

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

NEW REALITY IN AFGHANISTAN: INDIAN APPROACH

Shoislom Akmalov

Candidate Of Political Sciences, Associate Professor, International Islamic Academy Of Uzbekistan

Abstract

This article analyzes the new reality that has emerged in Afghanistan, including the Taliban regime, and India's approach to it. The article also explores the significant choices facing New Delhi.

Keywords Taliban, The Delhi Regional Security Dialogue, Kashmir, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Inter-Services Intelligence, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Afghan refugees, Kunar river, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Shahtoot dam.

INTRODUCTION

Today, a new reality has emerged in Afghanistan. In August 2021, US military forces left the territory of Afghanistan, and the Taliban movement took control of Kabul for the second time. This event was awaited by some states involved in the Afghan issue, while for others it became an unexpected reality. Naturally, India stands out among regional power centers that are not interested in such a situation. The Taliban's takeover of power is linked to New Delhi through close ties with Afghanistan's former president Ashraf Ghani, cooperation between the US and India on Afghanistan, India's "soft power" policy in Afghanistan, and its strategy to expand into Central Asia. Nevertheless, India is moving towards adapting to the new situation in Afghanistan from a Realpolitik perspective.

METHODS

In the article, historical, event and comparative analysis methods were used.

RESULTS

The establishment of the Taliban regime and the subsequent war in Ukraine in the following years led to a significant reshaping of Afghanistan's political landscape, contributing to the global

political scene in a destabilizing manner over time. In addition, a number of countries of the region, which previously had hostile relations with the Taliban, began to establish appropriate dialogue with them. India's foreign policy stance in this reality can be assessed not only as a threat to its security and geopolitical influence, but also as an opportunity for India.

Security and geopolitical approaches. It is known that India develops its approach to Afghanistan through the prism of Pakistan. However, the threat scenario of Afghanistan becoming an international terrorist and extremist space in the future is one of the most alarming dangers that India's leadership is facing. Because India considers terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed to be sent to Kashmir through the territory of Afghanistan as one of the main threats. Therefore, Islamabad's close ties with the Taliban leaders in Afghanistan further intensify Delhi's concerns. The rapid withdrawal of the American military from Afghanistan and the transfer of a number of weapons and military equipment to the control of the Taliban or terrorist forces are creating new concerns for Delhi. The following points of view of the former Indian Foreign Minister Somanahalli Krishna clearly

express Delhi's views on this issue: "Delhi does not recognize the "good" of the Taliban as there is not the "good" of the terrorists" (Akmalov, 2013, p.189-193). Indian Major General Ajay Chandpuria said that the military equipment remaining in Afghanistan from America was found in Kashmir and these weapons were intended to be used by terrorists. Chandpuria claims that these weapons are transported to Kashmir through Pakistan, with approximately 150 to 200 terrorists activated in Kashmir, and that 40-45% of them are from Pakistan with experience of fighting in Afghanistan. (Chandpuria, 2022 ارتش هند...).

It is natural that the possibility of joint activation of power centers in the region, such as Pakistan and China, in Afghanistan will increase Delhi's concerns. The direct negotiations with the Taliban leaders of Chinese companies on the implementation of various investment projects, can seriously concern Indian officials. The inclusion of Afghanistan in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was discussed during the visit of Pakistan former Prime Minister Imran Khan to Beijing, where he held talks with Xi Jinping (Hakimi, 2022). At the same time, three-way talks between the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan and China took place in the Chinese city of Tiansi in March 2022 was also an important signal for India. In this way, after America, the Chinese policy in Afghanistan began to manifest itself with an economic factor. In particular, for the Aynak copper mine, the Chinese side planned to invest 400 million dollars a year in the current government of Afghanistan. The most notable, according to data, is that the China National Petroleum Corporation International has signed a 25-year contract for oil finds in the Faryab and Sar-e Pol regions of Afghanistan (Maa, 2022). Such actions will leave the fate of the future economic and other projects of India in Afghanistan under question.

However, this situation cannot be a reason to say that India's influence in Afghanistan and the region as a whole has been seriously limited. The Delhi Regional Security Dialogue, organized by India in November 2021, has become a unique platform for discussing regional security issues after the Taliban regime. In the Joint Declaration adopted

with the participation of India, Russia, Iran and Central Asian countries, the following was noted:

- assistance in humanitarian and economic recovery conditions in Afghanistan, as well as aid in combating COVID-19;
- ensuring the safe, unhindered, and direct access of aid providers to Afghanistan and distributing assistance among all segments of Afghan society;
- continuing the UN's activities in Afghanistan and ensuring the rights of women, children, and ethnic minorities;
- the necessity of integrating all levels of society into governance and political structures for successful national reconciliation processes;
- the imperative nature of preventing terrorists from using Afghan territory for their activities and refraining from using terrorism for political or financial gains (Afghan territory..., 2021).

In recent years, Taliban forces have often tried to show that they are not under the influence of external forces and that they are conducting an independent policy in Afghanistan. In particular, their strong views on issues related to Pakistan may prompt a change in India's approach to Afghanistan.

Reality and possibilities. Many politicians and Afghan experts predicted Pakistan's role as a significant actor influencing events in Afghanistan, particularly the establishment of the Taliban regime and the withdrawal of US troops, with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director Faiz Hamed's visit to Kabul on September 4, 2021 (Siddiqui, 2021) serving as a primary indication of Pakistan's involvement in shaping the new government under Taliban leadership. However, as time passed, events took unexpected turns. Tensions between the Taliban and Islamabad escalated due to the active involvement of the "Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan" group in the region between Taliban and Islamabad, leading to significant repercussions. Consequently, in response to Islamabad's move, Pakistan deported 1.7 million Afghan migrants and refugees from its territory in November 2023 (Hussain, 2023). In retaliation, the Taliban threatened to capture the lower valleys of the Kunar River in Islamabad and

construct large fortifications in those areas (AmuTV). The intensification of relations between the Taliban and Islamabad opens up certain possibilities for New Delhi. Under these circumstances, it is possible to observe India's engagement with the Taliban and even its recognition by the "Taliban." Moreover, according to information, New Delhi sent its diplomats to Kabul to renegotiate diplomatic relations and engage in talks with the Taliban (Bhattacharjee, 2022). A brief historical analysis shows that the former Ashraf Ghani government, with India's assistance, had planned 12 dams along the Kabul River. Naturally, the escalation of tensions between the Taliban and Islamabad has created an opportunity for India to make proposals to the Taliban to finance the construction of such dams. In 2022, Bharat Kumar, the representative of India in Afghanistan, held talks with the Afghan Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Hamdullah Nomani, and agreed to jointly implement the construction of the Shahtut Dam in Kabul (Vaishali, 2023). Abdul Qahhar Balkhi, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government of Afghanistan, in an interview with the "Indian Express" stated that since there are many and various projects of India in Afghanistan, but they have not been fully completed, the "Taliban" side aims to complete these works (Subramanian, 2022). In particular, India is trying to deliver humanitarian cargo to the Afghan people, albeit indirectly, to carry out trade relations. India sent a convoy of 50 trucks carrying 2500 MT of wheat as humanitarian aid for Afghanistan at the India-Pakistan integrated check post (ICP) on February 2022. Apart from wheat, India has already supplied 13 tonnes of essential medication and winter clothing, as well as 500,000 doses of COVAXIN to Afghanistan by commercial flights (Vasuduva, Haidar, 2022).

In turn, China's growing position and influence in the system of modern international relations, calculations of the future situation in South Asia, including Afghanistan, encourage the US side to cooperate with India in order to protect itself from influence mechanisms in the region. For this reason, the US and India have established the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) in the

Asia-Pacific region. After the multi-round secret negotiations between the US and the Taliban ended, various speculations began to emerge about secret agreements between them. Most analysts tend to assess that the withdrawal of American military forces from Afghanistan has reduced its military influence in this country. But on the contrary, it can be observed that America continues its military influence through new forms and means. For example, American congressman Jim Blanks stated that the Taliban has US weapons worth 85 billion dollars (Buranov, 2022, p.19). This situation creates interests for India to cooperate closely with the US on the issue of Afghanistan. According to Arvind Gupta, director of the Vivekanda International Foundation (India), the recent events in Afghanistan are likely to bring the US and India closer together. He stated that India supports a multilateral global strategic partnership based on convergence of interests (Gupta, 2021).

Discussion. The new reality in Afghanistan is relevant and important for India from security and geopolitical perspectives. In recent years, the tension between the Taliban and Islamabad and the strengthening of the China-Pakistan tandem in the region, Washington's policy of rapprochement with New Delhi, has led to an assessment of the situation based on the Realpolitik approach, leaving behind the skepticism of India's approach to the Taliban. Such a conclusion shows the need for India to cooperate with the countries of the region concerned with Afghanistan and the US, and the approach of taking a temporary observer position as an acceptable choice.

REFERENCES

1. Afghan territory must not be used for terrorism: Delhi dialogue on Afghanistan crisis (2021) The Economic Times. Retrieved from https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/afghan-territory-must-not-be-used-for-terrorism-delhi-dialogue-on-afghanistan-crisis/articleshow/87625831.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
2. Bhattacharjee K. India Sends Diplomats to

- Kabul for Talks with the Taliban // The Hindu. 02.06.2022. URL: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-sends-diplomats-to-kabul-for-talks-with-the-taliban/article65486694.ece> (дата обращения: 10.06.2023).
3. Boronov, S. (2022). Internal and external factors of taliban origin. Journal of Social Research in Uzbekistan, 2(02), 15-23.
4. Hakimi, A. (2022). China, Pakistan Mull Afghan Membership in CPEC. TOLO news. Retrieved from <https://tolonews.com/business-176659>
5. Hussain, Abid. 'What's wrong?': The silence of Pakistanis on expulsion of Afghan refugees. Aljazeera, 22 November 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/22/whats-wrong-the-silence-of-pakistanis-on-expulsion-of-afghan-refugees>
6. Maa, A. (2022). China's prospects in Afghanistan: Opportunities and adversities. Hindustan Times. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-insight/international-affairs/chinas-prospects-in-afghanistan-opportunities-and-adversities-101645181272767.html>
7. Pakistani official warns of 'hostility' over Taliban's Kunar River dam decision. Amu TV, DECEMBER 17, 2023. <https://amu.tv/76296/>
8. Siddiqui N. "Don't Worry, Everything Will Be Okay": ISI Chief During Kabul Visit // Dawn. 04.09.2021. URL: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1644463>.
9. Subramanian Nirupama. Taliban: Asked India to complete its development projects in Afghanistan. August 16, 2022. The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/asked-india-to-complete-its-projects-in-afghanistan-taliban-8090476/>
10. Vaishali Basu Sharma. Afghanistan 'Unleashes' Hydro Power On Pakistan; Dam On Kunar River Powers Taliban, Haunts Neighbors. EurAsian Times Desk. December 27, 2023. <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/afghanist-an-unleashes-hydro-power-on-pakistan-dam/>
11. Vasudava, Haidar. (2022). India sends first consignment of aid for Afghanistan. The Hindu. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-sends-first-consignment-of-aid-for-afghanistan/article65075046.ece>
12. Акмалов, Ш. (2013) Афганская политика Индии в контексте ее стратегических интересов в Южной и Центральной Азии. УЗМУ ХАБАРЛАРИ N 3/1, 2013.
13. Гупта Арвинд. Как крах правительства в Афганистане повлияет на отношения США и Индии. Валдай международный 10.11.2021. дискуссионный клуб. <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/afghanistan-indiya-ssha/>
14. ارتش هند: تسلیحات به جا ماندن نظامیان امریکایی در افغانستان، در کشمیر کشف شده است.
15. (2022) Retrieved from <https://8am.af/indian-army-remaining-weapons-of-us-troops-in-afghanistan-discovered-in-kashmir/>