



India-Afghanistan relations since 2001

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Abstract

This paper discusses India-Afghanistan relations, especially in light of the 9/11 attacks on the United States of America. It looks at how, with the exception of the Taliban's brief rule from 1996 to 2001, India's relations with Afghanistan have been cordial since the country's independence. India got the chance to reestablish its ancient historical and civilizational linkages when the United States overthrew the Taliban administration and created a democratic system in Afghanistan. Since 2001, India has provided Afghanistan all sorts of assistance for its reconstruction. India's national interests are further in stake when the United States exits Afghanistan in August 2021 and a Taliban 2.0 leadership takes over. India's aid strategy has a new profile as a result of this recent development in Afghanistan. The paper accomplishes this in an effort to understand India's relationships with Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban, Security, Reconstruction, Northern Alliance

Introduction

The relations of Afghanistan with India are as old as history itself. The valleys and mountain passes of Afghanistan acted as channels for currents and cross currents of history that had continually flowed from central Asia into the Indian subcontinents changing the colour and character of the Indian people and moulding the course of their destiny. This process continued till the establishment of British hegemony in India. And it was during the British rule in India that Afghanistan came to occupy an important position in the political and military considerations of their Indian Empire (Bilgrami, 1972) [3]. Historically Afghanistan has been at the crossroads of many civilizations: its territories were traversed by many famous men, and hoards of invincible conquerors who had been parts of the grand empires of Persians, the Greeks, the Mauryas and the Kushans. The Aryans were the earliest people to enter India by this route. The modern Afghanistan is today located at the crossroads of Central Asia and South Asia (David Levinson and Karen Christensen, 2002) [16]. Ahmed Shah Abdali, the first Afghan King who had unified different autonomous tribes in 1747 to give the present Afghanistan a definite shape, managed to push beyond Kabul and extended his empire to the northern parts of India (Jafri, 1976) [13].

Britain was interested in Afghanistan only from the Indian angle, in so far as the British Indian Empire might be threatened from its northern frontiers with Central Asia. At the time of the first intervention at Herat in 1838, some 2000 miles of Asian states still separated the expanding British and Russian Empires in Asia; yet the threat of Russian military might seemed close enough to the contemporary British strategists. Fears of Russian designs in Afghanistan contributed largely to the first Anglo-Afghan war of 1838-42. These fears loomed larger in the next decades, as each empire continued its seemingly inexorable absorption of territory, coming closer to the other with each decade. British Indian frontiers were pushed on into the Punjab and Peshawar regions, ruled by Sikhs who had conquered these districts earlier in the 19th century. Later on, the British India reached to the western edge of the Indus

Valley to the north, and after the Crimean War, the Russian forces moved from the Kazakhstan steppes to the basin of the Amu Darya (Oxus) and Jaxartes rivers, bringing into the Russian sphere the Khanates of Kokand, Khiva and Bukhara.

Thus from both north and south, Afghanistan was pressed by the two great expansionist empires of Asia (Hyman, 1982) [12]. From 1953 onwards when Afghanistan became the first non-communist recipient of Russian aid; it moved in a way into the Russian sphere of influence, but its dependence on the USSR remained discreet for the next 25 years (Calvocoressi, 2001) [4]. With the expansion of the Russian jurisdiction in Central Asia in the 19th century, Afghanistan somewhat inadvertently became an area of competition between the British and Russian Empires. This continued even during the Soviet regime till the end of World War II, after which right up to 1978, it was a Great Game of competition played between Western democracies led by the US, on the one hand and the Soviet Union, on the other. Another dimension of the tensions which has afflicted Afghanistan from the beginning of the 20th century has been the domestic conflict and competition between the forces of modernisation and those of orthodox Islam (Dixit, 2002) [5]. Modernization in Afghanistan was ushered in especially by King Zahir Shah and President Daud Khan but it culminated in the establishment of pro-Soviet communist regime through a bloody coup. Resistance to the communist government in Afghanistan provided the Soviet Union an opportunity to intervene with its military might directly in the country on 27 December 1979. The event gave United States a chance, with the help of Pakistan and Afghanistan's opposition parties to support a militia of sorts called Mujahideen, composed of diverse ethnicities in Afghanistan, and in this work it got active participation of Osama bin Laden and his organization Al-Qaeda (Singh, 2012) [29].

The early 1990s witnessed the collapsed of the Soviet Union and that strengthened the US strategic foothold in the region. But by this time, Afghanistan had collapsed into virtual anarchy due to ethnic conflicts. Different factions of

the Mujahideen struggled for power; however in April 1992, Kabul finally fell in one faction of the Mujahideen, i.e. the Taliban, which had emerged in 1994 and had captured power with the help of Pakistan army in 1996. The US now called upon the Taliban for construction of oil pipeline. The Washington at this time even ignored Taliban's barbarism and human rights violations in the hope that the latter would be helpful in the United States strategic designs. However, in post-9/11 period till date the US has followed its imperialist policies more vigorously, initially with the support of public opinion and later without it. President George Bush and Barack Obama have more or less pursued the same policy line in Afghanistan.

It was George W. Bush who had vowed to capture Osama bin Laden dead or alive in response to Al-Qaeda who organised attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. In retaliation, the US launched its campaign for international war against terrorism and "Operation Enduring Freedom" directed against both the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during November 2001. This provided India an opportunity to pursue its positive foreign policy goals with regards to both the new non-Taliban regime in Kabul as well as the post-cold war US. Therefore very logically, post- 9/11, India intensified its efforts to re-establish its influence in the war-ravaged country of Afghanistan (Mukherjee, 2008) ^[20]. In the wake of 9/11 incidents, India willingly let the U.S. take the lead in dealing militarily with those groups in Afghanistan who had planned the attacks as the defeat of Al-Qaeda-Taliban combine was in India's interest. India was perhaps the first country to come out strongly for the American military intervention in Afghanistan, with Indian officials claiming that their country was a similar victim of terrorism from Al-Qaeda and their Taliban hosts who were training militants against Indians in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Ashraf, 2007) ^[21]. Since the fall of Taliban regime in Kabul, India has been one of the primary donors in the context of Afghanistan's reconstruction. India's pledge towards Afghanistan's reconstruction process has now reached the tune of US \$ 3 billion. Some of the sectors to which India has significantly contributed include hydroelectricity, power transmission lines, road construction, agriculture and industry, telecommunication, information technology and broadcasting, humanitarian assistance, education and health. These have been identified by Afghan government as priority areas for development (Dutta, 2008) ^[7]. Indian efforts in Afghanistan's reconstruction are underpinned by the key objectives i.e. negating the influence of Pakistani Inter-services intelligence (ISI)-backed groups like the Taliban, which are hostile to Indian interests, curtailing the spread of drugs – trafficking which poses a risk to both national and human security in the region and securing Afghanistan as a trade and energy corridor to Central Asia (Sharma, 2011) ^[26].

India-Afghanistan relations Since 2001

During the Taliban reign in Afghanistan, India hardly had any relations with Afghanistan. Hence, India's position during this phase was worse than ever. This has further led to complete rupture of India of India-Afghanistan relations with the anti-Indian attitude of Taliban guided by its close ties with Pakistan. Taliban's deep-seated hatred towards minorities in Afghanistan further distanced Indian from Kabul. This distance was further widened when an Indian

Airlines aircraft was hijacked from Kathmandu enroute to Delhi was taken to Amritsar and from there it flew to Lahore and to Dubai and finally landed in Kandhar. The Indian misgivings towards Taliban was further confirmed as the Taliban regime refused to allow India to use force against the hijackers and instead went on helping the safe exit of the terrorist without taking action against them. It was also believed from certain sources that, Taliban over the years were acting in concert with Pakistan in anti-India activities including providing its territory for training of Kashmiri terrorists. Hence, it was not surprising that the government of India promptly offered the United States every logistic support in the wake of its declaration of war against Afghanistan's Taliban regime in September 2001 (Pradhan, 2013) ^[23]. Following the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. led war in Afghanistan; India got an opportunity to rebuild its ties with Afghanistan. After toppling of Taliban, the U.S. has instated an interim government in Kabul with Hamid Karzai as its President. In Karzai, India saw a trusted friend and seized the opportunity for rebuilding the relationship that was in dormant during the brief period of Talibanism of Afghanistan. With Afghanistan viewing a friend in India, the relations between the two countries bolstered in many ways. New Delhi since then has been pursuing a "soft power" strategy towards Afghanistan, sticking to civilian rather than military matters. This was reflected in an immediate up gradation of India representation in Afghanistan from a Liaison Office to a full-fledged Embassy in 2002. India actively participated in Bonn conference and was instrumental in the emergence of post-Taliban governing and political authority in Afghanistan. Since then India's main focus has been to support the Afghan government and the political process in the country as mandated under the Bonn agreement of 2001. India's Afghan policy has been driven by both economic and strategic factors. The annual reports of Ministry of External Affairs 2001-2021 have visibly pointed out that one of the foreign policy priorities of India would be strength the trends of cooperation, friendship and trust with countries of India's extended neighbourhood based on old civilization and historical ties as well as strong contemporary relevance. Countries of Southeast Asia, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean Region have a common stake with India in promoting peace, stability and development in this space. This prompted the then National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government to endeavor sincerely to make its presence felt in its extended neighbourhood expanding from the East and Southeast Asian countries to the oil kingdoms of West Asia (Ganguly, 2013) ^[9]. During President Hamid Karzai's visit to India from 4-5 October 2011, India and Afghanistan signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA); the first such agreement signed by Afghanistan with any trade and development activities, this agreement indicated that both sides would establish a strategic Dialogue to provide a framework for cooperation in the area of national security. The agreement mentioned that the strategic dialogue would "involve regular consultations with the aim of intensifying mutual efforts towards strengthening regional peace and security. The agreement also pointed out that India would assist in the training, equipping and capacity building programmes for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). This agreement reflected India's intend to pave a suitable cooperative mechanism whereby it could be an

indispensable part of the security framework of Afghanistan after the 2014 drawdown of forces.

India's approach towards Afghanistan has largely been a function of the desire to prevent Pakistan from dominating that country, something Islamabad views as a vital counterweight to India's preponderance in South Asia. India and Pakistan have been struck in a classic security dilemma in so far as their Afghan policies are concerned, in that any measure by either side to increase its security is liable to trigger a reaction, thus causing deterioration in the overall regional balance. India's support for Northern Alliance (NA) against the Pakistan backed Taliban in the 1990s strengthened its position in Kabul after 2001 as many Alliance members have come to hold key governmental or provincial posts. New Delhi has also done its best to restore the balance in its engagement with a range to different ethnic groups and political defilements in Afghanistan and has used its vocal support for President Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun educated in India, to demonstrate its keenness to revive hand and to support the Afghan government and countries economic and political restructuring on the other (Pant, 2010) ^[22]. With establishment of an interim government in Afghanistan under President Hamid Karzai and following India's well-received role in the Bonn Conference of 2001, India announced US \$ 100 million in reconstruction aid to Afghanistan. Since then, India has followed a policy of high-level engagement with Afghanistan characterized by political, development projects (Rajeswar, 2011) ^[25]. Then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told the Indian Parliament that India is making efforts to have a 'maximum possible' role in the establishment of a broad-based, non-aligned and fully representative post-Taliban regime in Afghanistan (D'Souza, 2011).

Taliban 2.0 and India

In August 2021, the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan following American withdrawal. From its previous name of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the war-torn nation was renamed Emirates of Afghanistan. India's approach towards Afghanistan has changed as a result of this development in Afghanistan. It has received substantial consideration as a security problem. Although India did not recognize the Taliban 2.0 government in Afghanistan, the Afghan people nonetheless regarded it favorably for its assistance during difficult times. There have been media claims that India has quietly started backchannel talks with the Taliban in Doha. India was formally invited to negotiations with the Taliban first in Moscow and then in Doha (Haider, 2021) ^[11]. At the end of August, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai a Taliban representative, and the Indian ambassador to Qatar hold a formal meeting in the Taliban's political office in Doha. A previous Indian ambassador to Afghanistan named Gautam Mukopadhaya argued in favor of a limited and modest engagement because of the Taliban's widespread dislike in Afghanistan. India was a significant regional and international supporter of the Afghan government, although they were well-informed about the country's future, particularly following the United States' decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. India made an effort to keep its diplomatic relationship with the Taliban open or closed due to their significant stake in Afghanistan (MEA, 2011). Once the Indian engineers and staff operating in Afghanistan needed to be freed from the Taliban in 2011,

however, communication between Indian officials and the Taliban was fairly open. Literally, Pakistan regards the previous Afghan government as India's proxy, and India sees the Taliban as Pakistan's proxy. India studied and examined interior Afghanistan from four different angles; prioritizing the Northern and Eastern regions of Afghanistan, India prioritized Mazar-e Sharif and Herat. They primarily formed their relationships with Durrani Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Hazara on the basis of economic engagement and cultural cooperation. While designing its plan to counter Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, India gave security in the country's center and southern regions, including Kabul and Jalalabad, a high priority. It is also simple for India to monitor issues and potential threats from Pakistan by operating consulates in Herat and Kandahar, while by effectively operating consulates in Mazar-e Sharif and Jalalabad, India used to protect the national interests in the northern part of Afghanistan, Kashmir, and the potential pressures from Pakistan, especially from the tribal areas. However, some academics have stated that the present and future of India's strategic outlooks in Afghanistan should be evaluated in light of three key aspects, namely the fact that Afghanistan is strategically crucial because of its proximity to Pakistan. The Taliban might not have taken control of Afghanistan without Pakistan's backing and regular help. Secondly, for continuing the India's projects and investments in Afghanistan, and to make the check and balance in Afghanistan, mainly to tackle Pakistan and China's strong presence in Afghanistan, India would be forced to implement the strategic relations with Iran where the Chabahar port of Iran will be strategic place to maintain the trade route with Afghanistan (Lievin, 2021). Secondly, India would be forced to implement strategic relations with Iran, where the Chabahar port of Iran will be strategic place to maintain the trade route with Afghanistan, in order to maintain the India's projects and investments in Afghanistan and to make the check and balance in Afghanistan, solely to tackle Pakistan and China's strong presence in Afghanistan. It is evident that China and Pakistan, India's enemies and neighbors, both share a border with Afghanistan, while India does not (Siddiqui, 2021) ^[28]. As a result, it leaves India with a strategic vacuum and a long-term gap, forcing it to align with Iran or any other Central Asian nations like Tajikistan. Thirdly, China is either totally or partially challenging the external power equation and influences in Afghanistan, primarily economic and diplomatic engagement. While India is still waiting for its international allies to acknowledge the Taliban administration, China actively cooperated with the Taliban 2.0 regime.

If international organizations accept the Taliban 2.0 administration, India will adjust its approach accordingly. Apart from Pakistan's active involvement in Afghanistan, China's robust presence there puts India under a lot of regional pressure. Other than the border disputes between India and China, the hostile attitude in Askia Chin in Kashmir, economic disputes, and the long-term issue via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), maritime conflicts created in the Indo-Pacific region would have numerous repercussions for India (Anbarasan, 2021) ^[1]. Due to their alliances with Pakistan and China, the Taliban 2.0 will gain enormous influence and may pose devastating security threats to India that won't be restricted to Afghanistan but will instead affect Kashmir and its neighbors Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. China's

long-term objective is to incorporate all of South Asia's countries into the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) practical implications. The current situation in Afghanistan illustrates China's promising future, in which it would be simple to suggest including Afghanistan in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has been a huge success in Pakistan. In light of this, if China is successful in incorporating Afghanistan into the BRI and CPEC models, it will further erode India's interests in Afghanistan, particularly in the South Asian region. By proposing and carrying out CPEC investments and projects in the disputed territories between India and Pakistan, China had some success.

India's Interests in Afghanistan

India has many interests in Afghanistan that are germane to India's positioning itself as an important power beyond the confines of South Asia. India has fundamental interest in ensuring that Afghanistan emerges as a politically stable and economically integrated state.

Security Interests

India's physical security has historically been threatened by its North-Western frontier with Afghanistan, which has been a launch pad for invasions in Northern India and Kashmir. However, after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Kashmiri linkage with Afghanistan rekindled, with ideologically motivated Mujahideen using weapons supplied by the USA (Warikoo, 2002) [14]. Pakistan has supported militant groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen/Harkat-ul-Ansar, and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami in India, all trained in Afghanistan. India is concerned about Afghanistan's potential return to terrorist safe heaven. The Taliban's control of Afghanistan served military objectives, ensuring strategic depth for Pakistan's army and maintaining Arab and Afghan militancy in Indian Kashmir (Dua, 2011) [10]. The Taliban provided sanctuary for terrorist training in Kashmir, established 21 camps, and exacerbated New Delhi's security concerns due to their involvement in the Kargil conflict and the hijacked Indian airliner landing. India seeks to maintain Afghanistan's friendly status, allowing it to monitor Pakistan and influence its activities, while Pakistan aims to deny India these opportunities and cultivate Afghanistan as a client state.

Energy Security

Energy access is crucial for national progress, but fossil fuel resources are not meeting global demands. Emerging powers like China and India are recognizing the importance of energy for their future. Despite their resources, China relies heavily on imported energy, while India has only 0.3% of the world's oil reserves.

Afghanistan is a critical country for securing the region's future due to natural gas from Turkmenistan and energy pipeline routes. India's strategic interest lies in easy access to energy-rich central Asian states, Iran, and Gujarat ports for refineries and pipeline networks. India's President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam emphasized the importance of a stable Afghanistan as a key land bridge for energy interests in Central Asia, reducing dependence on Middle East supplies. The Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India (TAPI) project aims to enhance energy security and sustain

economic growth by carrying 30,000 cu. feet of gas from Turkmenistan's Dauletabad field (Kiesow and Norling, 2007) [15].

Commercial Interests

Afghanistan presents a significant untapped market for Indian industry, amidst Pakistan, Iran, and Turkmenistan dominance. It also serves as a gateway to the Central Asian market, attracting Indian industries in tea, pharmaceuticals, food processing, IT, banking, health, tourism, consumer durables, and automobiles. India's global IT hub, medical tourism, affordable drugs, and small and medium-sized enterprises give it an edge (MEA, 2009). India is developing the International North South Trade Corridor (INSTC) to bypass Pakistan and access Central Asian markets. The 218 km Zaranj-Delaram road on the Afghanistan-Iran border aims to provide shorter sea access to Afghanistan and bypass Pakistan, shipping goods from Mumbai port to Chabahar in Iran and then to Central Asia (Srinivasan, 2007) [30]. India has proposed Afghanistan's membership in the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to address transit and free flow issues, leading to economic development and increased connectivity to Central and West Asia. Participation in the SAARC could result in trade gains of \$2 billion for the region and \$606 million for Afghanistan. Indian companies have invested nearly \$25 million in Afghanistan since 2001, primarily in services and construction sectors. Afghan-Indian firms have also established 80 joint ventures with an initial capital of \$20 million.

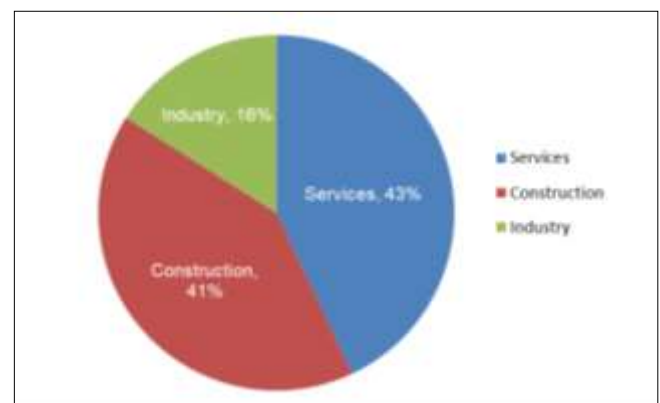


Fig 1: Investment decomposition of Indian firms in Afghanistan by Sector of Activity

India and Afghanistan signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTSA) in 2003 to enhance economic integration and facilitate mutual trade between the two countries. India became Afghanistan's major trading partner and fifth largest importer, with trade value increasing from 80 million in 2001 to nearly \$280 million in 2010, representing 20% of total Afghanistan's imports and exports.

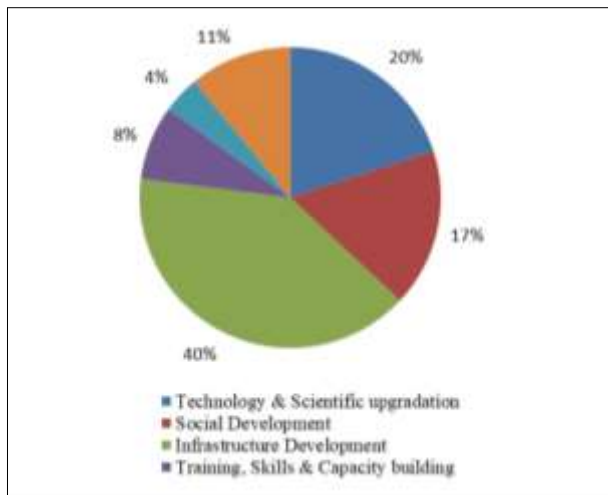
India's role in reconstruction of Afghanistan

The rebuilding of formal and informal institutions, such as infrastructure, social services, and structural reforms, during the post-World War II period is a difficult policy accomplishment. It has a lengthy history, and two important initiatives are the Marshal Plan and the European Recovery Programme. Which were primary programmes of United States. India renewed diplomatic ties with Kabul after the

Taliban's ouster, adopting a "Soft Power Approach" in Afghanistan reconstruction. The country aims to revive its humanitarian, historical, social, cultural, and civilizational ties, supporting the democratic regime and denying Taliban return (D'Souza, 2011). As a major regional and economic power, with ambitions of extending its influence beyond its immediate neighbourhood, India has worked towards reviving the role of Afghanistan as a land bridge thereby connecting South Asia with Central Asia to tap on energy resources and augment trade. Since 2001, India has been one of the primary donors to Afghanistan's reconstruction. India's pledge towards Afghanistan's reconstruction process has now reached the tune of US \$ 3 billion. India has pledged around \$2 billion to Afghanistan under a Strategic Partnership Agreement signed by President Karzai in 2011, focusing on political security, trade, economic cooperation, capacity development, education, and social, cultural, civil society, and people-to-people relations (Price, 2013)^[24]. The projects completed in Afghanistan by the government of India from 2002 to 2007 can be broadly categorized under six heads. These heads have been elaborated further below:

Table 1: Projects completed in Afghanistan by Government of India (2002-2007)

S. No.	Projects Heads	Approx. Expenditure (in million \$)
1.	Social Development	16.30
2.	Infrastructure Development	39.10
3.	Training, skills & capacity building	8.31
4.	Economic Development	4.32
5.	Contribution to reconstruction fund	10.80
6.	Technology & scientific up-gradation	19.60
	Total	98.43



Source: Mondira Dutta, 2008: *World Focus*.

Fig 2

1. Social Development includes consignment for immediate humanitarian relief, education kits, books, reconstruction of schools, donation of desks and benches for schools and construction of toilets.
2. Infrastructure development includes the supply of aircrafts, buses and vehicles. It also consider the construction of electricity transmission lines and solar electrification.
3. Training, skills & capacity building focuses on the development of capacity building measures through the training of school teachers ICT professionals, doctors,

- and diplomats, skills development, provision of sewing machines, banking etc.
4. Economic development includes the digging of deep wells, agriculture, construction of cold storage facilities etc.
5. The contribution to Reconstruction Fund includes support to the Afghan Government budget and World Bank managed Afghan Reconstruction Fund.
6. Technology & Scientific up-gradation includes the restoration/revamping of information systems, TV satellites, telecommunication, setting up of common facilities services centers (Dutta, 2011).

In addition, to the above, other major projects have just been completed or nearing completion. Some of these include:

Construction of Zaranj-Delaram Road

The Zaranj-Delaram Highway, completed in 2008, connects 14 major cities in India with the Iranian sea port of Chabahar. The project, costing \$184 million, demonstrates joint resolve and reduces Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan's sea port. Despite Taliban attacks, the highway has brought the two countries closer together.

Reconstruction and completion of the Salma Dam: India is rebuilding the Salma Dam in Herat province, built in 1976 but damaged during the conflict period.

The Dam will produce 42 MW of power and irrigate 40,000 hectares of land. Total cost of this project was US \$ 85 million which have ever risen now. Iranian government has reservation on this dam as Rari Rod River flow in to Iran would be reduced after completion.

Construction of Afghanistan's Parliament building

Construction of the new Parliament Complex in Kabul firm G & C construction is yet another project of Indian government in Afghanistan. This project of Indian government in Afghanistan was completed and inaugurated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the special invitation by Afghan government. Total cost of the project is US \$ 178 million.

Construction of a Double Circuit Transmission Line from Pul-e-Khumari to Kabul:

The Indian government has assigned the project to the Water and Power Consultancy Services (India) Ltd. (WAPCOS). Besides this, India is involved in the construction of a 220 KV double circuit transmission line from Pul-e-Khumari, and a 220/110/20 KV substation in Kabul, which involves the construction of 600 transmission towers and the estimated cost of which is Rs. 478 Crores. It will supply electricity to Kabul from the Tirmiz Power Project in Uzbekistan.

Hijgak Iron Ore Deposit Contract

Afghanistan government has awarded the mining right to the country's biggest iron ore deposits at Hajigak, Bamian province to a consortium of Indian firms. The deposits are estimated to hold one billion dollars to mine. The contractor has to build a power plant, steel mill and improve the transportation links and roads.

Building and Developing Educational Institutions

India has been building & developing hospitals, medical centres, dispensaries, MCH centers provision of

ambulances. Developing Agriculture University in Kabul, construction of water channels, tube wells, provision of seeds, tractors and 25 million tonnes of wheat.

Conclusion

As a friendly gesture towards Afghanistan and to bring to South Asian mainstream, India also piloted the move to make Afghanistan a member of the South Asian Associations of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Since the year 2001, relations between India and Afghanistan are characterized by continuous engagement resulting in frequent to level bilateral exchanges, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has visited India 12 times which shows the level of engagement and importance Afghanistan assigns to India. Indian Prime Minister visited Afghanistan in 2005 and 2011, the first visit after 29 years. India provided assistance during the US-led invasion in 2001 and post 9/11, supporting reconstruction and development. India's development partnerships focus on infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance, and education. During the pre-Taliban 2.0 era, India supported Afghan National Security Forces training and capacity building. However, efforts to deepen ties with the former Afghan government were one-sided, focusing on health, agriculture, education, and sports. India contributed \$3 billion to Afghanistan over 20 years, constructing trade facilities, highways, and dams. It also built hospitals, rebuilt stores, and provided various goods to the Afghan leadership. Bilateral trade reached \$1.3 billion in 2019-20. India delivered the first humanitarian aid shipment to Afghanistan, and promised to supply wheat amid the humanitarian crisis. India needs to establish its official position on the new power in Afghanistan and receive international approval to determine its stance on Taliban 2.0. The wait and watch strategy is crucial in this situation. India plans to reevaluate its foreign policy approach in Afghanistan by consulting with the international community, particularly Western allies, to ensure its support for the new power. India's approach to Afghanistan should be reevaluated based on five variables: determining the best strategies for forging ties with the Taliban, emphasizing its economic and technical support, using soft power strategies, maintaining alliances with long-standing allies, and increasing bilateral communication with Pakistan. These factors can help India negotiate with Taliban 2.0 and tribal leaders. India requires Afghanistan and Taliban cooperation for security hegemony in South Asia, particularly in Kashmir, and economic engagement with Central Asian countries. This is achieved through the Pan Central Asian E-Network and Connect Central Asia policy, which promotes an alternative to China's BRI and CPEC projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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