



INDIA'S AFGHAN POLICY IN THE SHADOW OF THE TALIBAN: CONTINUITY OR CALIBRATION

Sonia Raju

Research Scholars, Department of Political Science, Osmania University

Hyderabad, Telangana.

Prof. J Laxmi Narsimha Rao

Department of Political Science, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

ABSTRACT

The Taliban's restoration to power in 2021 brought about a minor change in India's approach to Afghanistan, raising important questions about whether New Delhi's stance reflects a dedication to fundamental principles or a calculated response to shifting ground circumstances. In addition to providing Afghanistan with enormous funds to develop healthcare, education, and infrastructure, India has a long history of supporting Afghan democracy and state-building endeavours. India has also provided Afghanistan with substantial financing. In view of the resurgence of governance by the Taliban, which has a problematic past and strong ties to Pakistan, India has to rethink its diplomatic involvement in order to safeguard its strategic interests and investments in development. Even though India has not formally accepted the Taliban government, it has progressively restored diplomatic channels by delivering humanitarian items and forming a technical staff at its embassy in Kabul. This is a pragmatic decision considering that India has not officially recognised the Taliban authority. Important factors in this evolving stance include the maintenance of regional peace and the management of security concerns such as cross-border terrorism and radicalisation. This demonstrates India's cautious balancing act with its long-standing commitment to the Afghan people. India is making an attempt to avoid creating a diplomatic vacuum that may be filled by other states such as Pakistan or China, despite the fact that its role is restricted. Therefore, India's current posture on Afghanistan is neither an explicit support of the Taliban administration or a dramatic reversal from its earlier stance; rather, it is a measured response driven by geopolitical forces, strategic caution, and regional circumstances.

Keywords: India, Afghanistan, Taliban, foreign policy, strategic calibration, continuity, regional stability.

Introduction

India's attitude to Afghanistan has always been based on the conviction that democracy, wealth, and regional stability are the most important objectives. Over the course of more than two decades, India has been one of the most significant providers to Afghanistan from the area and has been absolutely essential to the reconstruction of the nation. This degree of commitment is shown by projects that have far-reaching implications, such as the Afghan Parliament and the Salma Dam, as well as upgrades to facilities for transportation, power, healthcare, and scholarship programs. It is India's steadfast support of the elected

governments in Afghanistan that has contributed to the strengthening of India's image as a trustworthy ally in the struggle for democracy in Afghanistan. When the Taliban rapidly gained control of Kabul in August 2021, however, the political landscape underwent a dramatic transformation. As a result, India was forced to reevaluate its policy in light of the strategic aims and ethical concerns that it had for itself.

India is facing significant hurdles in terms of its foreign policy as a result of the Taliban's return to power. Direct connection is politically fraught due to the Taliban's historical ties to Pakistan, its role in concealing anti-India terrorist cells, and concerns over human rights, particularly those of women and minorities. These factors combine to make direct interaction politically problematic. Afghanistan is a country that India has to be aware of because of the problems it faces with its own internal security and the geopolitical goals it has in Central Asia. This has resulted in a pragmatic recalibration of India's policy on Afghanistan, which is characterised by cautious outreach, the supply of humanitarian assistance, and the deployment of a technical mission in Kabul. However, India has not extended official recognition to the Taliban government.

In this changing strategy, India strives to sustain its strategic relevance and guarantee that the vacuum in Afghanistan is not only filled by unfriendly countries like Pakistan or China. This movement in policy signifies a transition from a value-based diplomatic approach to a more interest-driven one. Indian policy towards Afghanistan must now gently negotiate conflicts between continuing to support Afghan democracy and its people and dealing with de facto leadership in order to safeguard regional influence and national security. At the same time, India must continue to promote Afghan democracy. Therefore, the most crucial issue to take into consideration is whether India's present posture is just a continuation of its prior foreign policy or if it is a strategic adjustment in reaction to an unavoidable geopolitical reality. The topic is investigated in depth in this article, which examines the ways in which India's position, policies, and strategic requirements have evolved as a result of the aftermath of the Taliban.

Objectives:

1. To assess if India's strategy in Afghanistan is a continuation of the Taliban's control or a strategic reorientation.
2. To examine India's security and diplomatic objectives in dealing with the Taliban-led government.

Historical Perspective of India-Afghanistan relations

The origins of the relationships that exist between Afghanistan and India may be traced back to the time of the Indus Valley. Due to the fact that it began in the Mauryan period and continues all the way into Afghanistan, the Grand Trunk Road offers a historical and geographical backdrop for the proximity of the two nations. There was a road that connected Kabul to Chittagong that went via Delhi and Lahore. It was said to be one of the oldest and longest roads in Asia. The strategic importance of the route was derived from its economic and military value, as well as its function of uniting the many civilisations that inhabited the area. During the time of Emperor Ashoka, Buddhism developed in some parts of Afghanistan and spread across the country. After Ashoka's conquest of Afghanistan, there were decades of instability that followed. During this time, the Indo-Greek Kushan Empire and later Indo-Scythians emerged as prominent political forces. An example of this would be the Mughal Empire, which ruled India from 1528 to 1858 and had its origins in the region that is now Afghanistan. The Mughal Empire was one of the numerous empires

that attempted to conquer India. Among the notable Mughal rulers that came before Babur, whose tomb is located in Kabul, were Akbar, Shahjahan, and Aurangzeb. All of these individuals are significant characters in contemporary Indian historical mythology (Paliwal, 2017). Babur's mausoleum is located in Kabul.

An Abdali Pashtun named Ahmed Shah Durrani, who went on to establish the Durrani Empire in 1747, is often credited as being the person who lay the foundation for what is now known as Afghanistan. Having previously served as a commander in the Persian Army, he was the driving force behind the military operation that was launched in 1761 against the Maratha Empire of India. As a result of the defeat of the Marathas, the English East India Company strengthened its position as the dominant force in the subcontinent. In the end, it made it possible for the British to expand their influence over different parts of South Asia. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the British attempted to exert control over the affairs of Afghanistan in an effort to detach the province from the influence of Russia. There was an immediate threat to British India that was presented by the Great Game, which was a conflict between Russia and Britain for control of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Mazumdar Afghanistan was the focal point of British political, diplomatic, and military operations beginning in 2015 (Paliwal, 2017). These efforts were directed towards protecting the frontiers of the British Indian Empire and maintaining control over the territories in question. According to Mazumdar (2015), the Great Game was eventually put to an end in 1907 when Russia and Britain came to an agreement for the first time.

During the period in which the British administration of India was in place, there were significant connections between the two nations. This was notably true during the independence struggle in India, which was led by Mahatma Gandhi, and the nationalist movements in the Pashtun territories, which were led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, also known as Frontier Gandhi (Mullen, 2017). Both of these historical events occurred at the same time period. However, in 1947, during the most severe partition of India, Afghanistan and India themselves were physically separated from one another. In light of this, Pakistan, and not Afghanistan, was the subject of India's strategic imagination. On January 4, 1950, India and Afghanistan signed a treaty that established a bond of friendship and peace between them. According to Paliwal (2017), the deal was designed to result in a number of results, including the establishment of diplomatic connections, cultural linkages, and trade. At the same time, Pakistan and Afghanistan were already engaged in difficult negotiations when Afghanistan made a claim to land in Pakistan that was populated by Pashtuns and was situated beyond the Durand Line. In a following turn of events, Afghanistan became the sole country to oppose Pakistan's admission to the United Nations and to reject Pakistan's statements about Jammu and Kashmir (Mazumdar, 2015). These occurrences served to strengthen the relationship that exists between Afghanistan and India. The Bandung Conference, which took place in 1955 and was also known as the Asian-African Conference for International Order, was essential in laying the framework for the establishment of bilateral relations between Afghanistan and India. India and Afghanistan both used the non-alignment platform in their critique of the dichotomy that was produced by the Cold War phenomenon. Additionally, it was supposed to be a critique of Pakistan's affiliation with the United States after the signing of the Mutual Defence Treaty between the two countries in May of 1954. According to Paliwal (2017), India and Afghanistan became closer to one another as a consequence of a common objective in fighting Pakistan. This objective was achieved by Pakistan's admittance to SEATO in September 1954 and CENTO in 1955.

When India invaded the cities of Peshawar and Kohat in Pakistan in 1965, Afghanistan lodged an official complaint, stating that these cities were really a part of Pashtunistan and not Pakistan. By October 1965, Pakistan's strategic gamble had failed, and Afghanistan had joined India's diplomatic campaign for the right of the Pashtuns and Baloch people to exercise their right to self-determination. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister of India, was supposed to fly to Afghanistan two days after signing the Tashkent Declaration on January 10, 1966; however, his trip was delayed owing to the unfortunate tragedy that occurred. The following trip that India's Vice President Zakir Hussain made to Afghanistan in July 1966 prepared the path for the two countries to collaborate economically, which was to the mutual advantage of both countries. Over the course of the 1970s, the government of India initiated a number of different infrastructure projects. There were a number of initiatives that were initiated, such as the Chardeghorband Microhydel Scheme, the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul, and other types of technical assistance in the fields of irrigation, electricity production, and mining. Agricultural research institutes have been approved to be located in the cities of Kabul, Kandahar, and Bamiyan respectively. Through the decade of the 1970s, India and Afghanistan shifted their self-proclaimed objective of nonalignment towards a strong support for the Soviet Union. This occurred in the context of world politics. As a method of exerting pressure on Pakistan about the Pashtun issue, it became essential for Afghanistan to maintain friendly relations with India. By signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1971, India and the Soviet Union were able to strengthen their relationship with one another. Afghanistan was increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union's military and economic assistance; this was due to the fact that the Soviets supported both sides of the PDPA (Paliwal, 2017).

By the 1970s, Afghanistan had exceeded all other development partners in terms of significance as a direct consequence of India's drive to promote Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) (Mullen, 2017). In spite of this, Afghanistan had a huge political upheaval in the 1970s. Zahir Shah was removed from power by a bloodless coup led by Mohammad Daud Khan, a former prime minister who mostly adhered to socialist ideology and saw monarchy as an undesirable institution. Officials from India expressed their satisfaction with Daud Khan's decision to adopt a hard stance against Pakistan over the Pashtunistan issue. Following the fighting that took place between Pakistan and India in 1971, the United States of America relaxed its prohibition on the possession of weapons by Pakistan. Afghanistan was thrown into a state of heightened worry as a result of it, and the Daud government was critical of it. In response to Daud's request for active military collaboration in the battle against Pakistan's atrocities in Baluchistan and other Pashtun-dominated areas, India declined to cooperate with Pakistan's military (Paliwal, 2017). During this time period, Pakistan consistently attempted to exert its influence on the political system of Afghanistan, and it also worked towards the establishment of a friendly state along its western border. The conflict that Pakistan had with Afghanistan about the Durand Line, Pakistan's rivalry with India, and Pakistan's standing as an ally of the Western bloc all had a role in determining Pakistan's viewpoint towards India during the Cold War. Mazumdar (2015) is the source that is being quoted.

India's Policy towards Afghanistan 2001-2014

Immediately after the United States-led War on Terror was successful in bringing down the government of the Taliban, an Interim Authority was created. Pant (2012) is of the opinion that this is the time when India's participation in Afghanistan began to take on a more complicated shape. India's status in Afghanistan was immediately elevated from that of a Liaison Office when Satinder Lambah, the Indian Special Envoy for

Afghanistan, arrived in Kabul in November 2001. At that time, the situation in Afghanistan had just altered. Ashraf (2007) states that the inauguration of the provisional authority under Hamid Karzai's president took place immediately after the reopening of India's embassy in Afghanistan in December 2001. This event took place on December 22nd, when Jaswant Singh, who was serving as the India External Mission at the time, visited Afghanistan. Following the speedy reopening of the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Indian consulates were promptly established in the cities of Kandahar, Mazari-Sharif, Herat, and Jalalabad. Through these consulates, India had a fantastic opportunity to interact with average Afghans, to disseminate the message of democracy, and to monitor the amount of money it was providing to the nation. India was able to obtain an understanding of the political and tribal dynamics that exist among the Pashtun people via the use of these consulates. However, Pakistan asserts that R&AW is using these consulates in order to conduct surveillance on its tribal territories and to offer material assistance to a separatist rebellion that is taking place in the Baluchistan state of Pakistan (Mazumdar, 2015)." As part of its engagement strategy, India began giving Afghanistan with significant help in the areas of humanitarian relief, financial assistance, and project development. According to Pant (2012), India has continuously participated in a variety of international efforts that aim to aid political reconciliation and economic rehabilitation in Afghanistan. These initiatives have been ongoing for quite some time.

As a result of India's unwavering support for the Northern Alliance, which battled the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, India's relations to Afghanistan were even more firmly established in the years that followed the Taliban's fall from power (2001–2021). The provisional administration was mostly comprised of individuals who were members of the Northern Alliance. As a member of the Pashtun ethnic group, Hamid Karzai, the current interim president of Afghanistan, made efforts to cultivate relationships with his fellow Pashtuns when he was in India for his schooling. India provided him with assistance. Immediately upon the toppling of the Taliban in Afghanistan, India made the decision to refrain from supplying troops to the international security forces that were directed by the United States Government. Domestic factors, such as the demands of coalition politicians, internal insurgencies, and the United States' great aversion to upset Pakistan, prevented India from sending soldiers to fight in Afghanistan. These reasons prevented India from sending troops to Afghanistan. As stated by Mazumdar (2015), India's approach in Afghanistan changed towards giving economic assistance to the Afghan government. The key sectors of Afghanistan's economy that got assistance from India were agriculture, the development of human capital, the improvement of security, and the improvement of physical infrastructure (Pant, 2012). Immediately after the toppling of the Taliban in Afghanistan, India re-engaged with the nation for two primary reasons. Initially, in order to protect Indian interests in both the internal and regional security of Afghanistan, it was necessary for the Afghan government to be secular and chosen by the Afghan people. During the period of 1996 to 2001, India placed blame on the administration of the Taliban for the rise in instability in the region and the threats it posed to its own domestic and regional goals. As a result, India endeavoured to prevent the establishment of a fundamentalist Islamic state. In order for India to maintain its active participation with the Karzai government, it was believed that it was essential to safeguard India's regional security and financial aspirations. Secondly, it safeguards India's goal of becoming a strong regional power with global ambitions, which is a significant advantage. It is via Afghanistan that India is able to have access to the Central Asian Republics as well as other West Asian nations. In order to maintain interaction with other neighbours, achieve economic success, maintain regional unity, and leave a broader imprint, it was considered that strengthening connections with Afghanistan was the best course of action.

On February 26, 2002, Hamid Karzai and thirteen other ministers travelled to India on a visit. According to Ashraf (2007), the Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, made a commitment to provide a contribution of 10 million dollars to the government of Afghanistan during his presence in Afghanistan. In the course of his tour, the presidents of Afghanistan and India signed a commercial pact that provides preferential treatment. Because President Karzai is a graduate of Himachal Pradesh University, the university also bestowed upon him an honorary doctorate. This was in addition to the previous award. Under the terms of the agreement, tariff exemptions ranging from fifty percent to one hundred percent were granted to dried fruits from Afghanistan that were imported into India. In return, Afghanistan loosened its limits on commodities such as cement, tea, sugar, and pharmaceuticals that were manufactured in India. The trade agreement was intended to bring about a greater degree of integration between the domestic markets of the two nations, namely Afghanistan and India (Mazumdar, 2015). A memorandum of agreement (MoU) on media and information was signed by Hamid Karzai during his visit to India on February 23, 2005. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the context of civil aviation was also inked. By the end of December 2005, there were more than 798 persons working in Afghanistan for nine private Indian enterprises and seven public Indian companies. Television transmission, the sale of airline tickets, the delivery of electricity, the construction of common spaces and dams, telebanking, and the provision of cold storage were all activities that these firms were engaged in. Afghan women were given the opportunity to get vocational training via the Self-Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA), which received money from the Indian Ministry of Women's Affairs respectively. As a consequence of India's aid in the establishment of several channels, such as Jalalabad TV and Kabul TV, as well as significant media conglomerates like Tolo TV, there was a rise in the amount of media cooperation that took place between the two countries. India Airlines had already begun operating flights between Kabul and Delhi by the 31st of March in 2005, and Iran had already committed to operate flights between Tehran and Delhi that would go via Kabul. In accordance with Paliwal (2017), India presented Afghanistan with a total of 274 buses and three civilian aeroplanes as charitable donations.

India's Policy towards Afghanistan 2014-2021

After Afghanistan's presidential elections in 2014, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah engaged in a significant power struggle, and the United States and the United Nations intervened to provide assistance. In 2014, a new National Unity Government (NUG) was founded in Afghanistan as a result of the power-sharing agreement that Abdullah and Ghani had reached. In a formal ceremony, Ashraf Ghani was given the position of president, while Abdullah was given the title of chief executive officer. The continual political manoeuvring of the president and the chief executive officer resulted in a lack of accountability, which the Taliban exploited in order to gain further territory. After the Taliban took control of Kunduz in September 2015 and Helmand province in December 2015, the National Unity Government's (NUG) capacity to govern was severely hampered. The allegation made by Ishtiaq and Shah (2016) However, Narendra Modi was promoted to the position of Prime Minister of India after the sixteenth general election held in the nation in 2014. With the conclusion of the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) combat mission in Afghanistan, the number of soldiers stationed in Afghanistan dropped from 100,000 in 2010 to around 16,000 by 2014. As a consequence of a decrease in military participation and foreign finance, the once formidable economic and political powers of the NUG became very reliant on the assistance and support of the Western world. From 2014 to 2017, India's developmental assistance to Afghanistan climbed from \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion (Mullen, 2017). This is a significant and positive growth.

As a result of the leadership changes that took place in both countries, there was a variation in the political considerations; initially, President Ghani seemed to have a greater affinity for Pakistan. Almost immediately after assuming power, Ghani implemented a significant shift in Afghanistan's approach to international relations. Ghani drew to India's notice the fact that his foreign and security policies were radically different from those of Karzai. He did this by mending fences with Pakistan and increasing connections with China. In the immediate aftermath of his inauguration, Ghani made it a priority to meet with the highest-ranking military officer in Pakistan at Rawalpindi. This was done before to arranging a meeting with either the country's prime minister or president (Prasad, 2021). The development assistance provided by India remained unchanged, notwithstanding the tense relations that exist between India and Afghanistan. After making official appearances in Pakistan in November 2014 and China in October 2014, President Ghani made his first official appearance in India on April 28, 2015. During his trip to India, Ghani had conversations about a wide range of topics, including but not limited to education, health, agriculture, disaster management, elections, and power management. They have both asked the international community to address the problem of terrorist safe havens in the context of both regional and global security. The two organisations have established a pact to work together in the battle against terrorism, and they have both requested that the world community do so. In accordance with the decision made by the Afghan Embassy, a sister-city link has been established between the cities of Ahmedabad and Asadabad, Ajmer Sharif and Herat, Kandahar and Mumbai, Kabul and Delhi, and the state of Assam and the province of Helmand (Kaura, 2017).

Not long after entering office, Narendra Modi, who had been appointed as the Prime Minister of India in December 2015, embarked on his maiden journey to Afghanistan. The newly constructed Afghan Parliament was inaugurated by Narendra Modi during his visit to Afghanistan, during which India also sent four Mi-25 attack helicopters to Afghanistan. As a result of this modification, India's approach towards Afghanistan switched from providing the Afghan armed forces with training and non-lethal help, such as transport vehicles, to providing them with support that is lethal. Beginning in the beginning of 2016, the two nations' foreign ministers came to the conclusion that they would conduct the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Partnership Council. During this conference, there would be four different collaborative working groups (Kaura, 2017). The Indian government, on the other hand, was successful in winning over the hearts and minds of the Afghan people by providing backing for a number of unconventional and low-cost projects. in 2014 as a sign of togetherness and solidarity Along with the construction of a flagpole that was 200 feet tall, India also donated an Afghan flag that was 97 feet by 65 feet. The signing of a memorandum of understanding in 2015 "between the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) to utilise the Shahid Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex" as the home site for the Afghan cricket team indicates yet another endeavour on the part of the Indian government. Due to the fact that cricket is a popular sport in both Afghanistan and the United States, the Afghan national cricket team was able to develop thanks to the support they received when they became members of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 2007. The expansion of India's goodwill in Afghanistan and its aid in promoting Afghan sports have both contributed to India's increased goodwill inside Afghanistan (Mullen, 2017).

India's relation with Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in 2021.

By the time Obama's administration came to an end, the United States had already removed more than ninety percent of its forces from Afghanistan, despite the fact that he had made rhetorical pledges throughout his

time in office (Miller, 2020). The current administration of President Trump has abandoned the idea that the Afghan government need to be included in the conversations. This is due to the fact that the Taliban have taken control of significant portions of Afghanistan and the National Unity Government has been unable to rule the country. Sheikh and Khan (2019) state that the United States of America allowed the Taliban's request for a conference to take place in Qatar in July of 2018, despite the fact that Afghan authorities and ministers were expected to be there under the National Unity Government. In February of 2020, the United States of America and the Taliban signed a ceasefire agreement in Doha, Qatar, over the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. The deal was signed by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was a subordinate to the Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada (Chaudhuri & Shende, 2020). The United States envoy Zalmay Khalilzad was also present at the signing ceremony. It is three months into Joe Biden's administration that he made the remark "It's time to end America's longest war." In addition, he said that all American forces would be removed from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021 (Deshmukh & Sahgal, 2021). Over three billion dollars' worth of investments and assistance has been provided by India to Afghanistan, despite the fact that the United States is planning to withdraw from Afghanistan by the beginning of August 2021 and the Taliban have re-established themselves as the de facto rulers of the nation. According to Kugelman (2021), India has developed roughly 400 projects in Afghanistan as part of its assistance for the development of infrastructure. This has garnered India a great deal of acclaim from the Afghan people living in Afghanistan. However, after the Taliban acquired control of Kabul, India re-examined its stance from 2001 and called into question its policy for Afghanistan. As a result, it initiated Operation Devi Shakti with the intention of securely removing Afghan and Indian people who were employed by the Government of India (MEA, 2022).

The withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan has put India in a vulnerable position in the country. According to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), "Any political settlement (in Afghanistan) must be inclusive and should preserve the socio-economic and political gains of the past 19 years" (Deshmukh & Sahgal, 2021). This statement was made as a cautious reaction to the decision made by the United States. Asai Jaishankar Sai During a debate that took place in front of the United Nations Security Council, the Indian Economic Mission (EAM) advocated for a permanent halt to hostilities in Afghanistan. This was done in order to put an end to the slaughter and preserve the lives of innocent people. He stressed that "any political settlement in Afghanistan must ensure that the gains (by India) of the last two decades are protected, and not reversed," and he reiterated New Delhi's support for a "inclusive, Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled peace process." He also said that India is committed to ensuring that the gains were not overturned. To be more specific, he advocated "zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border attacks," so bringing attention to the grave need of cutting off supply lines for terrorists and destroying safe havens. According to what he stated, it is of the biggest significance to preserve "the constitutional democratic framework and ensure the protection of rights of women, children, and minorities" (Pant, 2021). This "afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled process for enduring peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan" received formal backing from India's government. Despite this, it became very evident during the course of the conversations that Afghanistan was not the driving force behind the process or even the charge. The United States of America was responsible for the bulk of the supervision and control tasks. Pakistan's influence over the Taliban and India's limited engagement in the reconciliation effort both contributed to a weakening of India's position in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

India's stance on Afghanistan after the Taliban took power is a pragmatic combination of preserving the status quo while making changes in a methodical manner. Despite the fact that India has made some subtle adjustments to its diplomatic strategy in order to handle the problems that come with engaging with a government that is ruled by the Taliban, the country has not abandoned its long-standing commitment to the Afghan people by providing them with humanitarian aid and help in regards to development. India is determined to protect its interests, maintain its relevance in the area, and prevent rival countries such as China and Pakistan from growing their influence. This commitment is shown by the fact that India has not received formal recognition or participated in strategic activities. The approach that is being taken here reflects a shift away from a policy that is solely motivated by ideals and towards one that seeks a compromise between principles and realpolitik. When all is said and done, India's current strategy is a deliberate readjustment that is intended to preserve security concerns, sustain prior investments, and maintain its place as a crucial participant in the shifting regional dynamics surrounding Afghanistan.

REFERENCES

1. Arunima. (2020). India Pulwama attack probe NIA finds close ties between jadish-alQaeda and Taliban. CNN-News18. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/pulwamaattack-probe-nia-finds-close-ties-between-jadish-al-qaeda-and-taliban-2821277.html>
 2. Ashraf, F. (2007). India - Afghanistan Relations: Post-9/11. *Strategic Studies*, 27(2), 90– 102. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45242397>
 3. Basu, N. (2022). India finally holds talks with Afghanistan's Taliban govt, 9 months after leaving Kabul. *The Print*.<https://theprint.in/diplomacy/india-finally-holds-talks-withafghanistans-taliban-govt-9-months-after-leaving-kabul/980724/>
 4. Bhatnagar, A., & John, D. (2013). Accessing Afghanistan and Central Asia: Importance of Chabahar port to India. *ORF*. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/accessingafghanistan-and-central-asiainimportance-of-chabahar-to-india/>
 5. Chatterji, S. (2020). Afghanistangeostrategically important for India; could be tapped for defence exports. *Financial Express*.<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/afghanistan-geo-strategically-important-for-india-could-be-tapped-for-defence-exports/1887297/>
 6. Chaudhuri. R., & Shende. S. (2020). Dealing with the Taliban: India's strategy in Afghanistan after U.S. withdrawal. *Carnegie India*. <https://carnegieindia.org/2020/06/02/dealingwith-taliban-india-s-strategy-in-afghanistan-after-u.s.-withdrawal-pub-81951>
 7. Chauhan, N. (2022). India – Central Asia: Why is the region important for India? *Financial Express*. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/india-central-asia-why-is-theregion-important-for-india/2413179/>
 8. Choudhury, A. (2019). India in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. *The Diplomat*.<https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/india-in-afghanistan-after-the-sovietwithdrawal/>
- Congress. (2008). Country Profile: Afghanistan, August 2008. Federal Research Division. United States Library of Congress. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4950afcc0.html>

9. Constantino, Z. (2020). The India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan. United States Institute of Peace.<https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/india-pakistan-rivalryafghanistan>
10. Cottey, A. (2003). Afghanistan and the new dynamics of intervention: counter-terrorism and nation building. In SIPRI Year Book: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security (pp. 168–188). Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. [https:// www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/167-194Chapter4.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/167-194Chapter4.pdf)
11. Deshmukh, S. D., & Sahgal, A. (2021). US withdrawal from Afghanistan: Compromising the Peace? Delhi Policy Group.<https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/policybriefs/us-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-compromising-the-peace.html>
12. Dobbins, J., Poole, M. A., Long, A., & Runkle, B. (2008). After the War: Nation-Building from FDR to George W. Bush. RAND. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG716.pdf
13. Ghosh. (2021). India hosts the Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan. icwa.in. https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=6593&lid=4515
14. Gill, D. M. (2022). India, the Taliban, and the Country In Between. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/india-the-taliban-and-the-country-in-between/>
15. Hanauer, L., & Chalk, P. (2012). India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan. Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2012/RAND_OP387.pdf
16. IANS. (2017). President Ashraf Ghani in New Delhi on Tuesday: Review of India Afghanistan bilateral relationship on cards. Firstpost. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/ashraf-ghani-to-visit-new-delhi-on-tuesday-review-of-india-afghanistan-bilateralrelationship-on-cards-4167305.html>
17. International Crisis Group. (2012). Talking about talks: Toward a Political Settlement in Afghanistan. International Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/talking-about-talks-toward-political-settlement-afghanistan>
18. Ishtiaq, S., & Shah, K. M. (2016). India and Afghanistan: Old Friends New Dialogue. Observer Research Foundation, 2-10. https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ORF_SpecialReport_22_IndiaAfghanistan.pdf
19. Kaura, V. (2017). India-Afghanistan Relations in the Modi-Ghani Era. Indian Journal of Asian Affairs, 30(1/2), 29–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26465815>
20. Kaura, V. (2023). India-Taliban relations: A careful balancing act, driven by pragmatism. Middle East Institute.<https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-taliban-relationscareful-balancing-act-driven-pragmatism>