, India eventually recognised the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani in Kabul as the legitimate authority in the country. Despite the fact that the Taliban controlled 90 percent of Afghan territory while they were in power, India maintained this assistance while it was under Taliban administration. India, along with Russia and Iran, provided backing for the Northern Alliance in order to halt the progression of the Taliban. India has always had a diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, with the exception of the years 1996–2001 when the Taliban ruled the country.

During that time, India maintained consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Mazar-e Sharif, in addition to Herat. Following the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, India moved swiftly to introduce a plan for the reconstruction of Afghanistan that was both comprehensive and adequately funded. Prime Minister Vajpayee pledged one million tonnes of wheat and sent a team of doctors and technicians to establish a camp for fixing artificial limbs for amputees in Afghanistan in December 2001. Almost immediately after making the announcement, Prime Minister Vajpayee sent a line of credit to Afghanistan in the amount of \$100 million for Afghans who had been displaced. Since taking those preliminary actions in 2001, India has maintained its

interest in Afghanistan, and the country has already committed 750 million dollars and pledged another 450 million dollars to the country. In addition, India submitted a membership application for Afghanistan to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the year 2005. In addition to this, they created a strategic and military alliance to combat Islamic extremists. During Hamid Karzai's visit to India in April 2006, the two countries strengthened their collaboration in the areas of standardisation, rural development, and education by signing three memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the two countries in 2011 provides for assistance to rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, technical assistance and education, to bear up investment in Afghanistan's natural resources, and for Afghanistan's exports. In addition, the agreement bears up investment in Afghanistan's natural resources and bears up on Afghanistan's exports. support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, broad-based and inclusive process of peace and reconciliation; emphasise the necessity for a sustained and long-term commitment to Afghanistan on the part of the international community; allowed duty-free access to the Indian market; India has taken the initiative to play a leading role in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan, and as a result, the country is held in very high esteem throughout Afghanistan. It is widely acknowledged that India plays a significant role in ensuring the peace and prosperity of Afghanistan over the long term. India is also acutely aware of the fact that a democratic, prosperous, and stable Afghanistan serves India's own strategic interests. India has a vested interest in seeing Afghanistan achieve and maintain a level of peace and stability over the long term. The government in New Delhi has sent a very small number of its paramilitary personnel to Afghanistan in order to protect Indian citizens who are working on rehabilitation projects in that country.

Since 2001, India has been providing support to Afghanistan in the form of well-targeted aid programmes that include institutional capacity building, infrastructure development, local development projects, and food security assistance, which includes regular deliveries of wheat. More than 10,000 Afghan students have received scholarships to study in India through the ICCR. Of those students, around 7,000 have returned to Afghanistan with an education and technical skills, which they are employing to advance Afghanistan's stabilisation and development. In addition, numerous officials in the Afghan government have benefited from the technical capacity building programmes offered by ITEC and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Furthermore, approximately 8,000 Afghan students are currently residing in India and pursuing degrees in a variety of disciplines through their own personal funding. And in the development of physical infrastructure, such as the construction of the Afghan Parliament in Kabul and the Salma Dam in Herat. However, up to this point, the majority of India's contribution has been focused on the following four general areas: education, humanitarian assistance, capacity building programmes, and small and community-based development initiatives.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1. Investigate the circumstances that led to the establishment of and continued expansion in the bilateral relations that exist between India and Afghanistan.
2. Become familiar with the areas in which India and Afghanistan work together.
3. Be aware of the opportunities that exist for India in Afghanistan following the events of 9/11.

ASSESSING RISKS

The process of assessing risks is fraught with peril. There is a significant corpus of research in the subfields of social and cognitive psychology that investigates how people understand and respond to potential threats. There is a consensus among experts in a particular empirical subject that individuals in that field "simplify reality" based on their schemata, which may be seen as the manner in which they choose to arrange knowledge. Even if Indian decision-makers interpreted India's position in Afghanistan in a different way, this would still remain the case.

In addition, the reality that is being questioned is based on perceptions, as Robert Jervis has repeatedly pointed out to the people who read his work. The specific nature of the relationship that exists between people's perceptions and the world around them is a matter that is best left to be discussed in academic circles; yet, it is essential to acknowledge the existence of such a relationship when writing a policy document like this one.

After all, the perception of risks by an entity is linked to the entity's interests, which, at least in part, are a consequence of the entity's perceptions of the realities that are continuously emerging. Because George Kennan was able to recognise that the Soviet leadership "relied on the fiction of external threat to maintain its internal legitimacy," his famous Long Telegram was essential in laying the groundwork for containment at the beginning of the Cold War. This was the primary reason why containment was so important. After the war, this "fiction" became the "reality" in the Soviet Union. According to Kennan, there was therefore no use in seeking to win Stalin over by cooperating with him as it would serve no purpose.

In a broader sense, one could say that India's objective should be to ensure that it would be able to maintain its presence in Afghanistan for a significant amount of time into the foreseeable future. Rakesh Sood, a former Indian ambassador to the country and a former special envoy for disarmament and nonproliferation, summed up the key features of Indian interests in Afghanistan as a "degree of stability and security" that would allow "us [India] to be active."

Then, what exactly is it that puts these interests at danger, particularly during a period when disengagement and peace discussions are taking place?

There is a well-founded schema of the dangers that could befall India's interests in the minds of Indian decisionmakers. Regardless of whether outsiders agree or disagree with the veracity of these concerns, India views them as being just as real as the view held by the Trump administration that it is necessary for the country to exit from this so-called "graveyard of empires." These are the realities that India faces. These crystallised perceptions are a part of the simplified realities of the Indian leadership and cannot be wished away by disagreement because they are a part of the simplified realities. They can be falsified by scholars and practitioners alike in Washington, London, Islamabad, Berlin, and other places; however, they cannot be wished away. The question that arises from the Indian point of view is how these effects might be lessened.

TERRORISM

The potential for acts of worldwide as well as regional terrorism makes up the first category of potential dangers. "guarantees to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any international terrorist groups or individuals against the security of the United States and its allies" is one of the four guiding principles that are mentioned in the joint declaration between the United States and the government of Afghanistan. The other three

principles are as follows: Despite the fact that these words may have been said with the best of intentions, there is very little clarity around how these commitments will be upheld. After all, those elements that have fought the ISI's battle against India from within Afghanistan will be a part of the factions that need to be reconciled. The body of evidence that substantiates this claim is extensive.

Attacks on Indian assets, such as the Indian embassy in Kabul, have been planned and carried out by the Haqqani group, which continues to be the Taliban faction that possesses the most sophisticated weapons and the most highly trained fighters. According to Myra Macdonald's argument, "the US media" stated that Washington felt the ISI had supplied backing for the attempt. Given the tight connections that exist between the leadership of the Haqqani group and the ISI, it is quite possible that a reconciled Haqqani group will carry on with its anti-Indian agenda even after the two sides have reached an agreement. In an interview with the New York Times, Sirajuddin Haqqani, a deputy leader of the Taliban, stated that it is essential to "keep amicable relations with all countries and take their concerns seriously." However, this does nothing to alleviate the concerns of the Indian security personnel. The relationship between the Haqqani group and the ISI is "still robust," according to individuals who have spent a significant amount of time studying the Haqqani organisation.

Last but not least, the retreat of forces commanded by the United States has resulted in the creation of a security void, which has led to the establishment of Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), a branch of the self-proclaimed Islamic State that operates in South Asia and Central Asia. The capability of this group to recruit well-trained defectors from other militant groups, including the Taliban and Pakistani militant groups, poses a very real risk to India's future in Afghanistan as well as to the future of the region as a whole. Some of these radicalised individuals come from India. The most telling example of the very real security concerns to India's presence within Afghanistan is an attack that took place in March 2020 on a gurdwara (a place of worship) in Kabul. IS-K claimed responsibility for the attack. The fact that one of the four IS-K operators who attacked the gurdwara complex was from Kerala, which is located in the south of India, makes this threat all the more important for Indian government officials.

PAKISTANI INFLUENCE

The expansion of the ISI's sphere of influence in Afghanistan presents a second connected group of potential dangers. The growing influence of Pakistan within the country is highlighted by the connections that exist between the ISI and several Taliban factions, most notably the Haqqani organisation. There is no denying that the ISI maintains a strong influence over the Taliban, despite the fact that the Taliban leadership may not always agree with the Pakistani state and the ISI. One individual who had been a founding member of the Taliban once described his relationship with the ISI in this manner: "They are our formidable watchmen." This condition of events is obviously quite uncomfortable for India given that there is a possibility that Taliban representatives would be present in Kabul in the not too distant future.

DIVIDED AFGHAN GOVERNMENT

The permanently fractured nature of the Afghan government presents a third category of potential dangers. A semi-united government led by Ghani and Abdullah could have offered India some choices for lessening the hazards indicated above; however, such an arrangement looked implausible given that both sides were involved in a fierce struggle that had been going on for months while the violence escalated. Even if it is

encouraging, the new political agreement between Ghani and Abdullah does not ensure that there would be political stability. The two leaders, who up until very recently were on opposing sides, will now need to find methods to collaborate with one another. India will need to determine its own strategic actions and cannot rely on an approach to reconciliation led by Afghanistan. This is because an Afghan-led approach carries the risk of disintegrating due to the fiercely competitive politics and the outsized battle of egos among Afghanistan's leaders. India will need to determine its own strategic actions.

Prior to ten years ago, when considerations about withdrawal began to consume administrative efforts in Washington and London, one plan that may have been enough was to place primary responsibility for maintaining peace in Afghanistan on the Afghan government. To some extent, and with minor adjustments, it might have even succeeded until January 2017, when Trump inherited this protracted war from his predecessor. However, given the circumstances, doing so is currently impossible. One former senior Indian diplomat expressed it thus way: "Ashraf and Abdullah" provide "no meaningful equities for our [India's] long-term interests in Afghanistan." To make his point abundantly apparent, he stated, "If you want to play a role, you must establish new equities, while not forgetting those you [India] have supported for a long time."

INDIA'S INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

India strives for a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Afghanistan that is significant on a political, strategic, and economic level to serve India's interests. Additionally, this will secure the stability of the area in general, and it will provide India with a long-term solution to its issues of terrorism, extremism, and separatism in particular. Afghanistan's government is working hard to improve the country politically and economically while maintaining a strong democratic tradition. She considers it to be in her best interest to work toward the establishment of an independent, secure, and unified Afghanistan that is unaffected by any outside pressures. She hopes that her prospective market will help revitalise the Afghan economy by importing goods and services from other countries. Afghanistan, like India, has indicated its desire to expand Indian business within the country while simultaneously building manufacturing centres in a variety of industries such as cement, oil, gas, energy, banking, communications, and so on. If democracy and peace are able to prevail in Afghanistan, India will have a solid foothold in South-West-Central Asia from which it can explore regional economic linkages.

India's energy demand have expanded as a result of rapid population growth, economic expansion, and energy deficits, which has caused energy security to become a necessity in order to maintain economic growth.

As a result of the fact that it imports 70 percent of its oil and 50 percent of its gas, the government is aware of the necessity to investigate alternate energy sources. The amount of energy that is predicted to be consumed is projected to more than double from the 122 million tonnes that were consumed in 2001-02 to the 364 million tonnes that will be consumed in 2024-25. This indicates the existence of a comprehensive relationship with the resource-rich Central Asian Republics (CARs), and Afghanistan has the significance of having the ability to operate as a transit route for the delivery of energy that is destined for India. The establishment of a connection between Central Asia and Afghanistan will make it possible for India to access resources located in Russia and the Middle East via land routes. In order to further regional economic integration, India is working at intensifying and strengthening regional cooperation on trade, transit, and energy. Rebuilding Afghanistan as a connecting bridge across the neighbouring regions is therefore the primary focus of her policy approach. Because this nation does not possess direct access to the Central Asian region, it must rely

on the transit rights granted to it by other nations in order to travel there. The rights to traverse the country were continuously denied to her by Pakistan, which forced India to look for other options. As a result, the help provided by the country in the construction of Chah Bahar Port on the Makran coast in Iran and the Zarang-Delaram highway in Afghanistan makes it possible for an alternate route to connect the Central Asian region.

CONCLUSION

The many different issues that worry on historical links, political and strategic relations, external concerns, and regional cooperation between India and Afghanistan. It also focuses on the most significant issues that have arisen in India's relations with Afghanistan and throughout the era following the end of the cold war, as well as their political and strategic connections from 1991 to 2012. This chapter provides a detailed summary of all that has been done and discovered in the current research. In total, there are seven chapters included in the thesis. The lessons of history demonstrate once more that the deployment of foreign military forces in Afghanistan has never yielded positive results. After more than a decade of international military action in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the horrific attacks on September 11, 2001, the political and security scenarios that are playing out in the country are still ambiguous. Despite this, significant headway has been made in the nation's state-building efforts, as well as in its rehabilitation and overall development, since the year 2001. Despite this, the society is still fractured, the economy is in disarray, there are problems with the security, and politics are chaotic. After a decade of fighting, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which had only limited success, has begun its withdrawal from the country, and the West is making efforts, albeit in the early stages, to reconcile with the Taliban. This comes after the ISAF, which had only limited success, had begun its withdrawal from the country. In a similar vein, it would appear that the political dynamics in the region are still marked by competition, and there is no sign of any regional consensus over how to best ensure peace and security in Afghanistan.

REFERENCES

1. Abdur Rahman Khan, *The Life of Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir of Afghanistan*, vol. 2, ed. Sultan Mohammed Khan (London: J. Murray, 1900), p. 280. Quoted in Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 415.
2. Aitchison C.U., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries* (Calcutta, 1933), Vol. XIII, p.209.
3. Akbarzadeh, 'India and Pakistan's geostrategic rivalry in Central Asia', p. 224.
4. Ananth Krishnan. "Amid Energy Competition, India, China Hold First Central Asia Dialogue," *The Hindu*. August 15, 2013.
5. Arpita Basu Roy, *contemporary Afghanistan: Conflict and Peace-*
6. *building*. New Delhi, Har Anand Publication Pvt. Ltd. 2010,
7. Barnett R. Rubbin and Ahmad Rashid, "from Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan", *foreign Affairs*, 87(6)2008.

8. Barnett R. Rubbin, *The fragmentation of Afghanistan: State formation and" Collapse in the International system*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995.
9. Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "Resolving the Pakistan- Afghanistan Stalemate," United States Institute of Peace Special Report
10. 176 (2006): 7–8. Afghanistan Study Group, *Revitalizing our Efforts, Rethinking our Strategies*, 37.
11. Barnett Rubin and Ahmad Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2008): 40–41.
12. Barnett Rubin and Ahmad Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan," 31.
13. Barnett Rubin and Ahmad Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan," 33, 36.
14. Barnett Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," 66–69. Conrad Schetter, *Kleine Geschichte Afghanistan's* (Munich: Beck, 2004), 125.
15. Barnett Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2007): 62–63.
16. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, 110–15.
17. Bhadrakumar M.K., "The Audacity of Afghan Peace Hopes," *TheHindu*, February 4, 2010.
18. Bhadrakumar. M.K. (2011) "Getting the Regional Act Together," *TheHindu*, August 27.
19. Bisheshwar Prasad, *The Foundations of India's Foreign Policy, 1860-1882* (Delhi, 1967), edn. 2, p, 254.