
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN, PLANNING AND POLICIES IN TERMS OF UPCOMING STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The government of Afghanistan under the Taliban has been condemned for its repressive stance towards human rights in the country, particularly the rights of women and girls to hold jobs and receive an education. India's policy has, from the very beginning, had as its primary goal the prevention of Pakistan's re-embedding in Afghanistan's strategic and political landscape. This has been India's focus ever since the policy's inception. Ironically, it is India's victories in Afghanistan that have caused Pakistan's security establishment to enter a state of fear. There is a widespread belief that India is trying to take control of Afghanistan, and this view is spreading. The assassination of anti-Taliban leader Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001, and the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, in which nearly 3000 civilians lost their lives in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, were the preludes to the war. The war began on October 7, 2001. The United States of America has determined that those responsible for the attacks were members of al-Qaeda, which is a group that is headquartered in, operates out of, and is affiliated with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban). It was in India's best regional strategic and political interest to cultivate close ties with Afghanistan, and India set about doing just that. In spite of the fact that India and Afghanistan's economic cooperation continued unabatedly, the political relations between the two countries and their shared strategic security interest were only superficially anchored. This was a discouraging reality regarding India's policy toward Afghanistan. The reason for this is that India remained neutral on the Pashtunistan issue until the middle of the 1960s, and it wasn't until Pakistan ceded part of POK territory to China that India officially voiced its support for Afghanistan on the Pashtunistan issue. This happened after Pakistan ceded territory in POK to China.

Keywords: *Relationship, Afghanistan, Policies*

INTRODUCTION

The assassination of anti-Taliban leader Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001, and the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, in which nearly 3000 civilians lost their lives in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, were the preludes to the war. The war began on October 7, 2001. The United States of America has determined that those responsible for the attacks were members of al-Qaeda, which is a group that is headquartered in, operates out of, and is affiliated with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban). Finding Osama bin Laden and other high-ranking Al Qaeda members in order to put them on trial was the primary objective of the invasion. Other goals included dismantling the Al Qaeda organisation and toppling the Taliban rule, which aided and protected the terrorist group. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan continues to claim lives through both the direct repercussions of violent acts and the indirect implications of a breakdown in public health, security, and infrastructure brought on by the conflict. Crossfire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), killings, bombings, and night raids into the homes of suspected insurgents have all been responsible for the deaths of innocent civilians. Unexploded munitions from earlier conflicts as well as cluster bombs dropped by the United States continue to kill even when there is no active hostilities. Large numbers of combat injured, including those who have lost limbs or suffered burns, are being treated in hospitals in Afghanistan. Additionally, the battle has caused wounds that cannot be seen. According to a research that was released by the Afghan Ministry of Public Health in 2009, a full two-thirds of Afghans are affected by mental health issues. Afghan society is especially vulnerable to the indirect impacts of the current war as a result of previous wars and civil unrest that have taken place within the nation. These conflict repercussions include increased rates of sickness as a result of a lack of access to safe drinking water, malnutrition, and medical care, as well as an increase in the number of people who are malnourished. The ongoing conflict exacerbates nearly all of the risk factors that are linked to death at an early age, including but not limited to: poverty, hunger, inadequate sanitation, and lack of access to health care, and environmental degradation. Despite the fact that Afghanistan has benefited from investments in health care that may mitigate some of the effects of the war, the results are mixed. While there has been improvement in some areas, such as infant mortality, this has been balanced by continuing or growing needs in other aspects of public health.

Since 2001, the war in Afghanistan has resulted in the deaths of around 92,000 individuals. There have been about 26,000 civilians among those who have been slain. Since 2001, there have been close to 100,000 persons who have sustained injuries. In 2003, there were 18 physicians and 11 nurses available per 100,000 inhabitants. At the same time, the infant mortality rate was 165 deaths per 1000 births, making it one of the highest in the world (Health in Afghanistan, 2011). This should not come as a surprise considering that the cost of healthcare was estimated to be \$58 per person in 2008. (CIA world fact book). The cost of providing healthcare to each individual in Japan is approximately \$2,700 annually. The high infant mortality rate indicates that only a very small percentage of the population had access to appropriate medical care. Furthermore, the dearth of medical professionals and facilities demonstrates that the nation does not really have the authority or the financial means to provide even the most fundamental requirements for human survival. Another indication that Afghanistan is an LEDC is the fact that its people does not have access to medical care at a rate that is close to one hundred percent, as is the case in a MEDC (Less Economically Developed Country).

Un addition to the ineffectiveness of the health care system, the economy was in a terrible state. Its meagre infrastructure was obliterated, and routine business operations were disrupted as a result of the war. Throughout the entirety of the conflict, the average GDP per capita was somewhere in the range of \$700 to \$800. (CIA world fact book). According to the CIA global fact book, 35 percent of the population was living

below the poverty line, and in addition to this, there was a drought that lasted for four years, which severely restricted agricultural productivity. This was a catastrophe for the 37 percent of the population that worked in agriculture, in particular due to the fact that many of them engaged in subsistence farming, in which they farmed in order to feed themselves and their families (Health in Afghanistan, 2011).

Their choice, from an economic standpoint, to rely on subsistence farming as their principal source of food had ramifications that lay in wait for them in the future; as a result, they were unable to cope when the drought struck. The fact that such a big proportion of the population is engaged in agriculture is evidence that Afghanistan is a Least Developed Country (LDC). This is because Afghanistan's industrial and service sector are not very developed due to a scarcity of jobs and technology.

Education was one of the last main aspects of Afghan society that was significantly impacted by the war. In fact, it was one of the last major aspects of Afghan society that was significantly impacted. Once more, as a direct result of the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, the educational system was nearly nonexistent. The majority of teachers left the nation, and schools were bombed during their absence. On top of this, during the reign of the Taliban, education for females was prohibited, resulting in a massive imbalance between the sexes (Education in Afghanistan). In the year 2000, just 12.6 percent of women were able to read and write, compared to 43.1% of males aged 25 and older. The percentage of males who were able to read and write was higher. Fewer than 50,000 of the approximately 1.2 million kids now enrolled in schools are female. Literacy rates should be close to 99.9 percent in a MEDC; nevertheless, the average literacy rate for Afghanistan was 28.1 percent in 2010. (CIA world fact book). This demonstrates the paucity of education opportunities available to individuals, which may possibly be related to the high death rate that the Afghan population experiences. Through increased levels of education, even more career opportunities can be generated, and through increased levels of general knowledge, even more fatal diseases and other types of accidents can be avoided. 3 The strength of the Taliban has increased since December 2014, when the NATO-led Foreign Security Assistance Force (ISAF) withdrew from Afghanistan. This drawdown brought the total number of international security forces down from over 130,000 to approximately 12,000. The Taliban have been able to expand their activity to the northern part of the country despite the fact that their leadership changed in July, there has been an increase in the number of clashes between different factions, and there are more insurgents on Afghan territory who are believed to be affiliated with the Islamic State. Since the beginning of 2015, it has carried out an increasing number of suicide bombings and bomb assaults around the country. In 2015, the already precarious security situation got even worse. The United Nations reported 22,634 security incidents in 2015, which is a 3% year-over-year rise and the second-highest number recorded since the organisation began keeping records in 2001. Since the publication of my previous report, combat has become more intense in the provinces of Helmand and Baghlan, and the situation in the province of Kunduz has remained unstable. Seventy percent of the security incidents that took place in 2015 were documented as having taken place in the southern, eastern, and south - eastern regions respectively. The provinces of Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar, and Nangarhar were the most dangerous, accounting for 49% of all security incidents. Nangarhar was the least dangerous province. Armed conflict and the use of homemade explosives accounted for 79% of all events in 2015, which is a 3% increase when compared to 2014 and reflects the general greater level of insurgent activity that occurred throughout the year.

In 2015, the Taliban expanded their territorial reach by temporarily seizing the provincial capital of Kunduz as well as 24 district centres in the north of Afghanistan (in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kunduz,

Sari Pul, and Takhar provinces), the west of Afghanistan (in Badghis and Farah provinces), the east of Afghanistan (in Nuristan Province), and the south of Afghanistan (in Helmand and Kandahar provinces). In addition, when compared to 2014, when the Taliban only took control of three centres, this shows a major growth in their control. Despite the fact that most district centres were rapidly retaken by pro-government forces, many remained under Taliban control for weeks. These included the district centres in the provinces of Faryab, Helmand, Kunduz, Sari Pul, and Takhar. The insurgency's efforts to overthrow the government were not stymied by the tensions that surrounded Mullah Mansoor's ascension to the position of Taliban commander following Mullah Omar's passing. The United Nations registered 4,014 security-related occurrences across the country between 1 December 2015 and 15 February 2016. These incidents occurred between December 2015 and February 2016. When compared to the same period in 2014 and 2015, this reflects an 8.3 percent decline; however, it should be remembered that in 2015, January and February had the greatest totals for respective months since 2001. Armed conflict was responsible for the bulk of security incidents, accounting for 57.4 percent of all incidents, followed by the use of improvised explosive devices, which accounted for 19.2 percent of all incidents. The number of assassinations of specific targets remained high. The period beginning on December 1, 2015, and ending on February 15, 2016, saw a total of 154 assassinations, including attempts that were not successful; this number represents a 27% decrease when compared to the same time period in 2014 and 2015. Twenty suicide attacks were reported during the period covered by this study, compared to thirty during the same time period in both 2014 and 2015.

The United Nations' monitoring of security-related developments related to the work, mobility, and safety of civilian actors recorded 6,601 incidents between August 1 and October 31, 2015; these incidents have the potential to affect the delivery of mandated activities and programmes. The monitoring took place between August 1 and October 31, 2015. When compared to the same time period in 2014, when 5,516 events were reported, the number of incidents indicated a 19% rise. The southern, south-eastern, and eastern regions were responsible for reporting the majority of these events (62 percent of the total). There was a notable intensification of insecurity in the north and north-east, including through the temporary seizure by the Taliban of Kunduz City, and an increase in incidents recorded in those regions, with Sari Pul, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kunduz, and Takhar Provinces being the most volatile. While the proportion of security incidents in those three regions has remained at a constant level over the past few years, the proportion of security incidents in the north and north-east has significantly increased.

The insurgency that is being headed by the Taliban has shown to be extremely tenacious during its first fighting season against an Afghan-led counterinsurgency. Since February of 2015, there has been virtually non-stop fighting. As a direct consequence of this, the number of casualties sustained by both the ANDSF (Afghan National Defense and Security Forces) and the Taliban during the reporting period and for the entirety of 2015 was higher as compared to the previous reporting period and 2014 correspondingly. However, the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) were also obliged to tackle instability at a higher level than predicted in other parts of the country, such as Kunduz. The levels of violence in normal insurgent strongholds, such as Helmand and Kandahar, were as expected. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan continued to inflict severe harm on the country's civilian population in 2015, with UNAMA recording the greatest number of total civilian casualties since the organisation began keeping such records in 2009. Following rises in both 2013 and 2014, the number of civilians killed and injured as a result of violence related to armed conflict increased by 4% when compared with 2014. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 11,002 civilian casualties between January 1 and December 31, 2015,

with 3,545 civilian deaths and 7,457 civilian injuries. This represents a decrease of 4% in the number of civilian deaths and an increase of 9% in the number of civilian injuries. The rise in the overall number of civilian casualties in 2015 was primarily the result of an increase in the number of complex and suicide attacks, as well as targeted and deliberate killings, carried out by Anti-Government Elements; an increase in the number of civilian casualties caused by Pro-Government Forces during ground engagements and aerial operations; and an increase in the number of civilians caught in the crossfire between the parties to the conflict, most notably in Kunduz province.

ISIS in Afghanistan

Since the middle of 2014, the Islamic State has been expanding its influence in Afghanistan. As part of this expansion, they have adopted the name Islamic State - Khorasan Province (ISKP, also commonly referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan, ISIL-K), which is named after an area that formerly encompassed portions of what are now Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The commanders of the United States military believe that there could be anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 ISKP fighters operating in Afghanistan, with their estimations as of April 2016 leaning toward the lower end of the given range. According to accounts from the press, Afghans believe that the practises carried out by the Taliban in areas under their control are relatively mild in comparison to those carried out by supporters of the Islamic State. Islamic State factions in Afghanistan have captured some small areas, primarily in eastern Afghanistan, while also seeking to recruit fighters for the Islamic State's efforts to expand its caliphate, which is now based in parts of Iraq and Syria. These Islamic State factions in Afghanistan are more in competition with the Taliban than they are in alliance with them.

Wilayat Khorasan is a branch of the Islamic State that encompasses Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other nearby lands. On January 26, 2015, Abu Muhammed al-Adnani, the chief spokesperson for the Islamic State, released an audio statement in which he declared the establishment of Wilayat Khorasan. In the statement, Abu Muhammed al-Adnani declared the establishment of Wilayat Khorasan (Jihadology, January 26, 2015). Since that time, Wilayat Khorasan has been leading an expansion and consolidation drive in the region, with the majority of its activity centred in the eastern and southeastern parts of Afghanistan. On the other hand, the group has suffered multiple defeats on the battlefield, which has led to speculation regarding the group's ability to maintain its existence and its future prospects in Afghanistan. Recent setbacks suffered by Wilayat Khorasan, on the other hand, make it abundantly evident that the Taliban represent a significant barrier to the expansion of the Islamic State in Afghanistan.

Current Political Situation

Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmedzai was inaugurated as President on September 29, 2014, and shortly afterward, he named Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as CEO of the organisation. It would appear that Ghani and Abdullah's alliance has been experiencing difficulties ever since the two of them joined office, although it has not completely disintegrated. Ghani has attempted to assert the full extent of his constitutional role and has announced initiatives to combat corruption and hold corrupt individuals accountable, to install officials based on merit, to promote women, and to explore new ways to settle the conflict with the Taliban insurgency through several trips to regional countries that have a stake in Afghanistan's future. Since he took office, it is said that he has placed a strong emphasis on timeliness and has meetings of high officials under tight control, marking a significant departure from Karzai's more relaxed approach. Additionally, he has announced a variety of policy

initiatives, each of which is addressed in the proper area that follows. Since he took office, Dr. Abdullah has had a difficult time defining his function and asserting the authorities that have been delegated to him. As a result, there have been instances when it has appeared that his role is unclear. According to some observers, his efficacy is hindered by a relatively ineffective advisory council, which includes aides who continue to focus on what Abdullah claims was widespread electoral fraud that prevented him from winning the presidency in 2009 and again in 2014.

Poverty, social exhaustion, and the emergence of illicit power centres as a result of decades of political breakdown, governmental incapacity, criminality, and insurgency have created an environment in which the politics of Afghanistan are characterised by a constant struggle to strike a balance between formal institutional governance and traditional informal governance. The goal is to have leadership in local areas that is responsive and reliable. This will bond the communities to the capital in a way that is reciprocal and will increase both the function of the Afghan central government and the role of local government. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to collaborate equally with traditional leadership structures and with those individuals who rose to power during times of conflict through the use of force or wealth, but who have demonstrated that they are willing to cooperate with constitutional government and the rule of law. The effort is made more difficult by the absence of a local consensus, the typically weak linkages between the capital and localities, the long-standing rivalry and hostility across towns, and the presence of illegitimate insurgent or criminal spoilers. The deteriorating security and economic situations, among other factors, contributed to the emergence of many areas of tension both inside the National Unity Government and between that government and parts of the political elite. In spite of the fact that neither of these were caused by the Government, accusations of inaction and miscalculation have been levelled at it in the media.

The government fulfilled one of its primary objectives by forming the Special Electoral Reform Commission, which marked a step forward in its efforts to solve the problem of electoral changes. The Commission presented its initial set of proposals, of which the Cabinet immediately approved seven of them and sent back three for additional investigation. The advice that the electoral system be changed would particularly have far-reaching ramifications for the future political landscape of the country. The establishment of a democratic foundation for the country is dependent on electoral reforms, and these reforms need to be a source of stability, bringing people together rather than driving a wedge between them.

Since the controversial presidential election of 2014 in Afghanistan, the Afghan public has been dissatisfied with both President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. When President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah took office, there was a lot of optimism for the future and the possibility that things would change for the better. After two years, there has been no significant change. The government of national unity has been mired in a never-ending conflict over patronage and appointments, and as a result, the day-to-day lives of the people it serves have not seen significant, if any, change.

A recent BBG-Gallup survey that was issued on March 25, 2016, showed considerable public unhappiness with the national leadership of Afghanistan. This finding came as the national unity government of Afghanistan was getting close to celebrating its second anniversary. Nearly 81% of those polled expressed some level of dissatisfaction or extreme dissatisfaction with the performance of the national unity government, while only 17% expressed some level of satisfaction or extreme satisfaction with its performance. The poll was carried out between the 27th of October and the 18th of November in 2015, and it involved a nationally representative sample size of 2,500 adults from each of the country's 34 provinces.

According to what they discovered, discontent permeated both Afghanistan's ethnic and geographic components.

The Afghan administration is in a state of complete turmoil. After highly contested and ultimately inconclusive presidential elections in 2014, Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah shared power in accordance with a settlement that was reached by Secretary of State John Kerry of the United States of America. According to the terms of the agreement, Abdullah was going to transition from his post as chief executive into the one of prime minister, which would be a first for the nascent democracy. The peaceful transition of power from former President Hamid Karzai to Ghani was lauded as a sign that Afghanistan has accepted the democratic process being undertaken by the international community in the wake of the overthrow of the Taliban by the United States. However, the so-called unity government of the country is not functioning at all like a cohesive entity. After nearly two years of trying to put their rivalry behind them, Ghani and Abdullah have been unsuccessful. The suspicion that the election was rigged against Abdullah and that it was given to Ghani as a gift because Washington saw him as someone with whom they could more easily conduct business is at the root of the animosity that exists between the two men. Both Ghani and Abdullah are perceived as catering to separate groups of voters; in the case of Ghani, it is the majority ethnic Pashtoons, and in the case of Abdullah, it is the Tajiks. While they argue about who should be appointed to important government roles, Ghani and Abdullah have successfully divided the government into two factions. The end outcome is a standstill in political activity. There is pervasive corruption, and administrative incompetence contributes to the problem, which might bring down the administration.

The Interest That India Has in Afghanistan

Since the beginning of time, India has had extensive and everlasting cultural connections with Afghanistan. In addition, as a result of Afghanistan's location on the traditional invasion route to India from the north-west, the conventional wisdom in this country places India's security parameters at the Oxus, which is the northern boundary of Afghanistan. This is due to the fact that Afghanistan is located on this route. As a result, India cannot afford to become unconcerned about what is transpiring in Afghanistan because those events may have direct implications for India's safety, stability, and prosperity. India has been prevented from gaining direct access to Afghanistan as a result of the partition of India in 1947 and Pakistan's illegal occupation of parts of Jammu and Kashmir state, which is referred to as Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). This has provided Pakistan with a crucial geopolitical location in relation to Afghanistan. However, New Delhi and Kabul have maintained extremely friendly multi-faceted cooperation from the very beginning, with the exception of the brief period from 1996 to 2001 when Pakistan-backed Taliban (meaning the students of Islamic seminaries or Madrassas) ruled over Kabul. During this time, New Delhi and Kabul worked together on a number of different fronts. Viewing India's current and future interests in Afghanistan through the lens of India's rise as an extra-regional power and an ambitious global actor is the best way to understand the country's position. The United States harbours the hope that Islamist terrorists would not be able to turn Afghanistan again into a safe haven where they can take orders from Pakistan. India plans to offset Pakistan's persistent efforts to develop Afghanistan as a client state by maintaining its investments and assistance in Afghanistan. This will allow India to achieve its goal of reducing Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. First and foremost, Afghanistan, together with Iran, is a significant conduit that India may use to spread its strength and influence throughout Central Asia and beyond. By demonstrating that its foreign policies are not driven simply or even primarily by Pakistan, New Delhi can show that it has a diverse set of interests in Afghanistan by pursuing

those objectives. Over the course of the past ten years, India has been successful to a certain extent in building a suite of sophisticated diplomatic ties with an extraordinary number of countries located in Southwest, Central, and Southeast Asia. Afghanistan and Iran hold a special significance for India due to the fact that they are the only gateways through which India can move goods into and out of Central Asia and further afield. This is especially significant given the fact that Pakistan is highly unlikely to ever grant India access to its ground lines of control. New Delhi's concerns about Islamist extremists headquartered in Afghanistan and Pakistan are motivated by the fact that the future of Afghanistan will have a number of significant and critical implications for India's domestic situation. To begin, extremist organisations are making it a priority to reach out to disillusioned Indian Muslims across the country. Some of these organisations have even gone so far as to establish franchises in India that are growing more and further removed from their roots in Pakistan. Second, Islamist militancy in India coexists with a burgeoning Hindu nationalist movement, which creates a destructive synergy between the two. Hindu radicals have used Islamist terror in India as justification for their own anti-Muslim violence, and proponents of Hindu nationalism want to remake India as a Hindu state so they can do so. On the other hand, Islamist militants would use the concept of "Hindu oppression" to rationalise their own activities as being justified. As a result of this process, India's apparently secular fabric is under danger due to the increasing polarisation of communal life, which disturbs moderates of faiths of all stripes.

Economic Cooperation Between India and Afghanistan and Its Prospects for the Future

Despite the fact that India's policy toward Afghanistan places a significant emphasis on security issues, New Delhi and Kabul have been exploring potential for deeper bilateral economic cooperation for the benefit of both countries. Although India and Afghanistan work together strategically, their economic ties have been rather weak up to this point. In 2011-12, overall bilateral trade was responsible for \$639 million U.S. dollars, which was equivalent to 0.08 percent of India's total trade. The majority of the goods that are traded between the two countries are agricultural and horticultural goods that are sent to India, as well as other goods such as machinery, medicines, textiles, and animal products that are sent to Afghanistan. On the other side, India is an important commercial partner for Afghanistan; more than twenty percent of the country's total exports, which is equivalent to one hundred twenty eight million dollars in US currency, are shipped to India.

Because Afghanistan is a landlocked country and there is no direct connectivity between the two countries, trade between India and Afghanistan has been restricted up until this point. India is a landlocked country as well. In order to carry out economic transactions, both nations required the assistance of a third party. In this regard, the development of Chabahar has provided an opportunity to recommence development of the INSTC (International North South Transit Corridor), which is essential to India-Central Asia trade but had not seen any progress due to inability to develop land connectivity and progress on development of sea route due to economic sanctions against Iran. INSTC is crucial to India-Central Asia trade but had not seen any progress due to inability to develop land connectivity and progress on development of sea route due to economic sanctions against Iran.

Afghanistan and the other land-locked countries in Central Asia will benefit from the project since it will make it simpler and quicker for them to access the Arabian Sea and South Asia. After the project is finished and it is connected by road to Afghanistan, it will assist in the realisation of the true potential of the Zaranj-Delaram road, which was built by India at a major expense and terrible risk, and it will further connect it to the 1,300 mile long Afghan ring road.

Mineral resources that have just recently been discovered in Afghanistan are widely regarded as one of the country's most significant selling points for potential commercial ventures. Huge quantities of oil, gas, copper, iron, gold, and rare earth minerals like lithium and niobium are among the country's undeveloped natural wealth, which is believed to be worth more than US \$3 trillion but has not yet been fully exploited. It is estimated that Afghanistan's iron ore deposits are worth \$421 billion US dollars, its copper deposits are worth about \$274 billion US dollars, its niobium deposits are worth \$81 billion US dollars, its cobalt deposits are worth \$51 billion US dollars, and its gold deposits are estimated to be worth \$25 billion US dollars.

According to estimates provided by the United States Geological Survey, the northern region of Afghanistan contains 36.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. It is believed that the country has a total oil reserve capacity of approximately 3.6 billion barrels. Cooperation between the two countries in this sector holds enormous potential for both Afghanistan and India. This is particularly true in light of the enormous mineral deposits that can be found in Afghanistan. India is of the opinion that the mining sector and the development of infrastructure may be the two most important areas for private investment, and Indian companies have indicated that they are willing to invest up to ten billion dollars in the mining industry, steel plant, and related infrastructure in Afghanistan. Iron ore reserves in India are believed to be around 2 billion tonnes, and Indian companies have been awarded Hajigak bids to mine four of the blocks.

Help from India in revitalising manufacturing industries in Afghanistan, such as cement, oil, and gas, as well as service industries, such as hotels, banking, and communications, would be extremely beneficial. The low tax rate in Afghanistan is an opportunity that should not be missed by Indian businesspeople. Additionally, the government of Afghanistan has recently proposed policy changes in an effort to entice investments from other countries, particularly India. Against this backdrop, India and Afghanistan have concluded four agreements on cooperation in the relevant areas, including small development projects, the fertiliser sector, and mineral resources, during the visit of President Karzai to New Delhi. The goals of these agreements are to realise their full potentials and increase the prospects of economic engagement between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

Because India and Afghanistan are not directly connected to one another, there has been a reduction in the amount of commerce that takes place between the two nations. During India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's trip to Tehran in August 2012 to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit, a tripartite agreement between India, Iran, and Afghanistan was successfully concluded, and it was decided to set up a Joint Working Group to boost trade and transit through Chabahar to Afghanistan and Central Asia. This group's goal is to increase trade and transit through Chabahar to Afghanistan and Central Asia. In addition to this, Afghanistan serves as a connection point between South Asia and Central Asia. The commercial and economic interaction between India and Afghanistan would gain a boost once the country becomes politically stable, and Kabul might become a conduit in expanding the engagement further with Central Asian Countries once the country does become politically stable. The Afghanistan–Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) of 2010 provides for the passage of Afghan commodities across Pakistani territory. As part of the arrangement, Afghan trucks are permitted to transport transit export cargo from Afghanistan all the way to the Wagha border, where it is then switched to Indian trucks. More than 2,000 truckloads of dry fruits and pulses entered India through the Wagha border crossing during the latter nine months of that year. On the other hand, Pakistan does not permit Indian products to go to Afghanistan; nevertheless, it has been said that this "may be negotiated at a suitable moment in the future." Recently, Pakistan and Afghanistan came to an

agreement to extend the remit of their transit trade pact to include Tajikistan. This expansion took place just recently. After India is included, commodities from Central Asian countries will be able to come to India through road, and Pakistan will give India most-favored nation status once this happens (MFN). Depending on the items' status, they could be transported overland from India through Afghanistan and then on to Central Asia.

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