Republic of India was the only South Asian country to recognise the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the 1980s, its relations were diminished during the Afghan civil wars and the rule of the Islamist Taliban in the 1990s.[1] India aided the overthrow of the Taliban and became the largest regional provider of humanitarian and reconstruction aid.

India's influence in Afghanistan waned in the 1990s after Pakistan-backed Taliban rose to power. During this period, New Delhi provided assistance to the anti-Taliban resistance, the Northern Alliance, comprised mostly of Tajik and other non-Pashtun ethnic groups, according to a 2003 Council Task Force report. After the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, New Delhi reached out to renew ties with Kabul.

IMPORTANCE to India:

Afghanistan holds strategic importance for India as New Delhi seeks friendly allies in the neighborhood, and because it is a gateway to energy-rich Central Asian states such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. "India is looking to ensure that other countries in the region favor or at least are neutral on its conflict with Pakistan,

IMPORTANCE to Afghan

Afghanistan, on the other hand, he says, looks to India as "a potential counterweight in its relationship with Pakistan."

2b aid:

Relations:

In January 2009, India completed construction of the Zaranj-Delaram highway in southwest Afghanistan near the Iranian border; it is building Afghanistan's new parliament building set for completion by 2011; it is constructing the Salma Dam power project in Herat Province; it has trained Afghan police officers, diplomats and civil servants; and it has provided support in the areas of health, education, transportation, power, and telecommunications.

India hopes its investment in the Iranian port at Chabahar will allow it to gain trading access to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan. Pakistan currently allows Afghanistan transit rights for its exports to India, but does not allow goods to move from India to Afghanistan.

But soft power is "India's greatest asset" in Afghanistan, writes Shashi Tharoor,Thier says the positive thing about such influence is that it engages the population in a way that takes into account what they want.

Background

* Strong historical ties
* India was the only South Asian nation to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
* During Soviet presence in Afghanistan, India sheltered over 60000 Afghan refuguees.
* Tumultuous times during the regime of Taliban. Diplomatic ties were snapped.
* Re-establishment of diplomatic ties after the overthrow of Taliban in 2001

Table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | India’s Concern (India’s interests in Af) | Afghanistan’s concern |
| Security | Security and stability of the region after the withdrawal of Western forces | Afghanistan looks to India as ‘a potential counterweight in its relationship with Pakistan’ |
|  | Security of Indian personnel. Embassy bombings. Killing of personnel involved in reconstruction work. |  |
|  | Pakistan’s growing influence in the region |  |
| Energy security | Afghanistan is key to our energy security because of geopolitical reasons. It is a gateway to energy-rich Central Asian states such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan |  |

Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Binders | Separators/Challenges |
| Significant cultural and economic links. Films and music of India popular in Af and products such as carpets, nuts and fruit are exported to India. |  |
| India’s popularity in Af high due to the no-strings attached economic assistance |  |

Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Positives | Negatives |
| 1. Lot of Indian developmental projects in Afghanistan. India provides technical and monetary assistance. India is the largest regional donor to Afghan reconstruction |  |
|  |  |
| 1. MMS’ visit to Af in May 2011 |  |
| 1. Af’s entry into SAARC |  |
| 1. The two countries have declared that Strategic Partnership should be developed between the two countries |  |
| 1. TAPI may promote regional integration. Af to earn about $500 mn in transit fee in TAPI. |  |
| 1. India implemented Small Development Projects (SDPs) scheme for grass-root level development in all parts of Afghanistan |  |
| 1. India has promised to increase the total development commitment to Afghanistan to USD 2 bn |  |
| 1. Bilateral trade of $358 mn in 2007-08 |  |
| 1. India has opened consulates in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandhar |  |

India’s development partnership with Afghanistan

* Aims to build indigenous Afghan capacities and institutions for an effective state system that is able to deliver goods and services required by the Afghan people
* Scholarship programme for Afghan students
* Training courses aimed at skill development
* New programmes on capacity building in the agricultural sector <?>
  + Agricultural research programmes
* Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Care
* Adopted 100 villages
* Rebuilding of Habibia school
* Agreements
  + Small devt prog
  + Healthcare
  + Agricultural research
* National Institutional Building Project (NIBP)
  + UNDP programme
  + India is a donor
  + NIBP follows an integrated and structured approach to capacity development
* Some projects
  + Zaranj-Delaram highway in SW Afghanistan near the Iranian border
  + Afghanistan’s new parliament building set for completion by 2011
  + Salma Dam power project in Herat Province
* India bidding for Hagijak mines (Iron ore) in Bamiyan province
* Cultural reconstruction programme
  + Bamiyan Buddhas

**Strategic Partnership Agreement**

* Signed in Oct 2011
* India will mentor the Afghan security forces as they gear up to deal with the drawdown of foreign forces by 2014
* SPA also spells out trade and economic cooperation in much greater detail, covering aspects ranging from assisting Afghanistan in developing trading routes to exploring for hydrocarbons and mineral ores the country is abundantly endowed with
* Both countries will try to operationalize trilateral MoU signed with Iran to end Afghanistan’s landlocked isolation and dependence on Pakistan to reach the sea

Challenges ahead for India in Af

* Taliban’s reach and influence has been growing in the relatively calmer areas of the country
* Defragmented nature of the polity

India’s role in Af in next few years

* Washington has indicated that it may withdraw its troops in Afghanistan by 2014
* Challenges after withdrawal
  + Resurgence of Taliban
  + Peace and security
  + Economic and political development of the country
* Political stability of the region is in India’s interest
* Economic ties with Afghanistan can be beneficial for India
  + India can sell technologies for development to Af
  + Bag contracts for re-construction
* Engage all major ethnic groups. It would be in the long term interest of India to evenly develop its relations with diverse ethnic groups of Afghanistan.
* India’s Afghan policy is constrained by various factors
  + Geographical limitations
  + Uncertainty in the US approach
* India’s likely options
  + To remain engaged and continue with reconstruction assistance
    - Focus on capacity building and human resource development
  + Need for border engagement
  + Strengthening the Afghan National Security Forces
  + Gauging varied Afghan perception
    - Important for India to constantly factor in the varying views and perceptions of the various Afghan factions and groupings.

# Af-Pak

Table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| India | Pakistan | Afghanistan |
| Porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan needs to be controlled | Thinks that India is trying to encircle it by gaining influence in Afghanistan |  |
|  | Promotes Taliban because it offers the best counterbalance against India |  |
|  | Pakistan’s support to Taliban has led to increased instability in Afghanistan |  |
|  | Pakistan’s tribal areas along Afghan border are safe haven for terrorists |  |

After US leaves, Af-Pak-India trilateral relations will become important.

Transformation of Pakistan-Afghanistan ties can only take place in an overall context of improved Pakistani-Indian relations that enhances Pakistani confidence in its regional position

Bonn Conference 2011