Delhi Regional Security Dialogue: NSAs' Agenda on Afghanistan

Why in news?

India is hosting the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue that will explore firming up a common approach for dealing with the changed realities in Afghanistan.

What is the meeting about?

- The idea of such as dialogue was first mooted in 2018, when the US decided to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.
- The first and second meetings were hosted by Iran in 2018 and 2019 to shore up multilateral cooperation on security among the key players in the global 'East'.
- The current meeting will be chaired by India's National security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval.
- Invitations were sent to Afghanistan's neighbours such as Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and other key players including Russia, and China.
- But Pakistan has announced that it would not attend the meeting while China has cited scheduling issues to convey that it will not participate.

Why is this meeting significant?

- The meeting that is being hosted by the National Security Council Secretariat would be the first time that all Central Asian countries, would be participating in this format.
- With security concerns pertaining to Afghanistan weighing heavily on New Delhi's mind, it is important to discuss on the Afghanistan's current situation and the future outlook.
- Since stability in Afghanistan is essential for a balanced regional aapproach, the discussions on Afghanistan is a necessity.
- India is hosting this regional summit as it regards itself as a neighbour of Afghanistan, given its legal and Parliament-mandated claim on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- It is different from other processes on Afghanistan such as the **Heart of Asia process or the Moscow format** as it is among the heads of the

security establishments in these countries.

The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) ministerial conference is part of the Istanbul Process (2011) - a regional initiative on security and cooperation for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan that was launched in Turkey.
The Moscow Format was established in 2017 as a six-party mechanism involving Russia, Afghanistan, India, Iran, China and Pakistan which later expanded with the inclusion of more countries.

What is the agenda of this meeting?

- The Eurasian allies will explore in finding a common approach for cooperation against increasing threats of terrorism, radicalization and drug trafficking following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul.
- The meeting is in the direction of calling for a unified international response to address the security and humanitarian challenges facing Afghanistan.
- It is expected to deliberate on cross-border movement of people from Afghanistan as well as the threat emerging from the military equipment and weapons left behind by the US forces in that country.
- Issues relating to humanitarian aid will definitely be a part of the discussions.

What are the challenges on the table?

- **Challenges for New Delhi**
  - Terrorism within Afghanistan and its spilling beyond its borders
  - Radicalisation and extremism in the population in Afghanistan, and in each of these countries
  - Cross-border movement of people, including ordinary Afghans and Taliban fighters
  - Drug production and trafficking
  - Vast amount of weapons and equipment left behind by the US and its allies in Afghanistan
- **Absence of Pakistan -** New Delhi notes that a credibility gap exists between Pakistan’s intentions and actions and without its presence in the table would not address this issue.
- **Absence of China -** Although China had attended both previous meetings, its absence now sends out a signal that it doesn’t want to

associate with any process led by India.

- **Taliban not invited -** India chose not to invite the Taliban, since none of the participating countries have so far officially recognised the Taliban regime yet.
- **Security interests -** The challenge for India is to protect its national interests and security interests and to frame an approach to deal with an uncertain present and future in Afghanistan.

What are the expected outcomes of this meeting?

- India feels that the high-level participation at the meeting reflects the widespread concern of regional countries about the situation in Afghanistan and their desire to coordinate with each other.
- India wants Afghanistan not to allow itself as a safe haven for terror, an inclusive administration and to protect the rights of minorities, women and children.
- New Delhi is hoping to emerge as the location for future dialogue processes with the expansion of the grouping by including other influential players such as the US.
- It is anticipated that this might enhance the pressure on the Afghan government to adhere to basic global norms of respect for human beings whether they be minorities or women.

References

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