

India's Shifting Position on Taliban

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- India sent two former diplomats as “non-official” participants at the recent “Moscow format” multilateral meeting that included Taliban delegates.

\n

- Indian government-nominated representatives sharing the table with a Taliban delegation for the first time is notable.

\n

\n\n

What is Afghanistan's stance?

\n\n

\n

- Afghanistan did not send delegates from its foreign ministry, but from the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC).

\n

- They were joined by the Ambassador to Russia.

\n

- The HPC is a government-appointed forum tasked with the peace and reconciliation process.

\n

- India is understood to have consulted Kabul about the level of its participation.

\n

- The Indian representatives did not make a statement at the meeting.

\n

\n\n

What was India's traditional position?

\n\n

\n

- India was among the countries that had refused to recognise the Taliban regime of 1996-2001.

\n

- India watched Taliban's growth with concern, assessing early that it was being driven by Pakistan's army and the ISI.

\n

\n\n

\n

- The Kandahar hijack of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 forced India to negotiate.

\n

- At other times, it supported anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

\n

- Throughout the 1990s, India gave military and financial assistance to the Northern Alliance fighting the Pakistan-sponsored Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

\n

- Meanwhile the 9/11 attacks and the US crackdown leading to the fall of the Taliban regime took place.

\n

- When the Taliban re-emerged in 2006-07 to once again challenge US forces, India maintained it was not going to talk with the Taliban.

\n

\n\n

What was the further development?

\n\n

\n

- The Taliban grew in strength, and the US decided to withdraw troops by 2009.

\n

- So the Afghan government reached out to the Taliban with a peace and reconciliation process.

\n

- In the International Conference on Afghanistan in London in 2010, India made a quiet shift.

\n

- It said it is for the elected Afghanistan government to draw the "red lines" - the terms for negotiating with the Taliban.

\n

- [The red lines are the rights of the people, especially women's rights, the right to education, the democratic process all of which are enshrined in constitution.

\n

- The “red lines” had defined the Kabul-Taliban negotiations and these will not be compromised during the talks.]
\n
- The Afghan government had stated that the Taliban must accept the Afghan Constitution.
\n
- It called for it to renounce violence and sever all ties with al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations.
\n
- This was endorsed during the International Conference. That was the first diplomatic opening.
\n
- Although India would not directly talk to Taliban, this shift meant it was approving the outreach if the Taliban adhered to these red lines.
\n

\n\n

What is the significance of the recent move?

\n\n

- \n
- Over the last couple of years, the US, China and Russia brokered reconciliation and peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.
\n
- With this, India stopped public articulation and insisting on the “red lines”.
\n
- It just insisted that the peace process be “Afghan-led” and “Afghan-owned”.
\n
- But it is felt that the current efforts as the Moscow format meeting are not being “Afghan-led”; Russians or the Americans are taking the lead.
\n
- India’s participation, however, is crucial, even though it is at a non-official level.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering