



India's Position Shift on Taliban

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Why in News

Recently, India has signaled a **shift in its position on engaging with the Taliban** by participating in the commencement ceremony of **Intra-Afghan talks** between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.

Key Points

- **India's Position Shift:**
 - The Indian presence at the Intra-Afghan peace talks indicates that it has changed its position given the ground reality in Afghanistan and the **changing power structure in Afghanistan**.
 - USA's withdrawal has given **Pakistan a major role to play in Afghanistan** directly or indirectly through its proxies.
 - However, some experts were of the opinion that India chose to attend the ceremony **because the Afghan government was also at the table**.
 - India still **does not recognise** the Taliban.

- **India's Stand:**
 - India believes any peace process must be **Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled. i.e.**
 - It has to respect the **national sovereignty and territorial integrity** of Afghanistan and promote human rights and democracy.
 - It also needs to **preserve the progress** made in the establishment of a democratic Islamic Republic in Afghanistan.
 - The **interests of minorities, women and vulnerable sections of society** must be preserved and the issue of violence across the country and its neighbourhood has to be effectively addressed.
 - **Indian interests**, which include the Indian Embassy and Indian companies and workers in Afghanistan, **should also be protected.**
 - India supports an "**independent and sovereign**" Afghanistan. The use of words "independent and sovereign" make it clear that **Pakistan and the ISI should not control the levers in Afghanistan.**
- **Background:**
 - The **USA signed a deal with the Taliban** that paved the way towards a full withdrawal of USA troops from Afghanistan and also represent a step towards ending the 18-year-war in Afghanistan.
 - The peace deal was expected to **kick-off two processes- a phased withdrawal of US troops** and an '**intra-Afghan**' dialogue.
 - The deal is a fundamental step to deliver a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire and the future political roadmap for the Afghanistan peace process.
- **India's Interests in Afghanistan:**
 - India has a **major stake** in the stability of Afghanistan. India has invested considerable resources in Afghanistan's development. **E.g.** the **Afghan Parliament, the Zaranj-Delaram Highway**, Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam) among others.
 - Afghanistan is the **gateway to Central Asia.**



Issues Involved:

- India is concerned about the **Taliban's links with Pakistan's ISI** and efforts by the latter to use the **Haqqani network** to target India's interests in Afghanistan.

India's Afghanistan policy continues to be assessed vis-a-vis Pakistan, which opposes any security role for India in Afghanistan and sees India's presence there as detrimental to its interests.

- Taliban also has link with **Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and Laskar-e-Toiba (LeT)** who are behind various terrorist activities against India.
- India still **does not recognise** the Taliban. However, if it considers the option of entering into direct talks with the Taliban, **it would constitute a major departure** from its consistent policy of dealing only with recognised governments.

Way Forward

- India needs to re-evaluate its decisions and be more omnidirectional in its approach to deal with all forces that are central to the future of Afghanistan.
- The changing political and security situation requires India to be more open to adapting its maximalist position and starting a dialogue with the Taliban.

Source: IE