

Abstract

India and Afghanistan have a strong relationship based on historical and cultural links, which suffered a serious setback during the Taliban regime (1996-2001). In its post-Taliban period, India maintained excellent relations with the Rabbani-led Afghan government. India-Afghanistan relationship is characterized by regular high-level exchanges. Our leaders have met each other during bilateral visits as well as on the side line of international events. Both these countries relations have been more strengthened after falling of the Taliban in December 2001. India had an excellent relationship with NATO forces in Afghanistan. After the Hamid Karzai government came to power in 2004, a major policy shift was introduced in favour of India. The 9/11 terrorist strike on the United States make India worried about terror threats which also became a factor in closer India-Afghanistan relations. India's Afghan policy is driven by, and dependent on, many extraneous factors such as India's troubled relationship with Pakistan, its search for a land transit to Central Asia through Iran and Afghanistan and its concerns regarding use of Afghan territory by Pakistan. Simultaneously, India has gained enormous political capital through its economic engagement with other countries of the region. This paper will examine India's interests and involvement within Afghanistan. It will also discuss the impact of India's presence in the country on regional stability, its role within Indo-Pak bilateral relations and the future of the Indian policy in Afghanistan in light of India's extended neighbourhood policy.