

How Delhi deals with the Daredevils: India's Security Concerns after Taliban's Take Over

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The rise of the Taliban and its steady accumulation of power can further exacerbate the already-tumultuous issues of terrorism and insurgency in South Asia. Moreover, as the power structure of the Taliban interim government continues to be marred by controversy among its factions, more instability can be expected. India, being the status-quo power in the region, is aware of the devastations and destruction the Taliban can cause. The last time the Taliban were in power, India witnessed the problems caused by regional and global terror groups that used Afghan soil as haven. India has seen a number of terror attacks throughout its territory leading to the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight IC 814. After Taliban's assumption of incumbency, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKAP) has carried out several deadly attacks in Afghanistan. Their unorganized arm Islamic State Hind Province (ISHP) claimed the responsibility for the recent attack that caused death of a street hawker in Sri Nagar. On the other hand, Al Qaeda Indian Subcontinent recently released a video statement to spread their terror propaganda. As India seeks to safeguard its national interest and maintain the peace and stability of the region, it must continue to bank on proactive strategies to maximize its function and role as security provider.



Needless to say, Afghanistan is a pivotal component of India's foreign, security, and economic policies. India has invested over three billion USD in the war-torn country. In addition, a large percentage of trade from India intended to Central Asia also transits through

Afghanistan. Most importantly, India is a major development partner of Afghanistan and is a top source of foreign aid grants. Furthermore, the 2003 preferential trade agreement between both countries allowed Afghanistan to tap India's large market for a variety of its products.

However, with the reemergence of the Taliban, the bilateral relationship between the two countries has been put into question. The Indian government is faced with a dilemma given its wariness towards the group while putting the plight of the Afghans at its core. While

India has been reluctant to consistently engage with the Taliban, a significant development took place at the side lines of the Moscow Format Consultations, where an Indian official delegation formally met with the official Taliban team.

Against this backdrop, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said, "The delegation of the Islamic Emirate met with the special representative of India for Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan." Moreover, the spokesperson also highlighted that India expressed willingness to provide significant humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. This demonstrates India's willingness to maintain a formidable presence in regional discussions in order to avoid being marginalized by other key stakeholders in the region. In addition, India's support in terms of humanitarian aid significantly reflects its prioritization of the welfare and wellbeing of the Afghans.

Moreover, amid their efforts to gain external legitimacy and limit the degrading conditions in Afghanistan, the Taliban have expressed their intentions to improve diplomatic and economic relations with India. In fact, they have also emphasized their readiness to receive

Indian diplomats and look after their security. In this context, key Taliban official Suhail Shaheen stated that "We are open to receiving all diplomats and committed to providing security for their routine diplomatic functions."

Beyond these efforts, India has also tapped on its role as an Indo-Pacific power, a vital member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and a crucial strategic partner of the United States to address the potential regional instability the Taliban may cause in the long term. A recent development focuses on the creation of what many term as the Middle Eastern or Western Quad comprising the US, Israel, the UAE, and India. This arrangement seeks to preserve and strengthen the security architecture of West and Central Asia, as well as the western Indian Ocean Region amid the uncertainties brought by the Taliban's consolidation of power. While it is quite early to point to the possible direction this new arrangement will be heading, it is safe to say that such a collaborative effort of key partners will contribute to the peace and stability of the greater region. India's Regional Security Dialogue, a NSA-level talks of Afghanistan's neighbours, is expected to bring some positive outcomes.

While the geopolitical situation remains tumultuous, India must continue to spearhead a wide array of proactive policies to address its strategic interests amid the evolving international political landscape. The need to avoid putting its eggs in one basket will be paramount in securing its ability to effectively maneuver amid the uncertainties the world is heading towards.

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Upcoming Events

Bay of Bengal
 Conversation
 Governance • Security • Development

28-30 May 2022

We are delighted to announce the inaugural edition of the Bay of Bengal Conversation which will be hosted by the Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh from 28-30 May, 2022. The three day conversation will discuss both the emerging regional and global political order and the associated institutional framework. It will focus on elucidating a human-first growth and development policy paradigm. This unique platform will convene around 200 delegates from over 70 countries to join the 400 brightest minds in Bangladesh to discuss, ideate, and debate the most pressing global issues. We expect to host ministers, members of parliaments, political leaders, and senior bureaucrats, military officials, diplomats, leading technologists, industrialists, journalists, civil society leaders and academics. The conversation will bring together diverse voices across sectors and geographies. The initiative intends to promote new ideas and to propose effective solutions that will help build a new humanitarian world order.

Global
 Directions
 Conclave

01-10 October 2022

The Global Directions Conclave (GDC) is an annual intensive ten-day policy workshop organized by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). Each year, the conclave will bring together 50 outstanding young leaders, between 25 and 35 years of age, from diverse backgrounds, geographies, and sectors. The young leaders will be nominated by heads of governments, leaders of private sector and global experts.

The aim of the Conclave is to foster leadership qualities among the selected fellows, to engage them in discussions on issues that are trending worldwide, and to serve as a networking platform. Through cross-border dialogue, deliberations and debates with prominent figures from the world of politics, business and academia, fellows of the Conclave will get opportunities to assess as well as challenge conventional interpretations of the global challenges. The first edition of the Global Directions Conclave is scheduled to be held from 01-10 October 2022 in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.