

# Role of India in Peace Process of Afghanistan

Sharifullah Amin<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohammad Yousuf Zamani<sup>1</sup>, Shahidullah Safi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Judgment and Prosecution, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Paktia University, Afghanistan



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\*Corresponding Author:  
Sharifullah Amin,

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## Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

## ABSTRACT

The tragic event of 9/11 altered the world's political and security dynamics. The events of September 11th gave India with an opportunity to enter Afghanistan. Due of its strategic importance, Afghanistan attracts international powers. Afghanistan serves as a gateway to Central Asia's energy-rich republics. India's presence in Afghanistan is very reasonable. India had never had friendly relations with Afghanistan's Taliban administration. The events of September 11th provided India with an opportunity to cultivate friendly relations with the Afghan political leadership. India attended the Bonn Conference and pledged its support for the Afghan people in their efforts to rebuild their nation. The governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani in Kabul have the best ties with India. India has strengthened relationships with Iran in order to protect its interests in Afghanistan and fight Pakistan. In Afghanistan, India and Iran share certain mutual interests. New Delhi has made significant investments in Afghanistan's numerous industries in order to strengthen its position in Afghan society. India has made a concerted effort to assist Afghan nationals in order to strengthen its soft power. India is now influencing Afghanistan's domestic politics. India is regarded as a big market in South Asia by the rest of the globe. Pakistan has long been concerned about India's position in Afghanistan. India's involvement in Afghanistan is seen as a danger to Pakistan's national security. Pakistan believes India should try to improve the lives of Afghans, but she should refrain from exploiting Afghan land against Pakistan. Pakistan has already suffered a great deal as a result of the unrest in Afghanistan. South Asia and the Global Powers benefit from a peaceful Afghanistan. The focus of this thesis is on India's involvement in Afghanistan and its role in bringing peace to the country.

Keywords: INDIA, AFGHANISTAN, TALIBAN, PAKISTAN, PEACE PROCESS

## Introduction

Kabul and Indian connections stretch back to 1855, when both governments signed the Peshawar Treaty, a Mutual Agreement Treaty. Following the fall of the Taliban administration, New Delhi arrived in Afghanistan physically. India attempted to explain its involvement by announcing that it will play a critical role in Afghanistan's rehabilitation. India's major goal in Afghanistan was to counteract Pakistan's influence (Rehman,

2014). For external forces, Kabul has always been a battlefield. The primary goal of India is to disrupt Pakistan's internal security. Seventy percent of Afghans believe India is a better alternative than Pakistan or the United States (Constantino, 2020). Pakistan and the United States have invested significant financial and human resources in Kabul. Since 2001, India has announced \$ 1.2 billion in aid to Kabul, making it the fifth largest donor (Joshi, 2018). Islamabad has expressed grave concerns over India's presence in Afghanistan and Raw's participation in insurgent operations in North Waziristan (Saleem, 2018). The presence of the Indian Intelligence Agency in Afghanistan demonstrates India's ambitions. India has a presence in Baluchistan and is attempting to derail the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has given Pakistan's economy a fresh lease on life. As a result, India and its proxies in the Afghan government are attempting to undermine Pakistan's security and economy (Ullah, 2020). India is adamant that she would not want Afghanistan to fall into the clutches of Taliban insurgents with Pakistan's help. India wants to remain a vital part in the Afghan conflict, and it may utilize whatever means to be physically on the ground in Kabul. A peaceful Afghanistan is beneficial to Pakistan, India, and other countries in the area. India has expressed worries over the Taliban-Pakistan connection (Paliwal, 2015). New Delhi is attempting to enlist the help of as many Great Powers as possible in order to realize its hegemonic ambitions in South Asia. In Afghanistan, India is using Soft Power to expand its influence. India's internal security situation is inadequate, and the issue of Kashmir, as well as the war with Pakistan, are the key roadblocks to India's ascension to the hegemony of South Asia. For the past ten years, India has been boosting its military and economic expansion. Due to its huge size and population, New Delhi has undoubtedly become a large and enticing market for other states. India is viewed as a viable investment destination by several countries. India now wants to use Soft Power to strengthen her influence in the area and attract the attention of world powers (Pande, 2020). On February 29, 2020, in Qatar's capital, the Taliban and the United States signed a peace agreement. According to an agreement made between the Taliban and the United States, the United States would remove its forces from Afghanistan until May 2021. Neighboring countries are contributing to a long-term peace in Afghanistan. The subject of this research paper is on India's engagement in the Afghan Peace Process and its presence in Afghanistan.

## Research methodology

To create this work, the researcher employed a qualitative method. The researcher looked over the existing literature on the subject. To do this research, the researcher relied on articles, books, and newspapers. The researcher addressed a number of people who were knowledgeable enough to speak on the subject. Mr. Abdul Basit, Research Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, gave me his expert judgment on my subject. MS. Farzana Shah, a journalist residing in Peshawar who is well-versed in Afghanistan, also assisted me in completing my study. The researcher went to many libraries in quest of information on his topic. To gather information on this subject, the researcher performed exploratory research.

## Literature review

Shanthie D'Souza and Rajshree Jetly's "Perspective on South Asian Security." Both are experienced writers in the field of security studies. The fascinating security dynamics of the South Asian region are depicted in this book. This book examines the region's security concerns. Afghanistan has been at war with the United States for the past 18 years. The central theme of this novel is Afghanistan. Both authors analyze India's foreign policy toward Afghanistan. India, being a neighboring country to Afghanistan, is concerned about security. From an Indian standpoint, Indian foreign policy toward Afghanistan is critical. India has a strong interest in Afghanistan since it has made significant investments there. This book examines India's foreign policy toward Afghanistan in depth (Souza & Jetly, 2012).

Dr. Iram Khalid wrote "The New Great Game in Afghanistan: India's Role (A Pakistani Perspective)." Dr. Iram Khalid examines the significance of Afghanistan to international powers in this essay. She sheds light on India's role in Afghanistan following the tragic events of 9/11. India has made significant investments in Afghanistan and is now working on a variety of projects there. Dr. Iram Khalid went about the reason of India's participation in Afghanistan in great detail. She also discusses India's intentions for the region of South Asia (Khalid, 2011). Marium Kamal's article "Indian Strategic Influence in Afghanistan: Realist Ends via Social Means" India, according to the scholar, is a rising force in South Asia and global politics. India's involvement in Afghanistan is a step toward increasing its Soft Power and achieving its long-term global aims. She emphasized India's intentions in Afghanistan as well as its impact on Afghan politics and society. She also spoke about New Delhi's goals and operations in Kabul (Kamal, 2019; Ullah, 2020).

Fazal Abbas Awan, Asia Sial Alvi, and Rabia Munir wrote "Delhi-Kabul Nexus: Regional Dynamics and Geopolitical Perspective (With Reference to Pakistan)". The researchers concentrated on the importance of India and Pakistan in bringing stability to South Asia. For both arch-rivals, Afghanistan represents a new battleground. They discussed India's participation in Afghanistan and its implications for Islamabad. India's security, economic, and political interests in Afghanistan were addressed in this study. They also talked about India's strategy for gaining access to Central Asian republics through Afghanistan. The writers also explored America's containment approach toward China through the use of India (Awan, Alvi, & Munir, 2019).

The authors drew attention to India's objectives in Afghanistan. India is attempting to gain prominence in international politics. India is attempting to counteract Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. However, India's participation in the Afghan Peace Process was conspicuously absent. India's position in the Afghan Peace Process must be improved.

### **The Role of India in the Afghan Peace Process**

After the division of the Subcontinent, the globe witnessed strong Indian-Afghan relations. After the 9/11 attacks, India made a personal visit to Afghanistan. It was attempted to legitimize India's involvement in Afghanistan by claiming that India will play a vital role in Afghanistan's reconstruction phase. Its primary goal was to

Pakistan's presence in Afghanistan should be reduced. India aspires to control the whole South Asian region. Pakistan's existence is the actual impediment to India's progress. Except for the Taliban period, India has always maintained good relations with Afghanistan. Afghanistan's geographic position encourages India to retain close relationships with the country. India's primary goal is Central Asia's energy-rich republics. Except for the Taliban, India had good ties with all Afghan administrations. India has not only strengthened its trading connections with Afghanistan, but it is also involved in local initiatives in the country. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent installation of the Taliban rule, India was pushed off of the Afghan political scene. Despite this, India has consistently backed the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Due of Pakistan's influence over the Taliban, India did not take an active role in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime ([Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2015](#)).

India's embassy in Kabul was shuttered in September 1996 and remained shuttered till 2001. After 9/11, India became a major influence in Afghanistan. Despite the fact that India did not participate militarily in Afghanistan, its influence is felt in Kabul. In 2001, the United States deposed the Taliban administration, and Hamid Karzai was elected President of Afghanistan. India saw this as an excellent chance to settle in Afghanistan by investing money in the country's rehabilitation. Due to India's historical, political, and cultural links with Afghanistan, the country was obligated to give financial and political assistance for the country's reconstruction ([D'Souza, 2014](#)). The wider picture shows India's involvement in Afghanistan. India is attempting to increase its influence over South Asian countries in order to establish hegemony in the region. India has a wider market than its South Asian neighbors, making it easier for India to attract the attention of world powers ([Fair, 2014](#)).

During a debate in the House of Foreign Affairs in February 2013, the American Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia emphasized the importance of India. He asserted unequivocally that no discussion of South Asia can take place without India's participation. In addition, the Assistant Secretary addressed the audience on India's engagement in Afghanistan ([The Hindu, 2013](#)).

At the Tokyo meeting in January 2002, India pledged to help Afghanistan. After the United States, England, Japan, and Germany, India offered a two-billion-dollar donation to Afghanistan's rehabilitation ([Price, 2013](#)). India and Afghanistan signed an agreement in 2011 to collaborate in a number of areas:

1. Government-to-government and defense-to-defense cooperation
2. Trade and Economic Cooperation
3. Strengthening Capabilities and Providing Education Support

To close the trust gap between the two nations, communal, ethnic, and people-to-people engagement was required ([Price, 2013](#)).

Since 2002, India and Afghanistan have had good government-to-government ties. President Karzai has also traveled to India several times during his presidency. President Ashraf Ghani believes India to be a friend and has visited the country to strengthen bilateral ties. India has aided Afghanistan on several occasions and has

expressed a strong interest in the country's restoration and rehabilitation efforts.

To preserve its influence in Afghanistan, India is assisting the Afghan government. India may build an embassy in Kabul as a result of its strong bilateral ties with the Afghan government. India has also opened consulates in Afghanistan's major cities. Afghanistan has also been admitted to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (SAARC). Afghanistan's entry in SAARC was aided by India. India's proposal aided both nations in their efforts to become closer (Kaur, 2017).

Afghans were also allowed to visit India for medical and educational purposes. The people of Afghanistan were also granted a significant concession under India's visa rules. India announced a two-year visa for Afghan people, as well as an exemption from police reporting for the elderly and minors. India's decision to increase its people-to-people engagement with Afghanistan was hailed as a brilliant initiative. India is also contributing significantly to Afghanistan's economic development. India and Afghanistan have inked a trade agreement to increase bilateral trade (Grades Fixer, 2019).

Customs duties on several commodities were decreased under the agreement in order to boost bilateral commerce between New Delhi and Kabul. It was a huge step toward helping Afghanistan's war-torn economy. As a consequence, in 2013, the total amount of commerce reached 600 million dollars. However, it is expected to grow to almost \$3 billion in the future years. Everything hinges on the state of peace in Afghanistan. The only thing that stimulates state-to-state trade is peace. India and Afghanistan are seeking to get the most out of the trade deal and improve the level of living for the average man (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2015).

In terms of natural resources, Afghanistan is a wealthy country. In addition, India and Afghanistan have inked a Strategic Partnership Agreement. In order to discover natural resources in Afghanistan, India and Afghanistan have attempted to strengthen their partnership. In various sectors, including transportation, communications, and information technology, India is dedicated to assisting Afghanistan. India has also inked two memorandums to investigate Afghanistan's mineral and natural gas reserves. These Natural Reserves are estimated to be worth a trillion dollars (Choi, 2014).

India is using deception to get entry to Central Asian countries. Central Asian countries have abundant energy resources. India aims to use Central Asia's resources through Afghanistan. India is spending to gain a foothold in Afghanistan's war-torn country. Through Afghanistan, India will have easy access to Central Asian countries, including Russia (Siddiqui, 2017).

India believes that after American and NATO forces leave, the Afghan government would lose control of Kabul. Things will not be in Pakistan's favor either (Shayan, 2016). India believes that the Afghan administration is incapable of maintaining peace in the nation. Unrest in Afghanistan might have major consequences for India and the whole South Asian region. India believes Afghanistan now has two major challenges:

1. a weak government system and

2. strong individuals.
3. The Peak of Corruption
4. Political Identities That Are Dispersed
5. Illicit drug trafficking

#### Organizations of Militants, No. 6

The Taliban's resurgence poses a severe threat to India. India is well aware that the Taliban have beaten NATO and US forces in Afghanistan. On Afghanistan's political scene, the Taliban is now the most dominant identity. The Afghan administration is also concerned about the economic situation. Afghanistan's economy is reliant on foreign aid. Due to allegations of corruption, countries are attempting to restrict help to the Afghan government. Afghanistan is the world's leading opium producer. Afghanistan produces 80% of all opium in the world. Opium money eventually ends up in the hands of the Taliban ([Tolo News, 2018](#)).

As a sophisticated state, India is attempting to discover viable solutions in Afghanistan. India's hegemony forces a shift in the status quo and the establishment of new institutions to meet her requirements. India's presence in Kabul demonstrates her need to beef up her security in order to maintain control over Afghanistan's external environment. Afghanistan has taken on a key role in India's foreign policy in a variety of ways ([Pant, 2010](#)).

India's interests are divided into three categories: security, economics, and regional concerns. India is projecting a soft image in Afghanistan in order to further its objectives. India is attempting to achieve her goal through social activity. Both India and Pakistan are arch-enemies. In Afghanistan, India and Pakistan have security worries. India's involvement in Afghanistan should be seen from a security standpoint. India believes that the terror influx from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has knocked it off its feet. India considers its presence in Afghanistan to be critical to regional security. Pakistan has no answer for Afghanistan, according to India, and Pakistan does not desire peace in Afghanistan. India's strong stance against Afghanistan in order to prevent Pakistan from gaining momentum and other Pakistan-related considerations. India also wants Pakistan's religious and extremist influence in Afghanistan to be minimal. India is concerned about the safety of its employees operating in Afghanistan. India has dispatched 200 border police commandos to ensure the safety of its employees, but it has refused to send its soldiers to combat the Taliban in defiance of American demands ([Kaul, 2007](#)).

India does not want Afghanistan's land to be used against its interests. India is concerned that Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan would have an impact on the Kashmir Militancy Movement. That is why India seeks to bring Islamic extremism in Afghanistan under control. India, too, sees itself as a victim of Islamization. As a result, it is critical for India to prevent the Taliban from gaining control of Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, India is attempting to eradicate Islamic extremism. Pakistan, on the other hand, must assist in the establishment of an Islamic regime in Afghanistan in order to increase pressure on India over Kashmir. If the Taliban seize Kabul or get a significant part of the government, Pakistan will emerge victorious ([Taneja, 2017](#)). India takes one step

farther than its neighbors by providing Afghan military leaders with training at India's several military institutions. Every year, over 100 Afghan military personnel receive instruction from Indian schools. Indian military officers are also in Afghanistan, teaching Afghan National Army women officers basic military procedures and English skills (Ravi, 2017).

Although India has educated Afghan military commanders, it has never been eager to send ground troops to the country. In Dubai, India stated that she is prepared to participate in joint military drills.

Following the American pullout from Afghanistan, Pakistan and NATO troops met with them. Due to a trust gap, Pakistan and India were unable to collaborate in the military. India is in Afghanistan to preserve its interests, not to care about the Afghan people or the country's peace. India aims to engage Pakistan on its western frontiers and cause havoc with Pakistan's internal security. In Pakistan, India has been involved in a number of terrorist acts. Terrorist actions are being carried out by the Indian Intelligence Agency in Pakistan's Afghan border regions. India is establishing security ties with Central Asia. After the United States, Germany, and Russia, India is the fourth country to have a military installation in Central Asia. In 2007, India paid ten million dollars in Tajikistan to finish the Ayni base. This facility allows India to defend itself against any assault from Afghanistan or Pakistan (Khattak, 2011; Ullah, Malik. Zeb, Rehman, 2019).

The Indian influence in Afghanistan is clearly seen on the other side of the photograph. In the South Asian region, America is assisting India in various ways to oppose China. America is keeping an eye on India's shared principles, such as democracy and liberal thinking. India too wants to be a part of international politics and is eager to take over the South Asian region. In every sector, such as security and the economy, India has always attempted to confront Pakistan. In terms of politics. Pakistan and Iran do not have the greatest of ties. The presence of the United States on Iran's eastern borders makes Iran uneasy. Through Chabhar Port, Iran, India, and Kabul attempted to improve trilateral relations. In Afghanistan, India and Iran have collaborated on commerce, as well as on intentions to gain access to Central Asia (Hameed, 2012).

Gawadar Port, on the Makran Coast in Balochistan, was created with Chinese assistance. This port is said to be the quickest route to Central Asia. CPEC is a game-changer for Pakistan's economy, since Gawadar port will give the quickest route to the Middle East. China is very interested in CPEC and is working hard to finish its current projects. Gawadar would also up Indian Ocean connections for Afghanistan and Pakistan (Azeemi, 2007). India has made significant investments in Afghanistan in order to maintain its presence and fill the void left by the departure of foreign forces. Afghanistan has long been a commercial route for Central Asian countries to export their wares in South Asia and the Middle East (Elizabeth, 2016).

A gas pipeline connects Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. TAPI is a large project aimed at resolving India's and Pakistan's energy challenges. During the Taliban leadership in the early 1990s, the TAPI gas pipeline project was considered. India was not a participant at the time, however later in 2008, India joined the TAPI initiative (Bhutta, 2016). Afghanistan is of enormous economic importance to India. India has previously made significant investments in Afghanistan through various initiatives. For Afghanistan to reap the

advantages of Indian investment, it must first and foremost maintain peace. India is focusing on initiatives in medicine, small industries, mining, communication, and information technology (Iwanek, 2019). There is no direct boundary between Afghanistan and India. Afghanistan also lacks a direct maritime route. Afghanistan's trade is reliant on Pakistan, and products are transported through Pakistani ports. Despite the fact that ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been tense since 2001. Pakistan and Afghanistan have a trust problem, with both accusing the other of harboring terrorist safe havens. It was exploited by India, who utilized Afghan leadership against Pakistan. From 2001 to 2010, India increased its commerce with Kabul from 80 million dollars to 280 million dollars. Afghanistan also sells 20% of its products in Indian markets. India is the world's fifth largest economy.

Afghanistan's exporter Private enterprises are also encouraged to invest in Afghanistan by the Indian government. In Afghanistan, about a hundred Indian firms have invested in various industries such as agriculture, industry, and power generation (Pasricha, 2012).

India is also involved in Afghanistan's social sector. New Delhi is attempting to attract Afghan youngsters by providing them with services. Afghanistan's kids are benefiting from sports facilities provided by India. In Afghanistan, India is a participant in the World Food Program. Biscuits are distributed to students in schools with the goal of increasing school attendance. Afghan students are studying in India at various universities and receiving scholarships from famous Indian institutions. India is also spending heavily in Afghanistan's education sector in order to lure the Afghan generation as well as the international community (Balachandar, 2012).

India's Cultural Exchange Program with Afghanistan has gotten a lot of attention. Through its television industry, India is strengthening its relationships with the local community. Both Indian and Afghan civilizations are multi-ethnic, and both nations speak a variety of languages. The Indian media, particularly Bollywood, has a significant impact on Afghan society. Bollywood actors from India have a large fan base in Afghanistan. Afghan ladies are huge fans of Indian shows. Today, the media plays a critical role in society, and governments use it to bolster their soft power. Through its media, India has gained control over a bigger portion of Afghanistan (Nooristani, 2013).

Where does India stand now in the Afghan Peace Process, despite all of these investments? It is the most essential aspect of India's interest in Afghanistan. At any costs, India will defend its interests. India has established a presence in Afghanistan. Stakeholders must believe that India is the region's largest donor to Afghanistan. America, as well as Pakistan and China, should recognize India's relevance in Afghanistan. Otherwise, India risks becoming a stumbling block to these peace efforts (Pant, 2019).

## Conclusion

India has influenced Afghan society after the ouster of the Taliban regime. India is using Afghan soil to create unrest in Pakistan. The establishment of Gwadar Port in Balochistan and Chinese presence there is the real worry for India. India does not want the Taliban militants in power and supporting Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan



as President and this system favor India. India is in a state of worry about how to protect Indian investment in Afghanistan if Peace talks succeed. India's aim to create unrest in Pakistan through Afghan soil but it will be difficult for India to execute her plans if the Taliban comes into power. India is playing the role of spoiler in the ongoing Peace Process. India is using its puppets in the Afghan government like Amrullah Saleh to derail this Peace Process. India is the biggest beneficiary if the Peace Process fails. America has already said to India to sit with Taliban leaders to discuss plans regarding Indian presence in Afghanistan. It is a difficult time for New Delhi to maintain her position in Afghanistan if the Taliban shares power with the government. India is using ISKP to counter the Taliban and derail the Peace Process. The Afghan government and The Taliban delegations are present in Doha for Intra Afghan Talks its historic moment in the recent history of Afghanistan. People are hoping that things will be better and peace will prevail in Afghanistan.

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**Sharifullah Amin**

Department of Judgment and prosecution, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Paktia University, Afghanistan

Email: [sharifamin9@gmail.com](mailto:sharifamin9@gmail.com)



**Mohammad Yousuf Zamani**

Department of Judgment and prosecution, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Paktia University, Afghanistan

Email: [myousafzamani@gmail.com](mailto:myousafzamani@gmail.com)



**Shahidullah Safi**

Department of Judgment and prosecution, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Paktia University, Afghanistan

Email: [shahidsafi22@gmail.com](mailto:shahidsafi22@gmail.com)



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