

GS Paper 2

International Relations

India and its Neighbourhood

India-Afghanistan Relations

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Afghanistan is a landlocked country located at the crossroads of Central Asia and South Asia.

Referred to as the Heart of Asia.

It is bordered by

- Pakistan to the east and South,
- Iran to the West,
- Turkmenistan to the North West,
- Uzbekistan to the North,
- China to the North East and East.



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Why in News?

- **19th June 2023**---Afghanistan was one of the 11 economies with the lowest rankings for Women, Business, and Law in the World Bank's most recent assessment. The World Bank claims that violent conflicts and high levels of institutional and social fragility have an impact on the quality of institutions and policies, particularly the ability of governments to implement reforms. "The recent regime change in the country has negatively affected both the economy and the welfare of the Afghan people, in particular, women and girls," the report noted. *Handwritten notes: "social eco." with an arrow pointing to "social fragility" and "security" with an arrow pointing to "violent conflicts".*
- **19th June 2023**---The plight of women and girls in Afghanistan featured prominently at the Human Rights Council where independent UN-appointed rights experts warned of systematic "gender apartheid" and "gender persecution". They even urged countries to consider making "gender apartheid" an international crime.

Gender apartheid refers to a systematic and institutionalized discrimination where one gender—typically women—is segregated, denied rights, and oppressed based on gender. It is similar to racial apartheid but focuses on gender-based oppression.

Key Features of Gender Apartheid:

- > Legal & Social Restrictions – Women may be barred from education, work, or public spaces.
- > Enforced Dress Codes – Strict clothing rules imposed only on one gender.
- > Limited Mobility – Women may need male guardians for travel, education, or employment.
- > Exclusion from Political & Social Life – Lack of voting rights, government participation, or economic freedom.
- > Harsh Punishments for Violations – Women may face arrests, punishments, or violence for disobeying gender-based laws.

History of Afghanistan

1823---The history of Afghanistan as a State began in 1823.

The land served as a centre of the ancient Silk Road.

1921

The British got defeated in the Third British-Afghan War (1919-21), and Afghanistan becomes an independent nation.

1926

Amir Amanullah Khan declares Afghanistan a monarchy, by 1929, the king abdicates and leaves the country.

abdicates means tyagna

1933

Zahir Shah becomes king for the next 40 years.

1934

USA - Pak

The United States formally recognizes Afghanistan.

1953

VSSR - Afg.

The pro-Soviet Gen. Mohammed Daoud Khan becomes Prime Minister.
Introduced a number of social reforms including allowing women a more public presence.

1956 .

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev agrees to help Afghanistan, and the two
countries become close allies.

1965

The **Afghan Communist Party** is formed secretly. The group's principal leaders are Babrak Karmal and Nur Mohammad Taraki.

1973

Khan overthrows the last king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, in a military coup. The Republic of Afghanistan is established with firm ties to the USSR.

1978

Khan is killed in a communist coup. Nur Mohammad Taraki, takes control of the country as President, and Babrak Karmal is named deputy Prime Minister. **They proclaim independence from Soviet influence**, and declare their policies to be based on Islamic principles. **Taraki signs a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union**. In June, the **guerrilla movement (Mujahadeen)** is created to battle the Soviet-backed government.

1979

President Taraki got killed. The USSR invades Afghanistan on Dec. 24 to support the faltering communist regime. Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal becomes prime minister. Widespread opposition to Karmal and the Soviets spawns violent public demonstrations.

By early 1980, the Mujahadeen rebels have united against Soviet invaders and the USSR-backed Afghan Army.

1984

Osama bin Laden makes his first documented trip to Afghanistan to aid anti-Soviet fighters.

1986

The Mujahadeen are receiving arms from the United States, Britain and China via Pakistan.

1988

1989

The U.S., Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union sign peace accords in Geneva guaranteeing Afghan independence and the withdrawal of 100,000 Soviet troops.

1992

Mujahadeen captured power.

1995

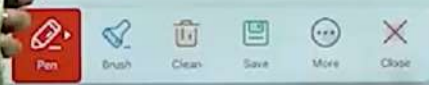
Newly formed Islamic militia, the Taliban, rises to power on promises of peace. The United States refuses to recognize the authority of the Taliban.

2000

The United Nations punishes Afghanistan with sanctions restricting trade and economic development.

9/11, 2001

Towers in New York.



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Sept 11, 2001

Attack on World Trade Center Towers in New York.

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Oct–Nov 2001

U.S. and British forces launch airstrikes against targets in Afghanistan. Northern Alliance enters Kabul.

December 2001

It was declared that the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan has totally ended. Hamid Karzai was sworn as the leader of the interim government in Afghanistan.

October 2004

Presidential elections are held. Hamid Karzai got elected as President.

2006

Amid continuing fighting between Taliban and al-Qaida fighters and the Afghan government forces, NATO expands its peacekeeping operation to the southern portion of the country.

2011

U.S. forces overtake a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden.

May 2014

Obama announces timetable for reducing US troop size by 2016.

September 2014

Ashraf Ghani becomes president of Afghanistan.

February 2020

Deal signed between US and Taliban in Doha to end the war in Afghanistan and allow US troops to return home.

April 2021

Biden announces aim to complete US troop withdrawal.

Aug. 15, 2021

The Afghanistan government collapses as the Taliban takes over Kabul. **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan under President Ashraf Ghani** was overthrown and **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan** under the control of the Taliban got reinstated.

An emirate is a territory, region, or state ruled by an Emir (a political or religious leader, often a prince or noble). It is a form of government found mainly in the Middle East and parts of North Africa.

Reinstated means to restore something to its previous position, state, or condition after it was removed, suspended, or canceled.



Why Afghanistan became the centre of Great games?

(I) Interest of USA

(II) Interest of Russia



Interest of Russia

Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline



(III) Interest of China



(IV) Interest



Why in News?

18th June 2023---Iran and Afghanistan are going head to head over control of the supply of a crucial resource that's shrinking by the day: This is water.

Violence along the border between the two tumultuous countries flared up in recent weeks, stoked by a dispute over the water flowing from Afghanistan's Helmand river into Iran. Tehran says Afghanistan's Taliban government is deliberately depriving Iran of sufficient water supplies in order to bolster its own; but the Taliban says there isn't enough water anymore to begin with, thanks to plummeting rainfall and river levels.

Iranian and Afghan border guards clashed on May 27, 2023 exchanging heavy gunfire that killed two Iranian guards and one Taliban soldier and several others.

(V)Interest of Pakistan



(VI) Interest of India

1) Geo Strategic significance

Critical in terms of outreach to the Central Asian Republics (CAR).

Shares a border with India's PoK.

Counterbalance to Pakistan



2) Economic significance

. Gateway to central Asia

✓ TAPI



Chabahar Port

Garland Road



- From Chabahar port using the existing Iranian road network, a link up to Zaranj in Afghanistan and then using the Zaranj-Delaram road constructed by India in 2009, access to Afghanistan's Garland Highway can be made
- This would establish road access to four of the major cities of Afghanistan -- Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif

North South Transport Corridor



3) Security Concerns



India's Afghan policy

1) Till the end of cold war



2)After the end of cold war

. 1996—Emergence of Taliban

2001—US war on Afghanistan—GWOT

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) refers to the international military campaign led by the United States after the 9/11 attacks (2001) to combat terrorist organizations, mainly Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other extremist groups.

3) India's Afghan policy between 2001-2021

- Ousting of Taliban
- India became Afghanistan's biggest regional development partner.
- In 2011, India became the first country with which Afghanistan signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

India always stood for an Afghan led, controlled, owned political process in which all stakeholders have a role to play.

It stresses on the legitimate democratically elected government in Afghanistan.

4) India's Afghan Policy after Taliban Takeover (Taliban 2.0 post 2021)

Why should India engage with Taliban 2.0?/Concerns that have arisen for India

- 1) Revival of terrorism
- 2) Rising international engagement.
- 3) Changing dynamics between Pakistan and Taliban.

4)Increasing influence of China

5)National security

6)Threat to financial and strategic investments.

7)Mutually beneficial.

8)Taliban presence could lead to perpetual regional instability.

India's Afghan Policy after Taliban Takeover (Taliban 2.0 post 2021)

1) India shuttered its embassy in Kabul.

2) Initially India reserved itself to limited talks with Taliban 2.0.

3) Initially India remained in a wait-and-watch mode.

Is there a policy shift towards Taliban 2.0?

1) At present, India is engaging at 2 levels: one at bilateral level, other at multi lateral level.

a) Engagement at bilateral level

- On August 12, 2022-- India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that India plans to expand its diplomatic presence in Kabul .

b) Engagement at multilateral level

- . Nov 2021---- India organised the 3rd NSA-level eight-nation 'Regional Security Dialogue' .

NSAs from Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan responded positively to Indian NSA Ajit Doval's invitation.

2) Maintaining a People-Centric Approach

3) Engage, isolate, or oppose

Downsides/Challenges of India's engagement with Taliban

- 1) India's outreach to Taliban 2.0 has raised several realist- moral **contention**
(i.e. vivad)
- 2) Shows inconsistency in India's policy
- 3) Security concerns
- 4) No change in the ideology of Taliban
- 5) Dealing with Pro-China Neighbours of Taliban