

AIR Spotlight - Discussion on Developments in Afghanistan and the Challenges for India

AIR Spotlight is an insightful programme featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion is the Developments in Afghanistan and the Challenges for India

Participants:

1. Ashok Sajjanhar: Former diplomat
2. Nilima Rai Chowdhary: Journalist.

Context: The Taliban has taken over Afghanistan, plunging the country once again into chaos and fear.

Current situation in Afghanistan:

- The scenes witnessed in Afghanistan are tragic and horrendous; images of people clinging onto aeroplanes in a bid to escape from their country that has been taken over by a dreaded organisation have sent shockwaves all over the world.
- Everyone is talking about geopolitics, the role of Pakistan, and other countries, especially the USA. However, the real sufferers are the Afghan people, who are now facing an uncertain future.

US-Taliban Agreement:

- To understand the genesis of the current situation, we have to go back to February 2020, when the US President Mr. Donald Trump had an agreement with the Taliban over the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Mr. Trump thought that it would help him in winning the presidential elections at home which was due in November 2020. For this, he appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as the chief negotiator to negotiate with the Taliban.
- In the negotiations, the Taliban agreed to sever ties with all terrorist groups, enter into an agreement with the civilian government of Afghanistan and not use violence on Afghan people. The USA on its part agreed to remove all foreign troops present in Afghanistan.
- The Taliban didn't fulfill any of the agreed upon promises even after the USA started pulling out troops from Afghanistan.

Legitimizing the Taliban:

- The USA had itself designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization and the opening of negotiations with it smacks of double standards. Right from 2009-10, there have been various efforts to classify the Taliban as 'good Taliban' and 'bad Taliban', which China has always opposed.
- Some countries like Russia and China are trying to give legitimacy to the Taliban by opening direct negotiations with them.
- They tried to establish that the new Taliban is different from the old Taliban and the new regime will respect human rights. However, all the claims were nullified when the organisation started preaching

the gospels of the old Taliban and started calling for the implementation of Sharia law instead of establishing democracy.

Effects of Taliban rule in neighbouring countries:

- The spillover of the Taliban taking over Afghanistan can be felt in Pakistan and the Xinjiang region of China also.
- It should be noted that the Taliban is not a homogenous group. It has many factions comprising groups preaching allegiance to Al-Qaeda, ISIS, etc. The terrorist group Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which works with the Afghanistan Taliban, will create more problems for Pakistan. Hence all neighbouring countries are going to have serious security challenges with the overtaking of Afghanistan by the Taliban.
- There will be fresh challenges over the Durand Line, which the Pashtuns of Afghanistan have never accepted. The Taliban will destabilize peace in the region.
- There will also be challenges to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is being constructed in the Sindh and Baluchistan regions of Pakistan.
- Note: The Durand Line is the 2,640-kilometre border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

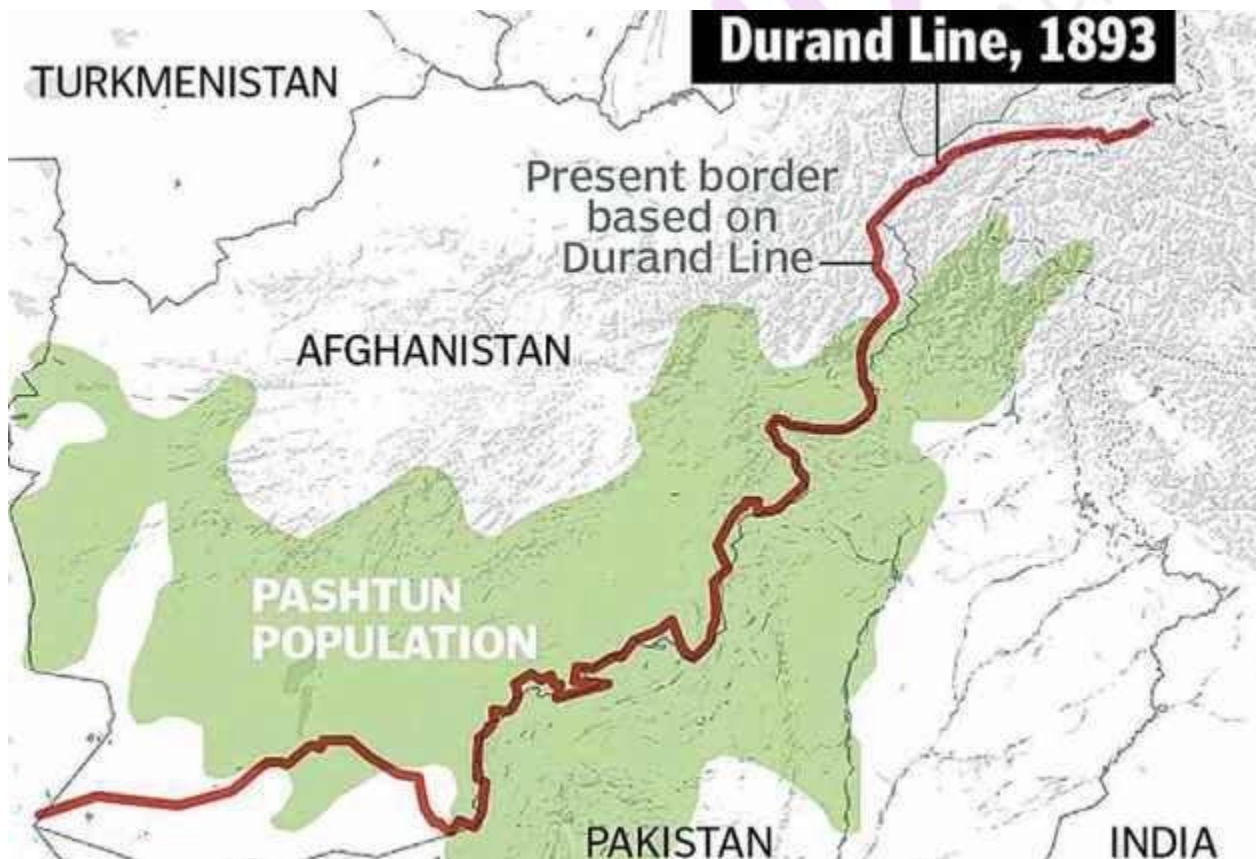


Fig 1: Durand line

- CPEC: The China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (known as CPEC for short) is a collection of infrastructure projects that are currently under construction throughout Pakistan. It is part of the greater [One Belt One Road \(OBOR\)](#) initiative launched by the Chinese government.



Fig 2: China – Pakistan Economic Corridor

- Iran is happy that the Americans are leaving the Afghan region but at the same time is also cautious about the influx of the Shia Hazara community that is being driven out from Afghanistan by the Taliban.
- Uzbekistan and Tajikistan will also face problems as terrorist organizations in their own countries will be strengthened with the rise of the Taliban.

Options for India

- India, being the president of the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#), called a meeting over the Taliban issue.
- India is also facing difficulties in terms of over 200 Indians who are still stranded in Afghanistan, and the investments made by it in Afghanistan such as the construction of highways and dams.
- India is evacuating all its people, religious minorities, and also Afghans. India is trying to protect its own interests as far as possible.
- India is engaging with regional players to chart out an appropriate response. India's foreign minister has visited Iran frequently in the past two years.

Way forward:

The situation is going to be worse and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as other stakeholders, must come up with a plan to protect the interests and rights of the Afghan people. It should be noted that peace in Afghanistan is in the interest of Asia as well as the whole world and any continuance of instability will only benefit terrorist groups.

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