

## Chapter 3

### Afghanistan-India Relations: the Post-Taliban Period

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#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter would study the Afghanistan-India relationship in a historical perspective in order to create a background. It would particularly focus on developments, opportunities, interests, and challenges in their relationship since c. 2001. Their relations would be analysed from the perspective of geopolitics. Geopolitical perspective allows us to bring the geographical point of view in exploring affairs between states. It implies that how the geographical position of the two entities affects the ties between them.

Afghanistan and India relations can be examined through three different phases. The first phase started after India's independence from the British rule and lasted till the end of the Cold War. There was a high level of amicability and cooperation. The second phase (1991-2001) started from the post-Cold War and lasted till at the end of the Taliban government in Afghanistan. There was a troubled and strained relation between the two states. Their relations changed severely when the Taliban came to power in Kabul in 1996. The third phase started after 2001 and it continues to this day. They rebuilt their ties after the fall of the Taliban rule. The geopolitical linkages between India and Afghanistan can be explained through various issues. These include religious fundamentalism, terrorism and separatism, security threat, energy and commercial interests, and transportation linkages.

Geography plays a significant role in the history and development of states and international relations, and Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan are no exception. Afghanistan, both in its historical and present context, is an intricate mixture of socio-cultural and geopolitical determinants that have characterised the development of its society. It has always held a great strategic significance in the Asian history.

Owing to its geostrategic position and rich natural resources, Afghanistan has always remained a battlefield between the major powers. Indeed, the colonial powers such as Russia and British used this war-ravaged country "as a pawn in their 'great game'

of colonization and, given the contested boundary between British India and Afghanistan” (Pant 2010: 134). It was also made a buffer state between these two colonial powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, it was the melting pot of the philosophies and cultures that flourish around it. It is evident that the country served as a gateway for the spread of Islam, Buddhism, Greek and Persian arts and aesthetics in the Indian subcontinent. The country is centrally located with connections to the Central Asian region and the Middle East from South Asia. It is also being projected as a gateway to Eurasia and regions beyond.

Afghanistan’s history reveals that it has suffered on account of its geographical position. It has extremely suffered from external interventions led to constant insecurity, instability, and internal power struggle in the country. In fact, India persistently supports Afghanistan during difficult times. India also occupies a key strategic position in the South Asian region. Geopolitically, it occupies the symmetrical location in southern Asia. Its physical location is sea frontage. Thus, the next section of this chapter would study how Afghanistan-India ties evolved through different phases.

### **3.2 First Phase: Afghanistan-India Relations, 1947-1990**

Before examining Afghanistan-India relations since 2001, it is important to have a brief description of their relations since the partition of the subcontinent. The evolution of India’s ties with Afghanistan has taken place along social, trade, economic, and cultural dimensions. All the military expeditions who marched to India passed through Afghanistan, whether to rule or to ransack, from Alexander of Macedonian to the Turks and Mughals of Central Asia.

Afghanistan became crucial for India since the Mughal rule in the subcontinent. Its geographical position has largely enhanced Afghanistan’s significance for India and other South Asian states. Indeed, its importance for India and Pakistan is largely geopolitical. The geopolitical enmity remains a main source of instability and troubles in Afghanistan. The geopolitical considerations dominated their policies towards one another since the end of the British rule in the Indian subcontinent. Issues like physical

connectivity, people-to-people contact, economic collaboration, and cultural exchange were made subservient to national security interests.

Afghanistan and India's relationship is not merely a product of contemporary geopolitical orientation. But the geographical and socio-cultural dimensions reflect the long legacy of the close links between the two states. However, the cruel partition of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947 ended India's physical proximity with Afghanistan. Since then, India's ties with Afghan governments have remained relatively amiable except the Taliban regime. Both countries have maintained cultural, economic, and political links, but their relations underwent several changes and transformations since 1947. The issue of the famed Durand Line, however, got transferred to Islamabad given the nemesis nature of Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship.

Afghanistan's antagonistic relationship with Pakistan over the legacy of the Durand Line and for the establishment of Pashtunistan and preferences of non-alignment policy brought it very close to India during the Cold War era. Afghanistan tilted towards India and, later, the development of closer relations with the Soviet Union had negative effects on its relations with Pakistan. Afghanistan's participation in the Soviet Union-India partnership was considered hostile and menace by Pakistan. India signed many protocols and agreements with various pro-Soviet governments in Afghanistan to enhance collaboration and to expand India's influence in the region.

In the 1950s, when the USA rejected Afghanistan's request for economic and military aid, the latter turned to the Soviet Union who respond favorably. They trained and equipped the Afghan military. They were also the major supplier of weapons to Afghanistan in the end 1960s and early 1970s.

The USA support of Pakistan and refused to provide military assistance to Afghanistan pushed both the countries tilt towards the Soviet Union. The increasing dependence of Afghanistan on the Soviet Union for aid further enhanced the relations between Afghanistan and India. Both countries share a number of identical concerns and interests, primarily in the economy and security area. However, their relations have seen

many ups and downs, dictated heavily by internal political developments in Afghanistan. The major agreement they have signed between 1947 and 1979 is mentioned below.

### 3.2.1 *The Treaty of Friendship*

On 4 January 1950, the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Afghanistan's Ambassador to India Nadjibullah Khan signed the Indo-Afghan Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation to institutionalise their historical relationship. Both countries pledge to strengthen cultural and trade ties. They had advocated establishing peace "with a view to the common benefit of their people and the development of their respective countries" (Ministry of External Affairs, 4 January 1950).

After the agreement, India's popularity in Afghanistan has become immense. Since then, the Indian films and songs have become extremely popular among Afghans. Apart from this, the Indian movies also become the vital element of the Afghan culture. In a way, their ties grew prosperous over a period of time.

On 15 September 1964, the then Indian Government has launched the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. It was a bilateral programme of support and assistance that covers number of states, which are in need of support around the world. Afghanistan has been a major beneficiary of the programme for many years (Moradian 2015).

Barring Kabul's support with Islamabad on the serious question of Kashmir and other India-Pakistan wars, not many differences were recorded from 1947 till the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Few key factors were responsible for the deterioration of their friendly ties. These included: First, India continuously remained silent over the Pashtunistan problem in international meetings where the country needed its help on such a crucial issue. However, Delhi sympathised with the Pashtunistan movement more openly whenever its relations with Pakistan has deteriorated. This led to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan to say, "You Indians left us for jackals (the Pak rules); you promised to help us but you betrayed us". Earlier he said, "India was never serious about Azad Pashtunistan but used the slogan only as a stick to beat Pakistan with" (cited in Nayer 1980: 122-123). Second, similarly, Afghanistan

maintained silence during the Sino-Indian war in 1962 and the India-Pakistan war over Kashmir in 1965 and again in 1971 war. Third, when the conflicts arose across Afghanistan between pro-communists and anti-communists it also had negative impact on India-Afghanistan relations.

In order to de-escalate the crisis, both states signed the Indo-Afghan Joint Commission in 1976 to facilitate technical and economic assistance programs. But this became non-functional from 1978 to 1982. These revolts also led to the Soviet occupation of this war-torn country in December 1979.

### *3.2.2 The Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan*

On 24 December 1979, the Soviet Union military units entered into Afghanistan. This constitutes a major incident that has extremely influenced the course of events and thoughts throughout the world at varying intensity. This had ushered in a new period of uncertainty and confrontation in international relations. It has also provided jarring evidence to non-aligned states that the Soviet Union was prepared to use force even against amiable and innocuous states. It had changed the strategic scenario in this sub-region. Since the 1980s, the Soviet Union's interests in this specific region rested on four major factors. These were: First, to maintain close relations with India; Second, to reconcile differences with Pakistan; Third, to neutralise Pakistan's covert support and aid to the mujahedeen groups in Afghanistan; and, Fourth, to encourage greater unity and harmony among the South Asian states rather than creating a feeling of discord.

More specifically owing to the geostrategic compulsions and geopolitical imperatives, it has largely impacted on this sub-region. The intervention has provided an ideal opportunity for India to re-engage and enhance the bilateral ties. However, at the same time, this laid a formidable challenge to India's Afghanistan's policy because it puts India in a complex situation affecting its credibility and prestige at the international system.

India was caught in between the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) of which it was a founding member and the friendship treaty signed by India with the Soviet Union in 1971. The then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi expressed that "the Soviet Union

were introduced into Afghanistan only after Pakistan started training Afghan rebels and sending them in to topple the government there, nevertheless India was opposed USSR's presence and it had told that country so" (cited in Horn 1983: 246).

Some salient factors led India's immediate response to the Soviet intervention. These included: First, America's financial assistance, furnish of sophisticated armaments and F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan; Second, a USA fleet build-up on the Indian Ocean; Third, the USA's rapprochement with China in which Pakistan has played a significant role; and, Fourth, an apprehension of mujahedeen triumph which provides coherent strategic leverage for Pakistan in Afghanistan.

Given these intricate geopolitical certainties, New Delhi couldn't afford to endanger its relationship with the Soviet Union because of the following two factors. First, the Soviet Union had emerged as India's major supplier of space technology and defence apparatus. Second, the Soviet Union had played an important role in extending help to New Delhi at major world meetings on serious problems such as the Kashmir dispute and the Bangladesh war of independence in 1971, in the face of severe objections and oppositions from China and the USA (Sharma 2011). For India, the Soviet Union also served as a counterbalance to both the USA and China.

On 9 September 1981, the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mohammad Dost met in New Delhi and agreed to re-activate the Indo-Afghan Joint Commission. In May 1982, the first meeting of the Commission took place in Kabul and India agreed to increase the number of exports to Afghanistan. Thus, India started a direct deal with Afghanistan. The Soviet Union praised India's realistic approach. India increased its investments in Afghanistan for the development of irrigational, industrial, and hydroelectric projects. India was the only country outside of the Warsaw Pact alliance that maintained normal relations with the Afghan regimes.

### **3.3 Second Phase: Afghanistan-India Relations, 1990-2001**

The nature of the international politics has altered radically following the decades of the Cold War. The breakdown of the USSR laid a major impact on India's foreign policy.

One of the analysts Raja Mohan has argued it gave India the choice “to reinvent its foreign policy” (Mohan 2006: 19). It has been argued that India freed itself from its Soviet-centric past. Moreover, India had new strategies and policies towards the newly independent Central Asian states with abundant energy resources of natural gas and crude oil. The multiple nuclear tests in 1998 and the India-USA rapprochement added to India’s increasing confidence. The USA presence in Afghanistan has been seen as a factor that is perceived to have enhanced India’s security (Pattanaik 2012). Since 1990-91, India’s regional approach has undergone major shifts with the transformation in the global power structure. The early 1990s was a significant turning point in Indian economic orientation, foreign policy, and politics.

India has sought to pursue its strategic interests through geo-economics<sup>11</sup> engagement with all the states in the region. India’s shift in its regional strategy has been dictated by changes in regional geopolitical situation and continuous development in its economy. Since the 1990s, India has moved towards establishing engagements with its neighbouring countries and invited them to engage in and benefit from its rapid economic development (Pattanaik and Behuria 2016). After 1996 India’s policies were building on the articulation of the Gujral Doctrine. Hence, India continues to play a major role in regional economic development, and strengthen energy, and market connectivity.

On 1 May 1990, V.P. Singh delivered the fourth Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture on India’s Contribution to International Peace in New Delhi elaborately discussed India’s role in international relations, perceived future objectives, goals, and priorities. He argued that:

All our neighbours are of special importance to us – we have similar historical experiences ... my government is making special effort to revitalise and strengthen ties with all neighbours and has initiated an intensive dialogue for finding mutually

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<sup>11</sup> Edward Luttwak, an American strategist and historian, introduced the concept of “geo-economics” in his article titled “From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce”. He argued that in a globalised world, “the deference that armed strength could evoke in the dealings of government over all matters” including economic, was in decline and the “methods of commerce” were displacing the “military methods” (1990: 17). It is defined as both ways: First, “the relationship between economic policy and changes in national power and geopolitics (in other words, the geopolitical consequences of economic phenomena)”; Second, “as the economic consequences of trends in geopolitics and national power” (Baru 2012:47-59).

acceptable solution to outstanding problems and enlarging the area of co-operation (Singh 1990: 2590).

However, Teresita C. Schaffer and Howard B. Schaffer argue that despite India's emphasis on geo-economics in its foreign ties, its neighbours "feel extremely vulnerable to Indian political, military, and economic pressures; they perceive their domestic economies as vulnerable to Indian whim" (1998: 12) and none of them cannot assume India's predominance as the regional policeman. India faced some contradictions in its policy and approach towards the neighbourhood. These includes: First, India's economic clout; Second, the lack of balanced political perspective; Third, extra-regional powers; Fourth, personalities, diplomatic styles and mindsets; and, Fifth, the power differential (Muni 2003: 187-188).

Dynamics of India's ties with Afghanistan has also changed immensely during the last two and half decades. The post-Cold War political process has largely ineffective in stabilising Afghanistan as hostility and violence reaches its climax. The departure of the Soviet Union troops from Afghanistan led to the formation of Najibullah's government in Kabul and India heavily supported him. The central power remains limited as the mujahedeen groups, particularly the Taliban have enlarged their authority beyond their traditional strongholds. During that period, India remained active while providing technical and humanitarian aid. However, the factionalism in Afghanistan led to the domestic crisis and violence. The factionalism led to a cruel civil war in Afghanistan and laid the foundation of the Taliban faction. They have replaced the Rabbani regime in 1996. Their ties were disrupted by the internecine and fratricidal warfare in the 1990s.

The Afghanistan-India relations were deteriorated after the Taliban government came into power. India didn't recognise the extreme Taliban regime which forced India to close its embassy in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime was tilted towards Pakistan. And, it was antithetical to India's interests. It has been argued that the Taliban's close contacts with Pakistan to use Afghan territory as a hub of anti-Indian activities further worsened Afghanistan-India ties. The world community didn't recognise the Taliban government, except Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Consequently, their ties also witnessed a setback with the Kandahar Hijacking. The militants of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI)<sup>12</sup> hijacked India's flight IC-814 from Kathmandu, Nepal and landed at Kandahar, Afghanistan. The Taliban government supported the hijackers and averted the Indian military to take any action against them. That forced the Government of India to deal with the Taliban regime and the then External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh handed over three militants in exchange for 155 passengers and the crew.

The non-Pashtun groups in Afghanistan were opposing the Taliban regime. So, they founded the Northern-Alliance under the leadership of Ahmed Shah Massoud. The group has controlled parts in the northern Afghanistan, bordering the Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. India established close ties with the Northern-Alliance group to sustain its influence in Afghanistan and counter the Pakistan factor. For that reason, the Indian government also extended aid to this group.

India believed that in collaboration with Pakistan, the Taliban regime endorsed Kashmiri insurgents to train within the territory of Afghanistan. During the time, it was witnessed that around eighty thousand personnel from the madrasas of Pakistan who got training in Afghanistan and later participated in militant activities in the region including Afghanistan, Kashmir valley and the Central Asian region. Post-independence and particularly in the past three decades, it has been security issues that have been India's concern as regard to Afghanistan. During the 1990s, Afghanistan-born-militants were took participation in Kashmir insurgency against the Indian forces. It was also estimated that twenty-two percent of militants operating in Jammu and Kashmir were either Afghans or Afghan-trained (Novjumi 2002; Agarwal 2015).

The September 2001 terror attacks offered an opportunity for the USA to hit on Kabul and its surrounding parts in October 2001. As a result, the Taliban regime has been demised in Afghanistan. This has provided India an opportunity to move back strongly

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<sup>12</sup> It was formed in 1984. Its root lies in the Deoband School of thought. In 1985, it split into two factions and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) was created under the leadership of Fazlur Rehman Khalili. HuJI was led by Qari Saifullah Akhter. The group has a major goal of separating of Jammu and Kashmir from India and merges the state with Pakistan.

into that country and regain its position. Since then, India has made extensive efforts in the reconstruction process of this war-torn nation.

### **3.4 Third Phase: Afghanistan-India Relations Since 2001**

This section would examine India's renewed engagement with Afghanistan after the 2001 routing of the Taliban. It would also study through the changing contours of regional and global dynamics. The "War on Terror" galvanised support for international assistance towards the reconstruction and stabilisation of Afghanistan. Regional powers including India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Central Asian states and China all took part in the stabilisation effort to varying degrees. Afghanistan signed many accords and agreements with its neighbouring states and also acquired membership of a number of regional organisations such as Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO).

However, these agreements of goodwill didn't bolster the country's stability, harmony, and peace. The regional countries also failed while relying on the prospects of Afghanistan as a land bridge for energy transportation and inter-regional transit-trade. Afghanistan faces both endogenous and exogenous challenges and concerns in this regard (Qassem 2011). Consequently, many of the initiatives by the regional states are constructive, but lack of cooperation and coordination between these players leads to inefficiency, mistrust, and duplication.

The response of the regional states to the Afghan fundamental challenges has been largely determined by their respective ties with the USA. Following the September 2001 terror attacks, the USA had received immense support and cooperation from nearly all of Afghanistan's immediate and extended neighbours. So, this section would examine India's engagement with Kabul since c. 2001.

The India and Afghanistan relations have swiftly improved since overthrow of the Taliban regime. Since then, India adopted a pro-active approach and policy towards Afghanistan. It has focussed to assist the Afghan people and developmental programmes. Moreover, it has started working for the democratic political processes in this war-

ravaged country as mandated under the Bonn Accord on 5 December 2001. The Accords aimed at transforming war-torn and economically devastated Afghanistan into a democratic state. India has also made strong connections with diverse cultural and ethnic and religious groups and political affiliations in the country. Indeed, a broad-based relationship is taking place between them. Indeed, India's capabilities – military, political, and economy – have markedly enhanced. It has also become aspiring in defining its foreign policy objectives and strategic programme (Pant 2012). For neo-classical realists, “it is the international systemic constraints that determine the foreign policy behaviour of states” (Pant 2010: 135). It is the “structure of the international system that sets the terms of conduct of foreign policy across time and space” (ibid). Realists argue that “the pressures of competition weigh more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures” (Waltz 1986: 329).

Kenneth Waltz in his influential work on Structural Realism argues that his theory is not a theory of foreign policy but it is a theory of international politics. It attempts to explicate the outcomes of state interaction. He has also argued that the main differences between countries “are of capability, not function. States perform or try to perform tasks, most of which are common to all of them; the ends they aspire to are similar” (1979: 96). The main prospects of neo-realism are: First, “the recurrence of balances of power in the international political system”; Second, “the inclination of states to imitate one another and to become socialised to the world political system”; and, Third, “the tendency of states to balance, or strengthen themselves in the face of external military threats” (ibid: 128).

States generally adopt rational approaches and policies in their pursuit of security and power. And, aim to maximise power and security and control over the external environment. When state increases its relative power capabilities, it will “try to expand its economic, political, and territorial control; it will try to change the international system in accordance with its own interests” (Gilpin 1981: 94-95). Rising powers always seek to intensify their capabilities and try to dominate the exterior environment.

India as an emerging power in an international system has consistently pursued a more proactive policy in its extended neighbourhood and building institutional, military,

and economic ties. Afghanistan has become symbolic of such an aspiring trajectory that New Delhi “seems to be charting in its foreign policy” (Pant 2012: 136). C. Raja Mohan explains that India’s grand strategy divides the world into main “three concentric circles”. The first circle covers the immediate region, “India has sought primacy and a veto over the actions of outside powers”. The second circle covers the extended regional level encompasses whole Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, “India has sought to balance the influence of other powers and prevent them from undercutting its interests”. And, the third covers the whole world; the country is trying to acquire its seat as one of the major powers, a vital actor in global security and peace (2006: 17). He also argues that “without enduring primacy in one’s own neighbourhood, no nation can become a credible power on the global stage” (cited in Malone 2011: 102).

S. D. Muni and Raja Mohan argue that for India, “achieving the objective of becoming one of the principal powers of Asia will depend entirely on India’s ability to manage its own immediate neighbourhood” (2004: 318). On 26 October 2004, the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh argued while addressing Combined Commanders Conference in New Delhi that:

Our first priority should be to devote ourselves to building a structure of cooperative and mutually beneficial relations with our neighbours. This is the basic objective of our policies. We have to remain alert about aberrations, strategic ambitions and geo-political motivations in their policies, which can militate against our security and our vital interests (cited in Behuria et al. 2012: 229).

Soon after the demise of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, India promptly joined the international community in seeking ways to reconstruct Afghanistan. Since then, India has played a significant part in the rehabilitation and renovation process in this war-ravaged country. Their ties have moved from the cultural and historical traditions to the development cooperation covering all the areas. India moved quickly to extend its footprints in this war-torn country by opening its embassy in Kabul and other four consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif (western Afghanistan), Herat (northern Afghanistan), Jalalabad (eastern Afghanistan), Kandahar (southern Afghanistan). It has emerged as a main developmental partner. Both the countries have the realisation that economic development of Afghanistan is a prerequisite for the stability and peace.

The Government of India has stated that its assistance to Afghanistan is aimed at promoting development and democracy as “key instruments in ensuring that Afghanistan becomes a source of regional stability and does not slide back into extremism” (*The Kabul Times* 2015) as happened earlier. Perceiving India’s role only to promote security and stability in Afghanistan is quite unrealistic. In fact, India is seeking to find out new opportunities in this country to address its foreign policy ambitions. Thus, its Afghan policy involves various strategic and central interests. However, there are some areas acting as constraints as well as posing threats for its engagements with Afghanistan. Therefore, it is significant to examine India’s major interests and challenges to pursue its foreign policy in Afghanistan.

India has adopted a soft power approach towards Kabul, sticking to humanitarian rather than military affairs. It focuses on building human capital and helping in a number of social and economic projects like rural electrification, small-scale irrigation projects, as well as improving security. It is also providing medical care, constructing new roads and dams, and assisting with the educational system in an attempt to enlarge and improve Afghanistan’s long-term capabilities. Today, India is the fifth largest donor, certainly the largest from the region, to Afghan rehabilitation and reconstruction process.

India along with other regional countries played a vital role at the UN-led Bonn Conference from the 27 November to 5 December 2001 that brought together four Afghan factions to decide on a future roadmap for post-Taliban Afghanistan. The Agreement was signed on 5 December 2001 at Bonn, Germany, by the Afghan military officers, representatives of Afghanistan’s different ethnic groups, and representatives of the former Afghan king, Zahir Shah. It was restored the country’s constitution of 1964 with the exceptions of provisions relating to monarchy. In an unprecedented move, the Loya Jirga met after twenty-three years on 12 June 2002 in pursuance of the Bonn agreement.

Both the countries share the vision of democratic and peaceful Afghanistan and agree that a democratic, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is crucial for security, peace, and stability not only in this sub-region but the entire South and Central Asia. It has been

argued that the stability in Afghanistan and sustenance of its democratic set up is a critical aspect of India's interest.

On 23-24 May 2002, the then Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh stated at a conference on South-South Cooperation and the Reconstruction of Afghanistan in New Delhi that India's approach to Afghan rehabilitation and reconstruction focuses on: First, providing immediate health, medical, and humanitarian aid; Second, strengthening institutional capacity of the government machinery; Third, offering commodity and project aid in priority sectors of education, information technology, health, civil aviation, public transport, agriculture and industrial development; and, Fourth, synergising with global endeavours to meet all the needs and prerequisites of the interim administration of Afghanistan (Gaur 2005: 155-156).

Consequently, he also proposed a ten-point programme as part of South-South cooperation on Afghan reconstruction. These includes: First, relevant capacities and capabilities of developing states can be easily and cost-effectively made available to the Afghan-led reconstruction process. This could also apply to building democratic, responsive, accountable, and transparent institutions – a vital condition for rebuilding endeavours; Second, giving training to Afghan people in or by developing states in accordance with Afghanistan's needs and necessities; Third, fostering private sector partnerships and engagements; Fourth, strengthening regional and inter-regional collaborations; Fifth, health, education, public administration, poverty alleviation, administrative reforms, vocational training and inclusive of financial management could be amongst areas, which can be identified by cooperation between Afghanistan and developing countries; Sixth, triangular collaborations between Afghanistan, developed and developing states; Seventh, similarly sharing experiences of developing states in respect of their own citizens living abroad for utilising the services and resources of Afghan people living outside for the rebuilding process in Afghanistan; Eighth, similarly share experiences of developing states for encouraging role of women and their engagement and participation in social, cultural, political, and economic sphere; Ninth, practical application of science and technology and information technology to address

socio-economic growth based on the results in other developing states; and, Tenth, emphasis on implementation (ibid: 157).

Taking into consideration the significance of civil services in strengthening the democracy, India has provided training to the Afghan police officers, diplomats and civil servants. The country deputed twenty civil servants to the various departments of Afghanistan government under a tripartite Afghanistan-India-UNDP programme of Capacity for Afghanistan Public Administration (CAP). These officers, since 2007, are working as coaches and mentors in the key Afghan ministries to enhance professional skill and developmental process in Afghan public administration (Chakraborti 2010). In May 2009, the former President Hamid Karzai argued at the Brookings Institute:

We fought the Soviets. We fought the British. We fought everybody else because we wanted to keep this sense that we are independent, our sovereignty. For that reason, we are requesting our friends in Pakistan that we will have relations with India because we are sovereign, and we will have relations with India because it's in our interest (India Today 06 May 2009).

In November 2011, a poll survey released by the Asia Foundation, which indicated that 45 percent of Afghan cited one of the three problems – poor economy, extreme poverty, and unemployment – as the utmost concern facing the state (Tariq et al. 2011: 23-26). It has been argued that “social and economic development is key to ensuring that Afghanistan becomes a source of regional stability” (Ministry of External Affairs 2009: 8). India has used a series of economic policy mechanisms – including development aid, private sector investment, and trade promotion – to foster peace and stability and intensifies India’s influence in Afghanistan.

The major agreements they have signed between 2001 and 2016 are mentioned below.

3.4.1 *The Preferential Trade Agreement:* On 6 March 2003, Afghanistan and India signed this agreement that reduced duties on Afghan exports, primarily agricultural goods. That includes “dried figs, mulberries, pistachio, roasted pine nuts, fresh melons, asafoetida, lapis lazuli, ruby and emeralds” (Ministry of External Affairs 2010: 37). The Agreement also bears fifty percent duty concession extended “on green, red, golden and black raisins; walnuts; almonds;

fresh grapes; apples; apricots; pomegranates; anise, caraway, linseed, alpha and sesame seeds; and dried apricots, plums and sour cherries” (ibid). It was a significant agreement given that one-quarter of Afghan exports are destined for the emerging markets of India.

- 3.4.2 *Cooperation in the Field of Tourism:* The year 2005 was the significant year in their bilateral relationship. On 28-29 August 2005, the former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh visited Afghanistan and became the first Prime Minister in the last twenty-nine years to visit this country. In 1976, Indira Gandhi was the India’s last head of government to pay a visit of Afghanistan. Both the states agreed to develop a new cooperation on the basis of traditional ties.

On 6 December 2005, the two governments signed an agreement to strengthen bilateral ties. It also focuses on mutual understanding between the two, for the growth of tourism on the basis of mutual benefit and greater equality. It includes the exchanges of information, experience, and expertise regarding inventory of tourism resources. They also agreed to exchange of methodology and curriculum on tourism courses, and research. In 2005, India has also started the process of constructing 220 KV Double Circuit “transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and sub-station at Chimtala to bring additional power from the northern grid to Kabul” (Ministry of External Affairs 2010: 10).

India has completed the elected transmission line projects for uninterrupted power supply in Kabul. The line “that passes over the Salang Range at a height of 4000 metres” is already in use since 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2009 (ibid: 21). The line made it possible for Kabul to enjoy uninterrupted 24-hour power supply for the first time in May 2009. The other ongoing project is the Salma Dam Power Project in Herat province on the river Hari Rud. A multitude of workers from both the countries are working in the construction of this Dam (Dutta 2008).

- 3.4.3 *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Education:* On 10 April 2006, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Education to encourage contacts and cooperation between the educational institutions based on their respective educational and academic needs. The

memorandum includes the exchange of research material, scholars, teachers, educational literature, teaching aids, publications, and academics. And provide mutual support in the field of computer science and information technology. It also includes a provision of scholarship for Afghan students to study in India.

3.4.4 *Memorandum of Understanding between Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)*: On 12 April 2006, they signed a memorandum to strengthen the economic ties with each other. They agreed to exchange and discuss investment-related views and more frequently consult with each other with a view to promote and encourage the Indian investment in Afghanistan. They also agreed that they will mutually assist and facilitate investment fact-finding and business development missions. Also, to support and encourage in the promotion of exhibitions and trade affairs both in India and Afghanistan.

3.4.5 *Afghan Capacity Building*: The most crucial element of India's aid plan in Afghanistan is the capacity building of the Afghan people. Their bilateral cooperation currently focuses the capacity development and building democratic institutions of the country (Wolf 2012). The former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh and the former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai agreed in 2005 to launch a Skill Building Initiative in Afghanistan in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). They also signed agreements in the areas of agriculture and health.

The formation of the India-Afghanistan Vocational Training Centre in Afghanistan by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in collaboration with the Afghan Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was extremely remarkable. The scheme provides "training to one thousand Afghan youths in the traits of carpentry, masonry welding, plumbing, and cutting and tailoring" (ibid: 33). The motive of this programme was to recognise assessors and trainers from the skilled employees "to continue the training modules on a self-sustainable basis" (ibid). The other agendas are also in progress in the areas of local governance, health care, civil aviation, tourism, public administration and diplomacy and electorate

management. In 2005, Manmohan Singh has also affirmed an innovative plan of Small Development Projects (SDPs) that have an immediate impact on the Afghan people. In addition, the local villages obtain instant benefits and profits from the projects. India is also providing training around one thousand personnel in various fields, including teachers, doctors, officers, diplomats, lawyers, paramedics, and bureaucrats.

The new parliament building in this country was also made by India. India has also announced to adopt a hundred villages in this war-torn country to assist rural development by “introducing solar electrification and rainwater-harvesting technologies” (Pant 2010: 137). The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is used to articulate the vision of Afghan government for its people and the nation. The latest plan (for the period 2008-13) uttered a list of objectives encircling major areas, including economic and social development, health services distribution, agriculture and rural development, investment in infrastructure, and education for all Afghans. It would also help to vulnerable social groups. Though the project emphasised that stability and security are the basic pillars upon which the aforementioned objectives would build (Motwani and Bose 2015).

Moreover, eighty-four small programmes are also under construction in 19 different provinces substantiate India’s latest endeavours to accelerate the substantial institutional buildings in this country. New Delhi has also reconstructed and upgraded many hospitals in Afghanistan. Among them, the most significant was the renovation of the Indira Gandhi Institute for Child Health (IGICH), the largest paediatric hospital in the country. This is the only hospital in Kabul to treat children and women. Medical support in Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Mazari-i-Sharif is also significant. The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) carried out a women’s vocational training centre in Bagh-e-Zanana, Kabul also known as Community Learning and Business Resource Centre that provides training and teaching to thousands of Afghan women particularly in nursery plantation, making garment and embroidery, and food processing. For the development of transmission sector, India undertook a project to “facilitate uplink

Radio and Television Afghanistan (RTA) from Kabul and downlinks in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan” (ibid: 25). The Indian satellite INSAT-3A transmits the radio and television signals to these provinces.

The country has also renovated the “telecommunication infrastructure in the eleven provinces of Afghanistan” (ibid). Besides it, India has maintained an Indian Air Force (IAF) base in Farkhor (Tajikistan) only two kilometres away from the Afghan border, upgraded to a full-fledged airbase in 2004 and completed it in March 2007. Taking into account the land-locked nature of Afghanistan and its dependence on others for trading with rest of the world, India has supported major infrastructure projects to reduce such dependence of Afghanistan. In this regard, the contribution lies with the construction of a ring road connecting this country to the Iranian ports facilitating her trade with India and the Gulf states (Wolf 2012).

India’s Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed a 218-kilometer long Zaranj-Delaram Highway, linking it up to the Chabahar Port. The road links provide “connectivity to the very end of South-western Afghanistan and Iran by linking Zaranj to the Kandahar-Herat highway” (ibid: 17). It facilitates the movement of goods and services across borders. The work of the highway has been completed in January 2009. On 22 January 2009, the former President Hamid Karzai and India’s the then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the highway. It reduces dependence of the country on Pakistan to reach the sea. India also built some inner-city roads including 40 kilometres in Zaranj, 10 kilometres in Gurguri, and 08 kilometres connecting Gurguri to Razia. In January 2009, the then Afghanistan’s President Hamid Karzai visited India. He has received a gifted of 250,000 metric tonnes of wheat to his country under the New Food Aid project. It would help to reduce food crisis in the country.

3.4.6 *The Strategic Partnership Agreement:* On 4 October 2011, both countries signed the agreement to strengthen the bilateral relationship. It was the first-ever agreement on strategic ties. India agreed to extend its support for all round development of the war-torn country. The former Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh hailing the Agreement stated, “India will stand by the people of Afghanistan as they prepare to assume the responsibility for their governance and security after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014” (Alikuzai 2013: 818).

Both countries realised that the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) would not be capable in handling the challenges of extremism and insurgency in post-2014 Afghanistan. The agreement has provided the space for the two countries to develop their ties from trade and economic collaboration, capacity building development, socio-cultural and civil society dimensions to security aspect (Pant 2011; Wolf 2012). The agreement directs them to set up new institutional structures for political, security, trade, and commercial collaboration. It provides an outline for collaboration in the sectors of national security, fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and so on. Being a growing economy, India has already committed nearly US\$ 2 billion in assistance programmes so far.

India agreed to train ANSF in post-2014 Afghanistan. The major features of this Agreement included defence cooperation, combating terrorism and training of the ANSF agreed by India. India also agreed to provide lethal and non-lethal weapons to Afghanistan. In May 2012, the then Afghan Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmai Rassoul visited India to co-chair the inaugural session of the India-Afghanistan Partnership Council with the then India’s External Affairs Minister Mr. S. M. Krishna. The Council has the mandate to implement the strategic agreement. In the region surrounding Afghanistan and India, there is a conflicting interplay of objectives and interests. It is evident that the reactions to this agreement by various states in the region vary significantly (Moradian 2015). Some regional and extra-regional countries raised several concerns and questions as to why Afghanistan chose India as its strategic partner.

To understand it, three important factors explain why Afghanistan chose India as its strategic partner.

First, the primary reason is a convergence of certain values. Indeed, India is the world’s largest democracy and a great example for pluralistic and multi-cultural societies. Afghanistan needs democratic set up and development to bring enduring

stability and peace in the region. Afghanistan faces several challenges and there is a more that it can learn from New Delhi's model of development, governance and democracy.

Second, another major reason is the convergence of national interests of both the nations. They face terrorist and radical activities. So, they need to tackle the issue of terrorism through a cooperative approach. This suggests that there is something beyond the historical and cultural ties between the two states that bind them together (ibid). On 9 July 2008, Nirupam Sen, Permanent Representative from India to the United Nations has argued that "security within Afghanistan, and coordinated efforts to stop terrorists from operating with impunity beyond Afghanistan's borders must be the paramount priority of our collective efforts in Afghanistan" (cited in Bhasin 2009: 2534).

Third, the economies of the two states are compatible as they complement each other. Afghanistan has enormous natural resources that can offer ample to India's rising economy and at the same time India with its massive human resources is a large market for Afghan products. For India, Afghanistan is a gateway to Central Asia and a part of the Middle East; in a similar way India is a gateway for Afghan products. Thus, three major reasons – shared values, common national security interests and complementary economy – that bind these two countries as strategic partners (ibid).

However, C. Raja Mohan has argued that the agreement "is bound to add a new layer of complexity to the triangular relationship between New Delhi, Rawalpindi and Kabul" (2011: 1). He has further argued that the huge test for the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh "is to signal India's determination to do all it can to strengthen Kabul's capacity to preserve its independence while dispelling the widespread perception that Delhi is eager to compete with Rawalpindi in Afghanistan" (ibid). The agreement notes that it is not directed against any country or group of countries. In May 2014, India has provided the US\$ 1 million assistance for flood relief programme in the Badakhshan province. In July 2014, India signed a memorandum of understanding for 57 projects. In October 2014, thirteen ongoing Small Development Projects (SDPs) were signed

(under US\$ 100 million commitment for SDP) covering education, health, infrastructure in various provinces of this war-torn country.

Subsequently, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kabul in June 2016, where he and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani inaugurated the \$290-million Salama Dam Project. It has been argued that the project will give up to 42 MW power to the state. The Indian Prime Minister said in a speech that “India will not forget you or turn away”. He further said: “Your friendship is our honour; your dreams are our duty” (Ministry of External Affairs, 4 June 2016).

3.4.7 *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of Textiles, Clothing, Investment, Compliance and Skill Development:* On 7 January 2015, both the countries agreed to develop closer economic ties and enhanced bilateral engagements “in the field of textiles and clothing, Cotton, man-made Fibre, and handlooms within their respective purview” (Ministry of Textiles 2015). They agreed to assist heavily on the aforementioned areas. They also agreed to promote joint trade missions, and will also facilitate to bring more business buyers, trade visitors, exhibitors and delegations of each other in the trade process. Moreover, in order to de-escalate any issue regarding this agreement, they agreed to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG). It will explore the details of the collaboration. It would also help to facilitate the scientific, technical, and economic collaboration.

3.4.8 *Agreement on Visa-Free Travel for Diplomats:* On 1 February 2016, both countries agreed to sign for visa-free travel for diplomats following the meeting of India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghanistan’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO)<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Abdullah. They pledge to strengthen their relations at bilateral as well as regional level. Furthermore, India has reiterated its strong commitments

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<sup>13</sup> Chief Executive Officer is an extra-constitutional post in Afghanistan. It has been established in 2014. The post was a power-sharing deal between Ashraf Gani and Abdullah Abdullah that ended a major dispute that occurred in the 2014 Presidential election when both the leaders have claimed victory. This is also known as “national unity” agreement.

to provide its efforts in building a stable, prosperous, inclusive, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.

3.4.9 *An Extradition Treaty to Enhance Bilateral Cooperation*: On 14 September 2016, both states agreed to sign an Extradition Treaty to facilitate exchange of wanted terrorists and criminals. It was signed when the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited to India on 14-15 September 2016. In the joint statement the leaders of the two countries agreed to “put an end to all sponsorship, support, safe havens and sanctuaries to terrorists including for those who target Afghanistan and India” (*The Indian Express*, 14 September 2016: 1). Moreover, India has also extended a one-billion dollar to this war-torn country for infrastructure development and capacity building programmes.

3.4.10 *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space*: On 8 December 2016, the Indian government has approved the agreement. It has envisaged collaboration between these two nations for application of space technologies in various fields. It would “cover agriculture, education, weather forecasting, rural health, telecommunications, urban development, sanitation, resource mapping navigation, remote sensing and any other areas mutually agreed upon” (*The Indian Express*, 8 December 2016: 1). It would enhance their ties and mutual respect. It would increase high-tech jobs in both the states. In addition, it will provide India’s foothold in this war-ravaged country’s strategic communication and space area. On 20 July 2010, the former India’s foreign minister, S.M. Krishna assured that:

India also supports Afghanistan’s efforts towards peace and reintegration. But for such an effort to succeed, it must be fully Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and carry all sections of Afghanistan’s population together as well as abide by the red lines agreed to at the London Conference, i.e., giving up violence, cutting off all links with terrorism – whether jihadi or state-sponsored (Ministry of External Affairs 2010).

Since c. 2001, India’s presence and involvement in Afghanistan’s rebuilding process has been increasingly contested and confronted by many

elements including terrorist groups. With the re-emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan, India's security concerns and apprehensions are bound to grow.

### **3.5 India's Major Interests in Afghanistan**

This section would study what are the major interests of India in Afghanistan? What are its strategies to maintain its presence and to make itself relevant for peace, security, and stability in this war-torn country? Given the current regional geopolitical dynamics, how can India optimise its objectives and strategy? It has been argued that Afghanistan holds the economic, security, and political significance for India. It is working for a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan and considered it as an important neighbourhood. In addition, the country is also assisting Afghanistan to preserve security and strengthening strategic relationship. So, India has substantial interests in Afghanistan.

#### *3.5.1 Economic and Political Development of Afghanistan*

Without a representative and stable political order built on the foundations of the rule of law, social and economic development to remain a distant dream for Afghanistan (Abbas 2014). The major objective of India's Afghan policy has been to see a prosperous, stable and democratic Afghanistan. India wants the peaceful, independent, and united Afghanistan able of standing on its own feet. And, always claims that it wants to build Afghanistan into a secure, peaceful, and democratic country. India has pledged in various international forums that it's major objective to enhancement democratic institutions and practices, and strengthening the rule of law in this war-ravaged country. According to the Strategic Partnership Agreement in October 2011, these two countries agreed to the following principles. First, protecting and fostering shared democratic principles and practices; Second, enhancing long-term stability, peace, and security; Third, strengthening bilateral and regional collaboration and security; Fourth, socio-economic growth; and, Fifth, fortifying democratic establishment and local governance in this war-ravaged country.

On 15 July 2015, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated India's commitment to Afghanistan in a speech at the 6<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, says: "India will continue to assist Afghanistan in building its capacity; in governance, security and

economic development” (Government of India, Prime Minister’s Office 15 July 2014). During his visit to Afghanistan in December 2015, Modi calls on Afghan people to vote in the elections and encouraged people to take participation in the democratic process. It has been argued that a stable and strong government at Kabul and free from external influence is its vital interest. It is largely accepted that the lack of stability and security would endanger all other desired interests and objectives. It has been argued that India has a strong interest in a secure and stable Afghanistan which does not harbour any anti-India activities on its soil. Besides, it intensely seeks to get influence in Afghanistan and beyond it.

India also wants to boost the economic sector there and has the market potential to stimulate Afghan economy in several ways. Indeed, since c. 2001 Afghan economy has considerably improved. Afghanistan has repetitively uttered its will to expand India’s trade while developing the manufacturing centres in various fields such as banking, cement, electricity, and oil. India’s efforts are to gain strong foothold not only in Afghanistan but in the Central Asian region as well. That is the major reason that it is fortifying trade and other relations with Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan is gaining enormously “by economically integrating itself with India given the nature of its economy and its limited access to markets and the sea” (D’Souza 2009: 25).

### 3.5.2 *Energy Security and Commercial Interests*

Strategically, Afghanistan is situated amidst states with rich energy resources and others with high energy demand, “presenting a unique opportunity to capitalise on its status as a land bridge between Central Asia and South Asia” (*International Agency Report 2004*: 1). India has an enduring interest in strong trade ties and collaboration in South and Central Asian region on energy, trade, and transit. It has been argued that India is set to become the third major economy in the world by 2030. For nourishing and achieving this goal, it requires exterior energy resources to boost its economic growth. On the one side, the rising population and on the other side, increasing economy has enlarged its energy requirements, giving rise to the need for energy resources. Indeed, energy security is a necessity to sustain its economic growth (Debata 2011).

Therefore, importing energy became a major component of its foreign policy. The late Indian President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam said in his speech that “my government will give full importance to synchronising our diplomatic activity with our need for energy to fuel our development needs” (cited in Sharma 2011: 111). The demand for energy has been swiftly mounting. It has been expected to grow from 122 million tonnes in 2001-02 to 364 million tonnes in 2024-25 (Joshi 2008: 44). This growing demand suggests a comprehensive relationship with the CARs. With the goal of strengthening its energy security, crucial to maintain the impetus of its economic development, India joined the “ambitious \$7,500m. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India” (TAPI) pipeline project. The project “was envisaged to carry 30, 00m. cu feet of gas from the Dauletabad field in Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan, into India” (ibid). Indeed, a peaceful, secure, and stable Afghanistan is important for New Delhi to meet its energy needs. The country has also substantial amount of untapped reserves of natural gas and oil.

### 3.5.3 *Central Asia: India’s Extended Neighbourhood*

Historically, the CARs have been an area of India’s civilisational influence. The region is a crucial element of India’s extended neighbourhood policy. The region not only connects Asia to the Europe, but it is also wealthy in vital assets and has a strong consumer market. The immense energy reserves in the CARs and the rising energy needs of world states have made it very important region in the world, particularly after their inception from the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, these states have offered a great opportunity for regional and extra-regional states to advance in the sphere of economic and diplomacy. India and Pakistan also see the region as a zone of influence. They are now locked in competition over security agreements, and trade accords in the region. They are very keen to expand stronger economic ties with the CARs. India built strong ties with the CARs and made collaboration with them on energy, trade, and transit.

The gas and oil of Central Asia deposits assure these two countries access to enormous energy resources for their economies. The region offers a geo-economic and geo-strategic advantage point for both the competing players in relation to China and

Russia. By attaining pre-eminence in South and Central Asia, each nation seeks to enlarge its global reach at the expense of the other.

However, India does not have direct access to the Central Asian region. It faces a geographical barrier. So, lack of direct connectivity with these countries impedes for India's inroads into Central Asia. But it has an option to reach Afghanistan and the CARs via Pakistan. However, Pakistan's refusal of granting transit rights to India and the dynamism in India-Pakistan relations act as the greatest obstacle for its Afghan policy and connect Central Asia policy. Over the past two and half decades, various initiatives have been made, but have been futile to realise their operation. The support to build Chabahar Port on the Makran coast in Iran and Zarang-Delaram highway in Afghanistan provide New Delhi an alternative route for connecting the resource rich region of Central Asia.

With the establishment of a hospital in Farkhor on the Afghan-Tajik border, construction of transmission line to bring electricity from Uzbekistan and participation in developing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, India is trying to explore new ways to develop its close connections with these states. Consequently, the region also provides overland routes for India to reach the resource rich Russia and the Middle East.

Besides the cultural and historical ties, these republics are significant for India because they face common challenges as combating terrorism, enhancing security and stability within the Central Asian region as well as curtailing drug trafficking. These states have also witnessed terrorism in the form of various radical organisations including "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)" (Gunaratna and Iqbal 2011: 251). These organisations have very close links with the global terrorist groups such as the Taliban and its allies.

Moreover, India has launched a new connect Central Asia policy in June 2012. This indicated that New Delhi would seek to construct stronger political ties and fortify security and strategic partnership with Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. India has projected to establish its arrangement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

(SCO). It has also set up a new Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to integrate its market with the Central Asian region. Indeed, India has assured cross-regional development and inter-connections, and new flight routes with these states. It has also pledged to advance information technology, industries and banking to fortify its relations. The issue of energy has necessitated India's quest for intensifying its ties with them. These nations provide market for India's emerging export industries.

India's increasing interests in the Central Asian region is not only confined to the linked threats of separatism or self-determination, cross-border terrorism, drug-trafficking, and incitement to communal violence. It has also profound and long-standing economic and strategic roots.

By reaching through Afghanistan into the Central Asian states, India has such capability to shape events in the region, both as a counterbalance to enhance Russian and Chinese influence and as a major consumer of natural gas and oil. However, C. Christine Fair argues that New Delhi's activities in Kabul "are about India's emergent ability to influence its extended strategic neighbourhood" (2010a: 1). She extended her argument that New Delhi's current goals and interests in this war-torn country are not only Islamabad-centric but "tied to India's desire to be, and to be seen, as an extra-regional power moving toward great power status" (2010b: 4). Broadly, the connect Central Asia policy envisaged the following:

1. To promote people-to-people relations through exchanges of scholars, researchers, academicians, civil society, and future leaders to gain deeper insights into each others' cultures.
2. To strengthen cooperation in the medical field by setting up civil hospitals and village clinics in the region.
3. To build a Central Asian University in Bishkek as a centre of excellence to impart world class education in the fields of information technology sector, philosophy, cultures, languages etc.
4. To establish comprehensive multilateral engagements with all the states in the area using the synergy of mutual attempts through the existing organisations like the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), the Custom Union (CU), and the

SCO. It also has proposed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in order to integrate with the Eurasian market.

5. To strengthen the political ties at both bilateral and multilateral forums.
6. To fortify security and strategic collaboration with focus on joint research, military training, counter-terrorism mechanisms (Stobdan 2014).

#### 3.5.4 *Enhance Regional Relations via Afghanistan*

India is very keen to advance well-built trade ties and collaboration in Afghanistan and Central Asia on energy, trade, transit. It has been widely acknowledged the need to advance and endorse regional economic cooperation and integration. The country is a vigorous and active supporter of regional economic collaboration involving all of Kabul's neighbours "to form transit corridors linking the energy-rich West and Central Asian region with the energy-deficient subcontinent" (Mukhopadhaya 2010: 32). Regional collaboration in the conflict renovation of the conflict ridden state could provide favourable atmosphere to establish long-lasting peace, stability, harmony, sustainable development, and security in the whole region (D'Souza 2009).

In 2002, the then Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai started the process of regional collaboration by engaging its neighbours with the signing of the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations. The Declaration sought the pledge of the neighbouring states "to constructive and supportive bilateral relationships based on the principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, cooperation and non-interference in each others' internal affairs" (Rubin 2013: 224). Consequently, in February 2003, the then Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah has declared that regional integration is the key focus of the country's foreign policy. So, it became the vital pillar of Afghanistan's policy.

The strategic investment India has made in opening sea, rail, and road links through the Iranian port of Chabahar to increase its access to the region and Eurasia market as well. It wants to diminish Afghanistan's dependence on Islamabad for trade and transit. It has added the benefit of diluting Pakistan's influence over Afghan affairs (Mukhopadhaya 2010). So, the trilateral accord between Afghanistan, India, and Iran to

build up the Chabahar route through Zaranj, Melak, and Delaram would ease regional trade and transit. As a result, it would also contribute to regional economic security.

### 3.1 Afghanistan-India-Iran-Central Asian Republics



Source: Prepared by GIS LAB, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

New Delhi is very eager to have a firm grip and utilise its power in the region along with other major powers. It is also trying to avert any possible influence intimidating to its goals and security. The major anxiety of its neighbourhood and extended neighbourhood policy has been the security and stability in the region. Afghanistan, however, acts as a hub of instability not only in South and Central Asian region but beyond as well.

#### 3.5.5 Contain Terrorism and Religious Extremism

India's primary concern in the region is the security aspect. The country's long-term goals have been retraining and inverting the tide of religious extremism and terrorism. Historically, various challenges and problems to India's security have tended to emerge from its NWFP. The region provides launching pads for deadly attacks and interventions

into the plains of northern India and Jammu and Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir also came under a spell of Afghan rule from 1753-1819.

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Kashmir's connection with Afghanistan was regenerated, although in a different context. Thousands of the Afghan militants turned to Jammu and Kashmir to fight against the Indian security forces. Religious schools and Islamophobia have played a crucial role in recruitment and training of militants for Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir. One of the Pakistani analysts Ishtiaq Ahmad argues that "Most of the militant organisations that are now fighting in Jammu and Kashmir, including Harakat-ul-Mujahidin, are products of the Afghan war. The Taliban are an important external agent fuelling the fire of Islamic militancy in Kashmir" (2002: 361-62).

The spread of Islamic fundamentalism is the major security threat for the Indian unity and diversity. So, the main interests of India's Afghan policy are to prevent the rise of radical Taliban and its allies. The country has been a victim of various terror outfits such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), etc. The Pakistani radical groups and the Afghan Taliban factions have developed strong operational connections. New Delhi is also trying to counter the growing nexus between the terrorist factions' active in the "Af-Pak" border. The Indian people have been continuously targeted and attacked in Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks on the Indian citizens in Afghanistan between 2001 and December 2016 are mentioned below.

1. On 7 July 2008, the terrorists had launched a deadly attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul that left sixty-six people dead, including two senior diplomats.
2. On 10 February 2010, terrorists attacked on a guest house in Kabul that left nine Indians death, including two military officers.
3. On 4 September 2013, the Indian writer and activist Sushmita Banerjee (49) was killed by the Taliban group in Paktita Province, Afghanistan.
4. On 13 May 2015, there were four Indians among fourteen people died in a terrorist attack at the Park Palace guest house in Kabul. It is confirmed that India's Ambassador Amar Sinha was the major target of the deadly attack. The

frequent attacks on its consulates and the killings of several Indians and Afghan workers assigned to the road construction project in south-western Afghanistan.

India's aspiration is to contain the resurrection of the Taliban and weed out all the elements from the Afghan soil that act against its interests and goals. Indeed, the Taliban and other radical groups' active in the "Af-Pak" region would be antagonistic to its interests. Stephen Blank has argued that "As long as central control and legitimacy continues to elude in Kabul, the conflagration in Kashmir will have a ready supply of tinder" (2003: 142).

Thus, India is apprehensive of the fact that any space for the radical and extremist elements in Afghanistan would marginalise its influence as well as boost the internal disturbances to India. It is under these security concerns that New Delhi is designing its approach and policy to tackle terrorism as well as curb religious radicalism. Since 2001, India has extended its diplomatic, political, and substantial humanitarian aid to the Afghan governments to prevent the rising of radical groups.

Moreover, Afghanistan's former President Hamid Karzai has urged the Indian government to do more support in terms of military aid. In his official trips to India in May 2013 and December 2013, Karzai requested Indian government to provide "lethal military equipment" in addition to military training programmes and small arms. His wish list included mortars, tanks, a transport aircraft, artillery, and medium-lift helicopters. Afghanistan has "placed request for 150 battle tanks, 120 (105 mm) field guns, a large number of 82 mm mortars, one medium lift transport aircraft (AN-32), two squadrons of medium lift (24) and attack helicopters (24), and a large number of trucks" (Agarwal 2015: 92). However, India has rejected to supply of lethal military aid.

Both the two countries declared they would expand their bilateral security cooperation to strengthen their ties. They agreed that they would begin with several new initiatives to enhance the capabilities of the ANSF. After signing the Strategic Partnership Agreement, India has trained the number of Afghan military officers and personnel. It trains around thousand personnel each year. Shaida Abdali, the Afghan ambassador to India, has said that around 350 military personnel receive training in India

every year. He has also confirmed that about 1400 Afghan personnel trained in India since the end of the Taliban regime. S. D. Goswami, the Indian defence spokesman, argued that the “focus of the training is on conduct of counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations, with special emphasis on operations in built-up areas and rural areas in a realistic environment” (Agarwal 2015: 92). On 15 February 2014, the then Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid agreed during his visit to Kandahar to provide two helicopters and transport aircraft to Afghanistan to enhance logistical support.

### *3.5.6 Drug Trafficking*

The opium production and drug trafficking in Afghanistan is another apprehension for India. Most of the people in Afghanistan are dependent on illegal drugs. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the country “became the world’s largest producer of opium poppy” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2002). The poppy cultivation has increased immensely since c. 2001.

In the last two decades, the cultivation of opium in this country spread very swiftly. At present the farming of poppy occurs in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The southern provinces of Afghanistan concentrate eighty percent of world’s opium production. Indeed, the opium trade was not a new problem in the country, but the challenge grew as a consequence of the degradation of the economic and agricultural infrastructure. The illegal trade of drugs in this country is a major source for the terrorist groups to generate money and buy weapons. Other related concern with this opium production is the spread of drugs throughout the region. The country became the “world’s leading source of opiates and supplies 93 percent of the world’s heroin, with the bulk going to users in Europe and Russia” (D’Souza 2009: 36).

In May 2004, the then chief of Afghanistan’s Counter-Narcotics Directorate Mirwaise Yasini reported that he was personally aware of at least two millionaire drug smugglers supplying ammunition, transportation and communication apparatus to the Taliban and its allies in the south. “From 2005 to 2010, the Taliban’s share of opium production and trafficking is put at between \$90 million and \$160 million a year” (Abbas 2014: 175).

Afghanistan's illicit opium and cannabis make way to the Indian market through the India-Pakistan border in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. The World Drug Report compiled by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2008 say that "India holds the largest opiate-using population in the sub-region estimated at around 3.2 million persons" (UNDOC 2009: 54). A host of counter measures were introduced by Afghanistan with the help of its donors, but these made not a dent in the development. The Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan which has dealt with the menace since its inception in 2005 remains ineffective till this date.

The drug addiction is growing at an alarming rate. Opium farming in this country hit a record high in 2013, with farmers harvesting a crop worth nearly \$1 billion. Therefore, it is inflicting profound damage on India's social fabric. It is also posing complex challenges to both the national security and human security of India. The Taliban and its allies are also increasingly reliant on drug money. Therefore, combating narcotic-terrorism and drug trafficking have shaped an imperative element of India's Afghan policy.

### **3.6 Challenges in India-Afghanistan Relations**

It is evident from the above discourse that India has considerable interests in Afghanistan. Though New Delhi's Afghan policies are not free from barriers. There are many complex challenges to advance its objectives and interests in the region. These included the resurgence of the Taliban, Pakistan factor, emerging China as a factor in India-Afghan relations, etc. has fuelled the complex nature of challenges. Prospects for India-Afghanistan relationship would depend to a certain extent on security and political ties, but largely, on the geopolitical dynamics in the region. The below mentioned are some major challenges in India-Afghanistan relationship.

#### *3.6.1 Pakistan Factor*

Pakistan is the main rival and competitor of India in South Asia and a main challenge for its Afghan Policy. The economic, political, and security interests of the two rivals in Afghanistan largely deviate from each other. Islamabad has always seen Kabul as its

backyard and a basis of 'strategic depth'. The strategic triangle of India-Pakistan-Afghanistan is apparent with the observation that "A central aim for Pakistan's military tsars is to make sure that the future political make-up in Afghanistan does not allow India to expand its security or even development footprint" (Chaudhuri 2011: 85).

Pakistan's mistrust of India and insecurities about India's engagement in Afghanistan are a major obstacle in Afghanistan-India relationship. On Pakistan's obsession with India's interests in Afghanistan, Ahmad Rashid argues that "Islamabad viewed its Afghan policy through the prism of denying India any advantage in Kabul....Kabul had suddenly become the new Kashmir – the new battleground for the India-Pakistan rivalry" (Rashid 2008: 110).

Pakistan seems hostile to the growing India-Afghanistan ties on one side and India, Afghanistan and Iran on the other side. It has used Afghanistan against the interests of India under the policy framework of 'strategic depth'. It has designed its Afghan strategy and policies in accordance with the India-Pakistan conflict. It has been argued that India and Pakistan hostility did not remain confined to the long-established problems of Kashmir, Siachen, and Sir Creek. But they have moved to new intricate concerns including economic battle, regional and international status, inter and intra regional alliances with diverge objectives and interests. They are also trying to expand their areas of influence against one another, access to the unexplored natural resources in the regions adjacent and so on. In this respect, Central Asia being a rich resource region and at close distance to India and Pakistan, is also a matter of concern between the two (Grare 2010).

Regarding India's presence in Afghanistan, Pakistan perceives that its strategic plan is to undermine Pakistan's arrangement to become a strong partner of the CARs. Pakistan also comprehends that India perceives Afghanistan as a geopolitical constraint on it (Baloch and Niazi 2009). Pakistan's perception is that India uses its consulates to encourage conflict in Baluchistan and other provinces across the border. Thus, Pakistan takes every move of India in Afghanistan hostile to its interests. From Pakistan's perspective, India is looking to undermine its political stability, territorial integrity and economic viability and prosperity.

Pakistan officials have expressed deep concerns over the Strategic Agreement signed between India and Afghanistan in October 2011. They argued that such kind of agreement could impairment the long-term interests of any country in the whole region. Many in Pakistan think that India's construction of Zaranj-Delaram highway on one side and dams on the Kabul River on the other side, aimed at creating the rift between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### 3.6.2 *China's Involvement in Afghanistan*

China and its uncertain stand on Afghanistan's security is another barrier to India's involvement in Afghanistan. It appeared as a new competitor to India in this war-torn country. The country is primarily been governed by its extensive geostrategic objectives and its complex regional security apprehensions. China dealt friendly with every Afghan regime except the years of the Soviet occupation. In fact, China is the second regional country after India to have institutionalised a supposedly long-term strategic cooperation with Afghanistan. China has endorsed the Bonn Agreement signed among different ethnic groups of Afghanistan on 5 December 2001. On 21 January 2002, at a conference on reconstruction support to Kabul in Tokyo, "China pledged \$1 million, in addition to humanitarian goods worth \$3.6 million" (Hall 2010: 1; Chandra 2015: 238).

In May 2008, China signed a deal with Afghanistan. The deal has made China the biggest single foreign direct investment in Afghanistan amounting to US\$ 3.5 billion in the Aynak Copper area in Logar region. On 16 September 2011, its oil company China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has won first oilfield auction in northern Afghanistan since the US-led NATO occupation. This would assist China to acquire energy resources as well as enhance it influence in Afghanistan. China has also committed to construct new coal fired "400 megawatt power plant, a freight railway running from Xinjiang through Tajikistan to Afghanistan" (Clarke 2013: 13). They have also built a hospital and a big mosque there.

On 23-25 March 2010, Hamid Karzai visited fourth time to China. On 24 March 2010, he met Chinese President Hu Jintao in the Great Hall of the People, where Chinese President has identified five priority fields for both the states to construct a

comprehensive cooperative partnership of good-neighborliness, mutual trust and friendship for generations. These included: First, fortify bilateral relations by engaging more regular interactions and meetings; Second, extend support in the field of humanities such as education, public health, culture and personnel training; Third, enhance bilateral economic partnership; Fourth, coordinate with one another in multilateral ties, and, Fifth, develop police and security cooperations by tackling cross-border crimes and the three evil forces of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

On 6 December 2011, Chinese President Hu Jintao proposed a five-point proposal to engage with Afghanistan at the second Bonn Conference on Afghanistan. These included: First, the global community should strongly encourage and help an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned development of sustainable peace, reconciliation, and rebuilding; Second, they should strongly help for the capacity building programmes that would create long-lasting stability and peace not only in this country but in the whole region; Third, it should also support the country in improving reconciliation through its own endeavours and assist to produce a favourable atmosphere for the reconciliation process; Fourth, it should also help the country in developing the economy; and, Fifth, it should strongly assist the country in developing external relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 6 December 2011).

On 8 June 2012, the then Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai and China's President Hu Jintao met on the sideline of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of State Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and agreed to set up the China-Afghanistan Strategic and Cooperative Partnership on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence which they signed on 20 January 1955. These were: First, to deepen political mutual respect, support and trust and strengthening the traditional friendship; Second, to enhance collaboration in diverse fields, including cultural, political, security, and economic. Moreover, they have urged that they would continue to find new methods and ways in order to increase investment and trade and expand commercial collaboration. They also agreed to strengthen the agreement which they have signed in 2006 on Trade and Economic Cooperation; Third, to enhance cultural and people-to-people contacts; Fourth, to develop security collaboration and jointly tackle the "three forces" of

terrorism, separatism, and extremism as well as trans-national crimes, including drug trafficking; and, Fifth, to develop multilateral cooperation and coordination within the framework of the SAARC and the SCO (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 8 June 2012).

Chinese major concern stem from the growing Uighur secessionist movement in its western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) bordering Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Afghanistan (Chandra 2015). Ahmed Rashid has argued that Islamabad has always been “trying to convince Beijing that the Taliban, to which it gives substantial military and financial aid, are willing to clamp down on the drug trade and have no desire to fund or support Islamic Uighurs in their fight for independence” (1999: 21).

It has been argued that China sees Afghanistan through the prism of its ties with Islamabad and therefore would not support India's role. It has already targeted India while overreaching its influence in Southeast Asia and the Central Asian states. Moreover, it has managed to set up a strategic foothold in New Delhi's neighbourhood. However, its presence in Afghanistan has serious implications for India. The growing nexus of Sino-Pak is another related aspect. These have raised serious concerns for India about the nature of power relations in the region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 8 June 2012).

China's biggest project – and the biggest foreign-investment project overall in Afghanistan – is the development of the Aynak copper mine. With a \$4 billion investment over five years, this could provide a steady source a revenue generation for Afghanistan. It is also investing hugely in gas and oil exploration in this war-ravaged country. The acquisition of Gwadar port in Pakistan already provides China with a potentially vital energy and trading hub. It unsettles India (Abbas 2014).

### *3.6.3 Resurgence of the Taliban*

Afghanistan is witnessing the resurrection of the Taliban and other terror groups as a main security challenge to the Afghan government. Afghanistan and its international

partners are fundamentally faced with a moral and security dilemma in what is termed as national reconciliation with the Taliban. It has been argued that the demise of the reclusive leader Mullah Omar would decline the Taliban and subsequently it would collapse. However, in subsequent years Taliban has fortified despite being divided into two groups. The Taliban has strengthened its civil and military administration and controlled some areas in eastern provinces of Afghanistan, such as Khost, Ghazni, Nangarhar, and Paktika. They are continuously carrying terror attacks in “Af-Pak” region.

On 7 July 2015, for the first time diplomatic attempts have been made to engage with Taliban representatives in the sustainable peace process facilitated by Pakistan. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG)<sup>14</sup> was formed for peace talks with the Taliban. However, it was disrupted due to the death of Mullah Omar. After that they rejected any kind of peace negotiation and declared their ultimate goal is to implement Sharia law in the country. Thus, the group has been an ineffective channel for resolving the difference between the parties and establishes peace in the country. It is clearly evident that both Operation Enduring Freedom and the ISAF haven't achieved their imperative objective, i.e., the annihilation of the Taliban and other radical groups.

The Taliban became an actor which spoils the India-Afghanistan relations between 1996 and 2001. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan pose a deadly but unique set of challenges in their relationship. The current insurgency that wracks the country is majorly caused the resurgent Taliban. They have safe haven in NWFP and Pakistan, where leaders of the Taliban and other fractions have found refuge (Council on Foreign Relations 2006). Unemployment, illiteracy, and high poverty rates are the major factors to create conducive environment for Taliban recruitment drivers.

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<sup>14</sup> The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) was formed in December 2015 on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia conference in Islamabad, Pakistan. The major purpose of this group is to endeavour to steer out Afghanistan from decades of violent extremism and achieve peace through peaceful means. This group is working for reconciliation process in this war-torn nation. Its member states are: Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and the United States.

Afghan governments and its donors' have been incapable to tackle growing unemployment and poverty in the country. This has caused vast dissatisfaction and anger among the people. The international interference has aggravated the internal fractions (social, tribal and ethnic) in Afghanistan. The Taliban have profoundly criticised the newly formed institutions of state and believe they will return to Kabul in triumph. The year 2015 and subsequent years marked significant for the Taliban. They had made strong gains in Badakhshan, Kunduz, and Faryab in the north and Uruzgan and Helmand in the south (Farrell and Semple 2015).

Many countries have expanded their energies and resources in Afghanistan, but with little coordination and planning. This has led to over-competitiveness and the pursuit of divergent agendas – all in the name of helping Afghanistan. Retrogressive forces including the Taliban have been direct and immediate beneficiaries of this ineffectiveness and incompetence. After 2001, the Taliban were resurgent by mainly guerrilla warfare, improvisation and galvanising people in the name of resistance to invasion. It has been argued that religious and economic factors influenced this metamorphosis (Abbas 214). The Taliban's position started to change in 2008-09 as argued by Antonio Giustozzi that the “Taliban made deals with local school of headmasters, allowing teaching to continue, but with changed curricula and the incorporation of mullahs among the school staff, tasked to monitor the proper behaviour of the teachers” (Giustozzi 2010: 22). This shared control of sorts led to the opening of around eighty-one schools in Helmand, Uruzgan, and Kandahar provinces. The Taliban establishes schools in areas under their control for ideological purposes.

India's investment in the Northern Alliance, through military training and financial support for its supporters during the 1990s, built its position in Afghanistan after 2001. It was wise of India to build on that strategy through development and economic projects, which it did with the support of Iran and the USA. It kept Pakistan under pressure, but without any military projection (Ibid). As Christine Fair, a noted American scholar on South Asia argues “Although India downplays its interests in securing and retaining Afghanistan as friendly state from which it has the capacity to monitor Pakistan,

and even possibly cultivate assets to influence activities in Pakistan, it most certainly has such aims” (2011: 181).

India often blames Pakistan for continual attacks targeting its embassy in Kabul and its consulates in the south of the country. While Pakistan frequently claims that India is supporting anti-state elements in its Baluchistan province. The competition between these two countries in Afghanistan continues, and the Taliban are more empowered in this process. India, besides its pure economic interest, wants to keep Afghanistan within its zone of influence. For Pakistan, the rise of Taliban is an assurance that Indian influence in Afghanistan would remain nominal and diminish (Abbas 2014). So, they are causing deterioration in the regional security environment.

The Taliban continuously targets India on account of its dynamic role in reconstruction and rebuilding process in the country. The growing Taliban factor is weakening the international community’s endeavours to reconstruct Afghanistan, and the credibility of the Afghan government. It has also created large disenchantment and frustration among the common masses. Rising hostility and violence, and widening instability and insecurity are causing significant concerns for India-Afghanistan relations.

These developments pose deadly challenges to the India-Afghanistan ties. These issues persistently to give rise more challenges and concern “about whether India can sustain its present aid-only policy under the shrinking US security umbrella” (Fair 2011: 181). The most daunting task for their relationship is to establish a set-up which could promote peace and stability in the country.

To sum up the chapter, India and Afghanistan ties have been built on trust, reciprocity and mutual respect. They work together as equal partners. Moreover, both the countries share certain common values to pursue goals having mutual significance. They also share common ground to build a strategic partnership. Indeed, they have considerably strengthened their relations since c. 2001. After 2001, Afghanistan has desired many a times that it needs continued cooperation with India and Pakistan to remain imperative to overcome the disadvantages of being a landlocked state. However, the country’s progress towards enhancement and stabilisation is being intensely

influenced by the Indo-Pak enmity. The rising Taliban insurgency in the southern parts of the country is slowing down the democratic and stability process. It faces key development hurdles, and New Delhi has assured to assist the country in the path towards advancement and peaceful. It has widened its engagement with the CARs within the framework of energy and trade partnership.

However, the current situation in Afghanistan is not a good sign for India, which prospects peaceful, stable, prosperous, and democratic country as crucial for its own security and the regional level. India's interests in this war-torn country in terms of people-to-people contact, geopolitics, and trade are far too basic to remain severed and disconnected from the unfolding crisis. They have to contend with growing religious radicalism, too. So, the main challenge for both India and Afghanistan is how to build effective mechanisms to eliminate the hurdles of their ties and to produce the favourable atmosphere of security, viability and stability in the country.