

## Afghanistan - Uncertain Times: RSTV - Big Picture

**Anchor:** - Teena Jha

**Guests:-**

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**Context:**

Recently, our Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said that the situation in Afghanistan is fluid and uncertain. Speaking at a virtual conference organized by the Public Affairs Forum of India, the Foreign Secretary listed the withdrawal of US troops and the Taliban's relentless pursuit of power through violence, including targeted assassinations and capture of territory as reasons for triggering the uncertainty. His comments came against the backdrop of the U.S. having completed the withdrawal of more than 50% of its troops from Afghanistan well ahead of a September deadline, and violence by the [Taliban](#) having increased despite talks with the group at different forums.

**Background:**

**Afghan Peace deal:**

It was signed between the Trump administration and the Taliban.

- It called for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.
- Ceasefire to end violence and terrorist activities.
- Taliban to cut ties with terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda.
- Initiation of intra-Afghan dialogue.

**Six plus Two Group** is an informal coalition of the six nations bordering Afghanistan (China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), plus the United States and Russia, which functioned from 1997 to 2001 under the aegis of the [United Nations](#). The coalition worked to find a peaceful solution for perpetual peace in Afghanistan.

**India's approach:**

India has always stood for an "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled" peace process.

- The peace process should include all sections of the Afghan society.
- The process should respect the constitution and political mandate.
- Any process shouldn't leave any ungoverned spaces that can be exploited by terrorists.

However, India has recently agreed to negotiate with the Taliban and has recognized it as an important stakeholder in the peace process.

**Persisting challenges:**

- The Taliban would continue to operate after the American withdrawal. The Taliban wants to establish an Islamic state based upon the principles of Sharia.

- Afghan national security forces are ill-equipped to deal with the Taliban.
- Pakistan would take advantage of its relations with the Taliban to gain strategic depth that could be used against India.
- Afghan society is multi-ethnic and there are deep divisions present.
- Afghanistan is the core area of the Golden Crescent with illegal money flowing in and out of the country.
- There is no guarantee that the Taliban would honour the ceasefire.
- China's expanding sphere of influence. It already has good relations with Pakistan and Iran.

### Way forward:

As per Shivshankar Menon, radical ideologies cannot be defeated on the battlefield, particularly if their military manifestation has state support. In this backdrop, a coherent peace process should be initiated on the basis of 4Ds:



India could ramp up its relationship with Afghanistan by means of infrastructural projects, development of human capital, medical tourism, etc.

India also needs to look into the distinction between the good and the bad Taliban to find a focal point of starting negotiations.

### Conclusion:

Persistent efforts are required to alter the status of Afghanistan as a failed state. A holistic plan of action could be formulated by international mechanisms like the Heart of Asia conference, 6+2 mechanism, etc. to create a peaceful and thriving Afghanistan.