



DAILY NEWSPAPER
ANALYSIS
THE HINDU
(16th November, 2018)



THE HINDU
Daily News Paper

Searching for an elusive peace : Afghanistan Peace Process and India

Context:-

- Recently Russia hosted a regional conference on Afghanistan named **“Moscow Format”** to nudge the reconciliation process between the Taliban and the Afghan authorities.
- In a **significant departure from India’s stand** on **engaging the “Taliban”**, India participated at a **“non official” level**. It is first time India engaging with Taliban.
- Moscow format included **“high level” delegation from Taliban, a delegation of Afghanistan’s “High Peace Council”** and representations of 12 countries including Russia, USA, India, China, Iran, central Asia’s country.

Evolution of Idea of Reconciliation:-

- The idea of reconciliation with the Taliban has been around for over a decade. As the Taliban insurgency grew 2005 onwards, the **British**, deployed in Helmand, soon found merit in doing side deals with local Taliban commanders. **With the help of the Germans and the Norwegians, they began to persuade the U.S. to work for a political outcome.**

- The U.S. soon realised that it had **run out of options**. Insurgency could not be contained as long as sanctuaries existed in Pakistan so in December 2014, it handed over primary responsibility for combat operations to the Afghan security forces even as the insurgency gained ground.
- **Taliban's growing visibility**: After prolonged negotiations, a Taliban **office opened in Doha in June 2013** to promote talks and a peace process.
 - Coming to power in **2014**, **Afghan President Ashraf Ghani** moved to improve relations with Pakistan, to push for reconciliation with Taliban. Preliminary talks were held in Murree but derailed.
 - An internal power struggle within the Taliban erupted due to political vacuum as Taliban leader Mullah Omar died. Insurgency grew with the Taliban. Mr. Ghani felt betrayed and lashed out, accusing Pakistan of “waging war”.
- **Quadrilateral Coordination Group**: Involving the **U.S., China, Pakistan and Afghanistan** was launched in January 2016. After a couple of meetings, there was a roadmap; Pakistan was to use its influence to get the Taliban to the negotiating table. Hopes were dashed when the Taliban demanded exit of foreign troops, release of detainees from Guantanamo, and removal of its leaders from international blacklists.

- **Russia Engagment:** In December 2015, Russia publicly acknowledged that it had “communication channels with the Taliban for exchange of information” and “a shared interest with the Taliban to counter the threat posed by the IS”.
- **Kabul Peace Process:** Mr. Ghani launched the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation and made an unconditional dialogue offer to the Taliban. The Taliban rejected his overture, declaring that they were ready to engage in direct talks only with the Americans. Mr. Ghani persisted, resulting in a three-day ceasefire during Eid.
- **Softened Stand of US:** The U.S. softened its stand on an “Afghan-led and Afghan owned peace process”, and , senior State Department official was sent in Doha for a meeting with the Taliban.

Current Afghanistan Situation:-

- The situation continues to worsen. Today, the Afghan government controls barely half the country, with one-sixth under Taliban control and the rest contested.
- There are multiple processes are underway as everyone agrees that the war has to end.

Why there is Significant Shift in India’s Policy:-

- Decision was the outcome of “close discussion with the Afghanistan government” and it was felt necessary for India to have a presence there.

- In the past India declined to participate in the Moscow format with Taliban unless the Afghan Government participated.
- India supports all efforts at peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan that will **preserve unity and plurality** and **bring security, stability** and **prosperity** to the country.
- India's consistent policy has been that such efforts should be **Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled** and **with participation of the government of Afghanistan.**

Way-Ahead:-

- India doesn't have the leverage to play spoiler but its presence is recognition that its economic cooperation programmes make it the most widely accepted development partner.
- Afghanistan play a very important role in India's foreign policy as it holds India's interest as **geostrategically** (Border with Pakistan; Mishandling of Taliban may spill over of terrorism in Kashmir as in 1980s) and **Geo-economically** (route to connect Central Asia; holds huge oils and Mineral wealth)
- **Pragmatism** dictates that India remain engaged with the multiple processes underway.
- Peace remains elusive but India's engagement demonstrates commitment to the idea of a stable, independent and peaceful Afghanistan.

THANK YOU

**LIKE &
SUBSCRIBE**