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INDIA'S ROLE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AFGHANISTAN: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS



PRADEEP REDDY TANGIRALA

Department of Geopolitics and International Relations

Manipal Academy of Higher Education

Manipal

June 2021

Department of Geopolitics and International Relations

Manipal Academy of Higher Education

**INDIA'S ROLE IN THE
RECONSTRUCTION OF AFGHANISTAN:
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Geopolitics and
International Relations in Partial Fulfilment for Master's Degree
in Geopolitics and International Relations**

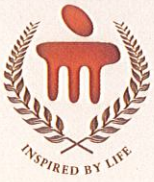
Supervisor

DR. MONISH TOURANGBAM

By

PRADEEP REDDY TANGIRALA

June 2021



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Date:

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**India’s Role in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Geopolitics and International Relations of Manipal Academy of Higher Education is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

(Tangirala Pradeep Reddy)

CERTIFICATE

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

(Dr. Nanda Kishor M S)

Associate Professor and Head

(Dr. Monish Tourangbam)

Supervisor

Department of Geopolitics and International Relations

Old TAPMI Building, Manipal - 576 104, Karnataka

dir. 91 820 2922398, 2922996 fax. 91 820 2570062 e-mail. nanda.kishor@manipal.edu, geopolitics.mu@manipal.edu www.manipal.edu

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HSA	Homeland Security Act
HSD	Homeland Security Department
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ITEC	Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammed
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LoC	Line of Control
MCA	Military Commission Act
NA	Northern Alliance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIST	National Institute for Standards and Technology
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
SAARC	South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation
SEWA	Self Employed Women Association
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
WTC	World Trade Centre

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ABSTRACT

India's role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan has been very extensive over the last two decades though it has dealt with many critical situations and challenges. The context of India's aid and assistance to Afghanistan can be understood and analyzed through many geopolitical and international prisms. India's aim and objectives to aid and assist Afghanistan in its reconstruction process is to achieve its strategic, economic and security goals. India's foreign policy towards Afghanistan has always been to follow a soft power approach and has been containing itself in contemplating a policy shift and approach with more hard power due to many factors and reasons.

Afghanistan has been at the center of contemporary international relations debates owing to combination of several factors. The rise of terrorism, extremist groups, the Taliban rule and subsequent United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization led invasion and intervention to bring peace and stability, drug trafficking and being at the center of Golden Crescent, violation of human rights and the rise of radical fundamental Islamic organizations in Afghanistan made the policy community around the world to understand and analyze these issues in a comprehensive manner. Afghanistan has become more relevant in the 21st century and post-2001 situation in the international system. The issues pertaining to Afghanistan have made academicians and policy makers across the world to develop new perspectives and alternative policies with regard to these issues in Afghanistan, vi-a-vis, in the world. Contemporary Afghanistan poses many challenges due to varied reasons which both internal and external. International engagement in Afghanistan from 2001 to make Afghanistan a stable and peaceful nation have yielded substantial results over the last two decades.

The theoretical aspect of India's aid towards Afghanistan in international relations was to achieve and establish a stable and peaceful democratic Afghanistan by conceptualizing and encapsulating the realistic and neorealistic; regional security complex theory; neo liberalism theories to attain its goals and objectives. Afghanistan has been in turmoil since many decades due to which it was in dire need of humanitarian aid and assistance. India was at the epi-center in providing aid and assistance to Afghanistan.

India as an important regional player and with its extensive economic activity and interest in Afghanistan and in the region has been helping Afghanistan to make it a peaceful, prosperous and stable democratic nation. India has established a meaningful and cordial relationship with many

domestic players in Afghanistan and understood the unique nature of socio-political dynamics of Afghan society and kept his options open with respect to Afghanistan from a geostrategic perspective. India has been aiding and assisting Afghanistan across various fields in civilian sector like developing small and community-based projects, humanitarian assistance, major multi-sector projects and education and capacity building. India's assistance has been touched more than 3 billion USD and pledged more in the near future.

India has many prospects and at the same time faces many challenges with regard to Afghanistan. The main drivers for India's foreign policy strategy towards Afghanistan have been economic, strategic and from security perspective. India wants to have access to energy rich Central Asian nations geographically to suffice its energy needs domestically and also India wants to portray itself as a major regional player and gain influence in the region. Pakistan and terrorism have been one of the major factors between India and Afghanistan relations. India has been trying to contain Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan for many years as Pakistan has been using Afghanistan's soil as a ground to trouble India and contain India's growing power in Afghanistan and in the region due to the feud between both the nations.

The growing geopolitical complexities in the region and in Afghanistan in the recent past especially after the Doha agreement between the Taliban and the United States of America on 29th February 2020 have made the situation more complex to Indian strategic interests and its foreign policy towards Afghanistan. There are many uncertainties with respect to the contemporary situation in Afghanistan as the situation is changing on a day-to-day basis. Though the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan was initiated as per the agreement and is on the verge of conclusion by 11th September 2021, it is inconclusive about the complete withdrawal of foreign troops irrespective of United States due to surge in violence. There was a ceasefire agreement and a proposition of peaceful negotiations between both Taliban and the international community and also between Taliban and Afghan government. But eventually the ceasefire agreement fallout due to trust deficit and failure and inconclusive intra-Afghan talks made the situation more worrisome and critical.

The situation in Afghanistan has been evolving rapidly and many nations have been trying to cope with the pace and be relevant and adaptive to the contemporary scenario in Afghanistan. Due to many advancements from Taliban in capturing power in Afghanistan, the relevance of entire peace

process is diluted with only exception to troops withdrawal. The expected truce between Taliban and Afghan government to share power through a democratic process has went in vain as Taliban went offensive and is trying to capture power and is not in a situation to accept any peace agreement. Many regional players like Pakistan, China, Iran, Turkey, central Asian nations and also India have been eyeing to secure their place and capture their share in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops. The present situation in Afghanistan has made the policy thinkers very skeptical about the future of Afghanistan and about the targets achieved so far.

There are many possibilities and outcomes from the ongoing situation in Afghanistan as Taliban gains more power and occupies Afghanistan. Anti-Taliban forces including the government have been opposing the Taliban's offensive policy and are trying to counter Taliban and withhold their power. Many nations have been trying to balance the power between both Taliban and withhold their power. Many nations have been trying to balance the power between both Taliban and Afghan government so as to secure their interests. India has been reluctant in its policy towards Afghanistan and has not changed its policy in the last two decades. But India has been trying to contemplate its policy towards Afghanistan due to the on-going situation to secure its interests and by not losing its strategic gains it has achieved so far. India has many challenges and prospects in its policy towards Afghanistan and the region in the near future.