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# AFGHANISTAN WATCH

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## **Delegation From Iran Visits Afghanistan To Discuss Water Rights Issue With Taliban**

**<https://theprint.in/world/delegation-from-iran-visits-afghanistan-to-discuss-water-rights-issue-with-taliban/1706400/>**

An Iranian delegation is on a visit to Kabul to speak with Taliban representatives about a variety of topics, including water rights, reported Khaama Press on Tuesday citing an official. The spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry, Naser Kenani, reportedly stated in a press conference on Monday that various topics, including water rights, were discussed. Quoting an Iranian news agency report, Khaama Press stated that an 11-member delegation from Tehran had visited Afghanistan to follow up on the matter.

### **Comments**

Earlier in June, 2023, clashes between Iran and the Taliban took place in the Southwestern Nimroz border, escalating tensions between the two. The disagreement centres on the distribution of water from the Helmand River, which is critical to livestock and agriculture, especially opium cultivation. The Helmand River Treaty (1973) [1] was not approved due to ethnic clashes given that its Sunni majority was subjugated. However, it grants Afghanistan exclusive unilateral rights over the water supply, resulting in continued debates and tensions between the two countries. [2] The presence of Hamouns constituting the transnational swamps on the Iran-Afghan border makes the issue complicated. It consists of three distinct lakes: Hamoun-e Helmand, located totally in Iran, Hamoun-e Sabari, which lies on the border between the two countries, and Hamoun-e Puzak, which is largely within Afghanistan. [3] Each of these lakes derives its water supply from the Helmand River. In the Sistan Basin, these water bodies and marshes previously sustained an extensive diversity of flora and fauna. Iran has accused Afghanistan of infringing on its water rights by providing far less water. The opening of the Kamal Khan Dam brought back the longstanding issue between Iran and Afghanistan. Aside from the conflict, external factors further sabotaged the advancement of the project. Iran has traditionally benefited since the Afghanistan government lacked water storage facilities in its western region.

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[1] Turak, N. (2023, June 19). Water wars: Afghanistan and Iran's deadly border flare-up spotlights scarcity crisis. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/06/19/afghanistan-iran-border-flare-up-spotlights-water-scarcity-crisis.html>

[2] A Compulsive Embrace Beneath the Afghanistan-Iran Water Conflict. (2023, May 31). A Compulsive Embrace Beneath the Afghanistan-Iran Water Conflict - the Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/a-compulsive-embrace-beneath-the-afghanistan-iran-water-conflict/>

[3] John Weier, "From Wetland to Wasteland," Earth Observatory, December 13, 2002, <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Features/hamoun/>

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Reports allude, Iran periodically resisted postponing any initiatives in the nation's western rivers. Under Former Afghanistan President Ghani's leadership, the dam's last and third construction phase began in 2017 to support irrigation schemes that would considerably assist Nimroz's agriculture.

Tehran has invested a lot in battling the illicit drug trade, but traffickers always discover novel techniques to get narcotics into Iran. [4]The issue has heightened Iranian animosity toward Afghans accusing the latter of "squandering Iran's proportion of water" [5] on opium cultivation and allowing water to flow to Iran only during floods. [6] Iran reportedly maintains that Afghans operate farms in higher Helmand territory, seizing Iran's portion of the water share. [7] Afghanistan argues that Tehran is consuming an additional water percentage than it has been entitled to as per the treaty. [8]

Studies undertaken by the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS), effectively pointed out that the current Taliban administration lacks many administrative mechanisms and resources that were present during the Ashraf Ghani regime.[9] If the Taliban were to establish an environmental agency, experts argue that it would either be ineffective due to limited administrative decision-making or operate strictly under Islamic law or Sharia. This hypothetical scenario raises concerns about the potential limitations and constraints on environmental management in Afghanistan under Taliban governance. under PM Modi's leadership provided \$300 million aid, architects, and information while Afghan President Ghani reaffirmed his nation's claim to control Afghan waterways and cultivate Afghan fields. [10]. Conversely, since the 1980s, Tehran has been actively developing Chah Nimeh facilities for maintaining additional water, boosting the aggregate storage space to nearly double its obligated rights. However, owing to inadequate water management with the absence of an efficient agricultural framework, the water supply in Iran's Chah Nimeh dams continues to fall short of requirements. [11]

[4] Fatemeh Aman, "Traffickers Find Novel Ways of Smuggling Drugs into Iran from Afghanistan," Atlantic Council Iran Insight blog, April 29, 2016, (<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iraninsight/traffickers-find-novel-ways-of-smuggling-drugs-into-iranfrom-afghanistan>)

[5] Mehr News Agency, "Sistanis' Shaky Rights Facing Sand Storms," 2014, <http://goo.gl/rFy5Ep>.

[6] Tasnim News Agency, "Latest on The Situation of [Iran's] Share of Hirmand River, 2015, <http://goo.gl/zalwgo>.

[7] "United States' Support for Building Two Dams on the Helmand's Main Branches," Iranian Presidential Center for Innovation and Technology Cooperation, 2016, <http://www.citc.ir/?fkeyid=&siteid=1&pageid=134&newsview=1054>.

[8] We Are Delusional About Water, Interview with Najeeb Fahim, 2016, <http://8am.af/1395/03/29/afghanistan-problem-water-interview/>

[9] PDF view – CENJOWS. (n.d.). [https://cenjows.in/pdf-view/?url=2023/06/Afghanistan\\_Watch\\_16-31\\_May\\_2023.pdf&pID=20331](https://cenjows.in/pdf-view/?url=2023/06/Afghanistan_Watch_16-31_May_2023.pdf&pID=20331)

[10] Ashraf Ghani, "Afghans Wishes Came true," RFE/RL, Afghanistan Service, 2016, <http://da.azadiradio.com/a/27779442.html>.

[11] <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5742a3ea4.pdf>

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Source: ANI

This has long been a source of friction between Iran and Afghanistan, with the Taliban planning "Suicide Bombers"[12] due to the water dispute with Iran. This has also led to military deployments by Taliban taking aid to several military vehicles and weaponry left behind by the Americans. Conflict around water exhibits a negative impact on Afghan refugees living in Iran, who are held accountable for water scarcity, particularly during times of widespread national disapproval over atrocities committed by Afghans in Iran. [13]

Apart from Iran, the Taliban has developed water contentions with the Central Asian Region (CAR), too. Struck with successive droughts, the Taliban planned to divert water from the Amu Darya basin that would otherwise flow into Uzbekistan. The construction of a massive irrigation canal in their northern area has raised concerns from Uzbekistan. [14]

## Socio-Economic Problems

Droughts and diverting water for water supply, including dykes and reservoirs along the Iranian Afghan borders, have resulted in depleted levels of water supply. Thus, the flora and fauna diversity is heavily impacted, on which the local community traditionally subsisted. The issue was exacerbated significantly under the Taliban administration with the closing of the Kajaki Dam depriving Iran of its water share from 1998 to 2001, resulting in the region's severe drought. [15] Despite an influx of global aid, the Taliban government is yet to establish an effective water infrastructure. Out of eight million, only two million acres are under agricultural use, in present-day Afghanistan. With frequent droughts, soil fertility has decreased by 30%. [16] Industrial growth in the nation has been hampered by insufficient water infrastructure. Thus, improved water governance is critical to economic regeneration. However, instability, poor credibility of the Taliban administration and diminished foreign assistance in recent years are significant barriers to improving public infra.

[12] Taliban Prepare Suicide Bombers in Water Dispute With Iran. (2023, August 7). Time. <https://time.com/6302192/taliban-suicide-bombers-water-dispute-iran/>

[13] "Salma Dam Ready to be Operational but with Uncertain Future," Afghanistan Today, 2015, <http://www.afghanistan-today.org/fa/articles/business/2129/>.

[14] The Qosh Tepoh Canal and Afghanistan's Water Right in Amu Darya. (2023, May 4). Opinio Juris. <http://opiniojuris.org/2023/05/04/the-qosh-tepeh-canal-and-afghanistans-water-right-in-amu-darya/>

[15] Erika Weinthal, Jessica Troell, and Mikiyasu Nakayama, *Water and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*, 2014 <http://environmentalpeacebuilding.org/publications/books/water-and-post-conflict-peacebuilding/>.

[16] "Only 27 percent of Afghanistan's Agricultural Land Receive Water," Kabul News, 2021, <http://kabulnews.af/dari/index.php/afghanistan/3843--8-----27----->



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Industrial growth in the nation has been hampered by insufficient water infrastructure. Thus, improved water governance is critical to economic regeneration. However, instability, poor credibility of the Taliban administration and diminished foreign assistance in recent years are significant barriers to improving public infra. Dust storms originating from the Hamouns have created an extensive ecological emergency in Iran. The Iranian economy also suffered with thousands of peasants relocating to cities due to poor economic conditions and poverty. The diminished agricultural revenue has resulted in the increased illicit drug trade in the Hamoun region. Drought too has forced peasants in Afghanistan to convert to opium cultivation, which can thrive on less water and is therefore a better investment. With Iran serving as the primary transit corridor for Afghan narcotics reaching CAR and Europe, this issue has exacerbated Iran's societal issue, the abuse of opiates. [17]

## Climate Diplomacy

Afghanistan's water insecurity has been indicated as critical, indicating that Taliban is battling not only Iran on borders, but also climate change. [18] The excessive use of water has resulted in a significant decline in groundwater levels in Kabul, with reports indicating a drop of up to 50% since the beginning of 2022. [19] The country additionally requires \$4.6 billion this year to support over 20 million people facing acute hunger, which accounts for approximately half of its population according to the UN. [20]

Both nations must have mechanisms in place to improve their farming methods and identify crop-diversifying methods to cut slack on excessive water requirements. Water-intensive practices like rice cultivation in Iran's dry Khuzistan province and maize farming in Kohkiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province provide only fifteen percent of the country's GDP against 90% of water consumption. Residential water usage accounts for nearly 70% higher than the world average for Iran. [21]. Even before the nation became exposed to climate change, groundwater depletion accounted for nearly 87%. [22] Under the rule of the Taliban, Afghanistan lacks many administrative mechanisms and resources that were present during the Ashraf Ghani regime. If the Taliban were to establish an environmental agency, experts argue that it would either be ineffective due to limited administrative decision-making or operate strictly under Islamic law or Sharia. This hypothetical scenario raises concerns about the potential limitations and constraints on environmental management in Afghanistan under Taliban governance. [23]

[17] Fatemeh Aman, "Traffickers Find Novel Ways of Smuggling Drugs into Iran from Afghanistan," Atlantic Council Iran Insight blog, April 29, 2016, (<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iraninsight/traffickers-find-novel-ways-of-smuggling-drugs-into-iran-from-afghanistan>)

[18] Fernandes, F., & Wallach, O. (2023, August 11). Visualizing the Global Population by Water Security Levels. Visual Capitalist. <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/global-water-security/>

[19] Standard, B., & B. (2022, December 12). 79% households in Afghanistan suffer water shortage, shows survey. 79% Households in Afghanistan Suffer Water Shortage, Shows Survey. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/79-households-in-afghanistan-suffer-water-shortage-shows-survey-122121200188\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/79-households-in-afghanistan-suffer-water-shortage-shows-survey-122121200188_1.html)

[20] Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis - Center for Disaster Philanthropy. (2023, July 31). Center for Disaster Philanthropy. <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disasters/afghanistan-humanitarian-crisis/>

[21] Jason Rezaian, "Iran's water crisis the product of decades of bad planning," Washington Post, 2014 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/irans-water-crisis-the-product-of-decades-of-bad-planning/2014/>

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Despite appeals for diplomacy, both sides appear unwilling to end the conflict peacefully. Primarily due to ideological causes, both have failed to adequately demonstrate their respective citizens and instead provided them with biased news, ignoring the pressing requirement to enhance water policy and facilities in addition to their awareness of the ramifications of global warming. But the Taliban needs Iran to gain global recognition. The water treaty might be a source of dispute, but their bilateral relations have grown throughout the past year. [24] Although, if this trend continues, it might destabilize the area and would be politically irrational given the current situation.

Citizens of both nations at large need to recognise the climate risks, but policymakers appear to be more engaged in a blame-shifting strategy than reality supported by crucial facts. It is critical that both sides convey their requirements efficiently. To that purpose, communication avenues within the ministerial level must be expanded. Improvement won't occur without proper oversight of collaborative initiatives between Iran and Afghanistan, along with making investments in modernising both nations' water administration mechanisms. Although water seems uncertain to play a role at the heart of regional events, it may serve as a risk multiplier, with unavoidable ripple effects in the rest of Asia.

## **India To Attend Moscow Format Meeting On Afghanistan In Russia On September 29, 2023**

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-to-attend-moscow-format-meeting-on-afghanistan-in-russia-on-september-29/articleshow/102328218.cms?from=mdr/>

India will attend the new Moscow Format meeting on Afghanistan in the Russian city of Kazan on September 29 eyeing to safeguard its strategic interests and push for an inclusive government that serves the rights of all sections of the society. The meeting will call for the creation of an inclusive government in Kabul that represents the interests of all sections and ethnic groups of Afghan society, according to the host Russia.



*Source: Foreign Policy*

[22] According to Deputy Minister Meidani, 87 percent of Iran's water resources are "under threat of destruction."<sup>50</sup> "This cannot be justified by climate change and drought alone," he said. "Even before the impact of climate change in Iran became visible, ground water tables were dropping in Iran's plains."

[23] Pdf View - CENJOWS. (n.d.). Pdf View - CENJOWS. [https://cenjows.in/pdf-view/?url=2023/06/Afghanistan\\_Watch\\_16-31\\_May\\_2023.pdf&pID=20331](https://cenjows.in/pdf-view/?url=2023/06/Afghanistan_Watch_16-31_May_2023.pdf&pID=20331)

[24] Ibid

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## Comments

The Moscow format comprising Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and India is scheduled to meet in Russia's Kazan on September 29. The agenda is highly centred to eradicate terrorism and drug trafficking in Afghanistan while emphasising the importance of forming a truly inclusive government that represents the interests of all major ethnopolitical groups of the country. With no representation for 2022, the Taliban are anticipated to attend in the coming month. The Taliban have Pashtun dominance, accounting for nearly 55% of the total Afghani population. Although declared, to have a diverse representative Afghan administration including the non-Pashtuns, this has yet to happen under the Taliban administration. [25] According to Zabiullah Mujahid, Taliban government spokesperson, *'the meeting is important to put aside the differences between Afghanistan and other countries through dialogue while resolving conflicts in the spirit of cooperation.'*

## Key Issues Of The Upcoming Moscow Format

**Humanitarian Assistance:** While efforts to offer economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan should be increased, the nation's interim administration must "ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms" of the people.[26]

**Drugs:** In 2022, the Taliban issued an order to prohibit the growth of the poppy. Anyone violating the rule will face penalties under Sharia law. The Taliban's implementation of their 2021 ban on drug manufacturing, according to David Mansfield of consultancy firm Alcis, essentially wiped off poppy planting in Helmand and Nangarhar, two main production regions. Poppy farming will be effectively banned in Afghanistan starting in 2023, and there will be far less opium produced than there was in 2022. In fact, high-resolution imagery reveals that poppy cultivation in the Helmand province has decreased from more than 120,000 hectares in 2022 to less than 1,000 hectares in 2023. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), conversely, the country recorded an increase in opium production following the Taliban's takeover in 2021, including a 32% increase in 2022. This increase in the production was largely mapped in the southern provinces of Nimroz, Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul, accounting for roughly three-quarters of the total cultivated area. Kandahar experienced a 72 percent rise in poppy cultivation in 2022.[27]

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[25] Chaudhury, Dipanjan Roy. "India to Attend Moscow Format Meeting on Afghanistan in Russia on September 29." The Economic Times. Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-to-attend-moscow-format-meeting-on-afghanistan-in-russia-on-september-29/articleshow/102328218.cms>.

[26] Briefing, Silk Road, and Chris Devonshire-Ellis. "The Moscow Format Afghanistan Consultations To Be Held In Kazan In September - Silk Road Briefing." Silk Road Briefing, August 3, 2023. <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2023/08/03/the-moscow-format-afghanistan-consultations-to-be-held-in-kazan-in-september/>.

[27] United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime. "Afghanistan Opium Cultivation in 2022 up by 32 per Cent: UNODC Survey." Accessed August 18, 2023. [//www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2022/November/afghanistan-opium-cultivation-in-2022-up-by-32-per-cent-unodc-survey.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2022/November/afghanistan-opium-cultivation-in-2022-up-by-32-per-cent-unodc-survey.html).

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Even though the crop harvested in 2022 was planted twelve months previous to UNODC's assessment of an increase and five months prior to Haibatullah even announcing his narcotics ban, the Taliban received a great deal of criticism for this in the media and other places.

## India's Aid to Afghanistan

Infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid, small-scale and community-based development projects, initiatives for education and capacity building are the four declared components of India's development cooperation with Afghanistan. Since August 2021, India is providing aid to Kabul, including 50,000 MT of wheat, 65 tonnes of medical supplies, including anti-TB drugs, 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccinations, and 13 batches of medical and surgical supplies. Additionally, it collaborated with UNDOC for the welfare and rehabilitation of drug users and made sure that blankets and hygiene kits for women were available. It also provided stationery supplies and winter clothes for Habiba School's elementary school children. Sending COVAXIN vaccinations through Iran for providing Afghan refugees, India sent almost 28 tonnes of emergency aid through international agencies, acting as the first responder.[28] India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman allocated 2 billion rupees (US\$24 million) for grants and loans to Afghanistan in the current fiscal year 2023-24, which remained unchanged from the previous financial year but significantly lower than 3.5 billion rupees (US\$42 million) in 2021-22, when ousted President Ashraf Ghani was in power.

## Stakeholders' Interests in Afghanistan

Since the British Empire to the American 'War on Terror' of the 2000s, Afghanistan has traditionally served as an arena of great-power dynamics. Due to its strategic position, bordering Iran, Pakistan, and the other Central Asian Republics (CARs), Delhi has acquired an acute grasp of the narco-terror nexus emancipating within the region. When the Taliban gained control in 2021, India had to reconsider its strategy towards its northwestern neighbour. Based on historical and cultural ties, India and Afghanistan enjoy a strong relationship. The relationship is not limited to governments, but also to historical contacts and exchanges between people. Increasing strategic partnerships with Afghanistan will help India boost its position in the region. For example, India's current relations with Iran are dominated by oil. Diversifying engagements might improve India's relations with Iran and other countries. Afghanistan has long been seen as India's gateway to Central Asia. It suggests a global reach. For example, India's involvement with Iran to establish Chabahar port is primarily motivated by its connection with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Similarly, the Delaram-Zaranj highway is a vital route for connecting the Indian and Afghan economies. [29]

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[28] <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indias-stakes-in-taliban-ruled-afghanistan/?amp>

[29] The Hindu. "Moscow Format Calls for Minority Rights, 'Political Reconciliation' in Afghanistan," November 17, 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/moscow-format-calls-for-political-reconciliation-in-afghanistan/article66147872.ece>.



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The Taliban will have to weigh these projects against a perceived loss of political power in the country, a delicate balancing act that will make the Kazan event a landmark moment in Central Asian growth. China will be looking for success in Afghanistan because it wants to expand the Belt and Road Initiative-linked China-Pakistan Economic Corridor it has with Pakistan into Afghanistan and begin reconstruction efforts. Afghanistan became a member of the BRI earlier this year, and Pakistan has drawn up a "Development Road Map" for Kabul. [30] Though India has been a major donor to many development programmes in Afghanistan, its generosity has waned since the Taliban reclaimed control. India wishes to resume construction work on the long-delayed TAPI gas pipeline, while Pakistan and Uzbekistan want to see movement on the Trans-Afghan railway line.

## India's Position

A secure Afghanistan is critical for India's regional and domestic security and stability. If Afghanistan becomes a hotbed of extreme ideology and violence once more, it will have an impact on Pakistan and, inevitably, India. Furthermore, there is a risk of drug trafficking via the Afghanistan route. Peaceful Afghanistan is consequently required to decrease the threat to India's internal security. The Moscow format is significant for numerous stakeholders to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. These talks attempt to foster communication and maybe contribute to a peaceful conclusion to the country's continuing conflict. [31] Different groups' involvement can help address concerns, share viewpoints, and explore viable solutions for Afghanistan's stability and peace. Afghanistan's stability has a direct impact on India's security environment. Instability in Afghanistan could lead to the rise of extremist groups, endangering India's security, and stability. [32] India has made considerable investments in Afghanistan's development, including infrastructure projects and humanitarian assistance. A stable and secure Afghanistan would allow India to carry on with these programmes, benefitting both the countries between Central and South Asia. [33] Terrorism has struck India from its western border, with some organisations seeking safe shelter in Afghanistan. There are two types of terrorist organisations in Afghanistan: those supporting the Taliban and those hostile to them. Al-Qaeda, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and a handful of jihadists from Central Asia are some of the Taliban's partners. The Islamic State of Khorasan (ISIS-K) is the biggest issue when it comes to opposition to the Taliban. The terrorist organisations in Afghanistan still seem committed to waging protracted wars against their various foes. While other groups, like al-Qaeda, seem cautious, the TTP seems to be moving the most aggressively, strengthening its organisation and growing.[34]

[30] <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/33525/files/cps-pak-2009-2013.pdf>

[31] TOLONews. "Moscow Format Meeting on Afghanistan to Take Place in September | TOLONews." Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-184451>.

[32] Press release on the Moscow format consultations on Afghanistan - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. "Press Release on the Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation," November 16, 2022. [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/1838964/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1838964/).

[33] miqbal. "Reflections on the 2022 Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan and Regional Security." Atlantic Council, November 17, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/southasiasource/reflections-on-the-2022-moscow-format-consultations-on-afghanistan-and-regional-security/>.

[34] Two Years Under the Taliban: Is Afghanistan a Terrorist Safe Haven Once Again? | United States Institute of Peace. "Two Years Under the Taliban: Is Afghanistan a Terrorist Safe Haven Once Again?" Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/two-years-under-taliban-afghanistan-terrorist-safe-haven-once-again>.

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The Taliban are likewise striving to strike a difficult balance between curtailing their actions for geopolitical reasons on the one hand and pursuing their jihadist goals and commitments to their jihadist compatriots on the other. This restraint appears to be an attempt to prevent other countries from endangering the existence of their own rule via, among other things, creating an international consensus and taking military action against them. In the same spirit, the Taliban's campaign against ISIS-K is motivated by a desire to survive. The Taliban view ISIS-K as an unbeatable adversary and the principal opposition force with the greatest direct ability to damage the Taliban domestically through political and religious appeals. The Taliban, therefore, aim to violently oppose it.[35]

Participating in talks contributes to addressing terrorist issues and supports collaborative efforts to combat such threats. India may engage diplomatically with other regional players and contribute to debates regarding Afghanistan's future governance and stability by participating in the Moscow format talks.

Furthermore, India's engagement with the Taliban is also about its quest for influence in Central Asia. Since 2015, the Central Asian Republics have gained significance for India. In its second term, the Modi administration has attempted to deepen its connections with all five Republics, putting a particular emphasis on commerce, connectivity, and development cooperation. It was vital for India to formulate its Afghanistan strategy with its interest in the former Soviet republics in mind when the Taliban came to power since India's priority was how to interact with these Republics. To build on this, New Delhi hosted the first India-Central Asia Summit in 2022, which was followed by a joint working group meeting on Afghanistan in early March of this year. These interactions reveal a growing convergence of the two parties perspectives.[36]

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[35] Two Years Under the Taliban: Is Afghanistan a Terrorist Safe Haven Once Again? | United States Institute of Peace. "Two Years Under the Taliban: Is Afghanistan a Terrorist Safe Haven Once Again?" Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/two-years-under-taliban-afghanistan-terrorist-safe-haven-once-again>

[36] <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indias-stakes-in-taliban-ruled-afghanistan/?amp>