# TOC - Taliban AFF

#### Current talks with the US and Taliban are stalled as Sajjad Ashraf indicated this weekend that this stall in:

Sajjad Ashraf, 4-26-2019, "Afghan peace talks mired in mistrust," No Publication, https://gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/afghan-peace-talks-mired-in-mistrust-1.63551243, Date Accessed 4-26-2019 // JM

The current postponement stalls the momentum built at the February round of talks between the Taliban and the US. A framework agreement on the American troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and Taliban assurance that Afghan territory will not be used against another country has been in the pipeline. The two nonetheless remain in an atmosphere of mistrust. They disagree on the finer details of each issue, beginning with the troop withdrawal time lines. The Taliban suspect that the Americans are using the talks to undermine their military successes. The Americans and their partners suspect that by slowing the negotiation process the Taliban only want to run down the clock when the US president is signalling a troop withdrawal quickly. There is also no agreement on how to define a ‘terrorist’ which has stymied complete agreement on Taliban assurance that Afghan territory will not be used to launch attacks against the US. For the Taliban conceding to the American demand of declaring some of their ideological comrades as ‘terrorists’ is likely to divide their ranks, which they can ill afford. The Kabul regime, dependent upon the US military presence, has publicly cautioned the Americans not to reach a deal with the Taliban behind their back until there is simultaneous progress in power sharing. They believe that a troop withdrawal in the absence of a power sharing formula will result in the Americans losing their leverage over the Taliban and more importantly weaken their position. They are worried at the prospect that the Taliban would force their way into the interim government leading to a more permanent arrangement in Kabul. The Taliban are aware that a US troop withdrawal before the actual power transfer would guarantee their military victory. Direct Taliban-US talks also confirm that the US expects a major role for the Taliban in the interim set-up in Kabul. Isolating the Kabul regime could make it a stumbling block to the peace process for a time. They now control more territory than at any time since 2011. Much of the work at the negotiations is therefore, aimed at evolving a climate of trust. US President Donald [but] Trump is racing against time. He wants to demonstrate an end to the Afghan war before he enters his re-election campaign. Confident of their strength on the ground and mindful of his needs, the Taliban will extract every advantage if they are to oblige him. It is more likely that the US will blink first.

#### In order to expedite the negotiations, the neighboring nation of Pakistan is wielding their power in the negotiations – Stewart wrote in 2019 that:

Phil Stewart, 2-8-2019, "Exclusive: Long a spoiler, Pakistan starts behind-scenes aid to...," U.S., https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-exclusive/exclusive-long-a-spoiler-pakistan-starts-behind-scenes-aid-to-u-s-taliban-talks-idUSKCN1PX0EV, Date Accessed 4-26-2019 // JM

Pakistan, long at odds with the United States over the war in Afghanistan, has begun to play a behind-the-scenes but central role in supporting U.S. peace talks with the Afghan Taliban, including by facilitating travel to negotiations, U.S. officials and Taliban sources told Reuters. The Pakistani assistance, which has not been reported in such detail before, also includes exerting pressure on Taliban leaders who fail to cooperate, including by detaining members of the militants’ families, the insurgents say. Pakistan’s role in the peace negotiations is a delicate one, with Islamabad seeking to avoid demonstrating the kind of broad influence over the Taliban that Washington has long accused it of having. Sources caution its help could be temporary. The Taliban also do not want to appear beholden to Islamabad, which has long denied U.S. accusations that it provides safe haven and assistance to insurgents as a way to preserve influence in neighboring Afghanistan throughout its more than 17-year-old war. U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly signaled his intention to wind down America’s longest conflict, declaring this week in his State of the Union address that “great nations do not fight endless wars.” One senior U.S. official, who declined to be identified, said of Pakistan’s role in the talks: “We know it just wouldn’t be possible without their support.” “They’ve facilitated some movement and travel to the discussions in Doha,” the official said. Trump’s administration has accelerated talks for a political settlement in Afghanistan. U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad held six days of talks - perhaps the most productive to date - with the Taliban in Doha last month and is due to meet Taliban representatives again on Feb. 25. Speaking after Reuters reported the shift, Khalilzad confirmed at a forum in Washington that “there is a positive change in recent times” by Islamabad. “Pakistan has tried to facilitate talks between the Taliban and the United States and also favors inter-Afghan dialogue including between the Taliban and the (Afghan) government,” he said. Taliban sources said Pakistan’s role in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table was instrumental. In one instance, Islamabad sent a message to the militants through religious leaders that they had to talk to the United States or risk a cut-off in ties. They detained Taliban members’ families as a way to pressure them, a Taliban leader told Reuters. “I haven’t seen Pakistan so serious before,” the senior Taliban leader said. The Taliban leader, who declined to be identified, said Pakistan had kept “unprecedented pressure” on the militants and their close relatives over the past few months. “They made it clear to us that we (Taliban) have to talk to the U.S. and Afghan government,” the Taliban leader said. To be sure, current and former U.S. officials still are highly skeptical of Islamabad and do not see any steps by Pakistan that could not be easily reversed. Washington appears for now to be sticking to a total freeze in U.S. assistance to Islamabad imposed over a year ago over its suspected support to the Taliban. Trump at the time accused Islamabad of rewarding past U.S. aid with “nothing but lies & deceit.” “There’s some self-interest obviously involved here ... I would be wary of taking that and extrapolating off that and saying they’re now on board with the peace process,” said Jason Campbell, who was the Pentagon’s Afghanistan country director until last year and is now at the RAND Corporation think-tank. Afghanistan’s envoy to Washington, Roya Rahmani, said that any Pakistani shift in behavior was still not apparent from Kabul, which has yet to participate in the talks. “For us, it still remains to be seen,” she told Reuters in an interview. Pakistani sources suggest that the driver behind their country’s support for the talks is not U.S. aid but growing concerns over the regional economic shockwaves that could follow an abrupt U.S. pullout from Afghanistan. Those concerns have been strengthened by Trump’s surprise decision in December to withdraw completely from Syria, despite objections from the Pentagon. There are only about 14,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, but their presence ensures a continuous flow of U.S. financial assistance to Afghanistan. Islamabad, running short of foreign exchange reserves and in talks with the International Monetary Fund over what would be its 13th bailout since the 1980s, says it cannot afford to see Afghanistan slide into chaos just as Pakistan is trying to attract foreign investors to shore up its own economy. “That is our main worry in all of this,” said a senior official who is closely involved in cross-border relations. “We have enough economic issues of our own to deal with already.” One of the most notable public signs of Pakistan’s willingness to aid the negotiations was the release of Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Now the newly appointed chief negotiator, Baradar is expected to fly from Pakistan to attend the next round of negotiations in Doha on Feb. 25. Dan Feldman, a former U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said he believed Washington was still hesitant to become too hopeful about Pakistan’s change in posture. “There is cautious appreciation for the fact that Pakistan has seemingly done more than before to be helpful,” Feldman said, before adding that it did not “suggest a sea change in Pakistan’s position.”

#### The problem is that Pakistan is the wrong mediator as they only benefit the Taliban in the end – Umair Jamal wrote on April 10 that:

Umair Jamal, 4-10-2019, “Why the Taliban Are in Control of the Afghan Peace Process”, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/why-the-taliban-are-in-control-of-the-afghan-peace-process/>, Date Accessed 4-26-2019 // JM

Why is the United States putting Pakistan on notice and suggesting an intra-Afghan dialogue for Kabul at a time when the dialogue with the Taliban is at a very crucial stage? There are three issues that clarify this position. First, the United States is under a lot of pressure from the government in Kabul to limit Pakistan’s role when it comes to shaping the peace process. Afghanistan and perhaps the United States too expects Pakistan’s cooperation in only one form: force the Taliban or if needed, punish the Taliban into accommodating Washington and Kabul demands. While Pakistan has helped the United States in engaging the Taliban, the former has refused to force the group into any reconciliation process. Clearly, Pakistan doesn’t want to deteriorate its ties with the Taliban by putting pressure on the group. Moreover, for Pakistan, there is no reason to use force, for any such move can have strategic implications for Islamabad. The Taliban are quite capable of sheltering or providing refugee to militant groups that have targeted Pakistan from Afghanistan. Islamabad doesn’t want this to change in support of extremist groups or political actors that are anti-Pakistan. Second, for the United States to prepare for a graceful departure from Afghanistan, Washington expects the Taliban to agree to some of its key demands. Similarly, the government in Afghanistan also expects the Taliban to recognize the current administrative setup in Afghanistan as legitimate and the government a rightful authority in the entire peace process. Irrespective of the U.S. and Afghan government’s demands, the fact remains that neither Washington’s requests have been met nor Kabul’s calls to meet the Taliban have made any headway. Both states’ inability to succeed in their respective spheres have only added more confusion and complications to the entire problem. Third, Washington and Kabul’s individual interests and approach concerning the peace process have compounded the situation. Two weeks ago, President Ashraf Ghani’s national security adviser accused the U.S. special envoy to his country, Zalmay Khalilzad, of “delegitimizing” the Afghan government by ignoring it from peace talks with the Taliban and acting like a “viceroy.” In response, Washington has stopped dealing with President Ghani’s national security adviser. Kabul maintains that the United States is not specifically concerned about the political future of the current government and is only focused on building consensus on matters that favor Washington’s withdrawal agenda. From Kabul’s perspective, Washington’s focus on finding a way for its own departure and reaching out to tribal chiefs and Afghanistan’s wider political community to engage the Taliban dents political and constitutional legitimacy of the Afghan government. While Kabul may not like Washington’s current approach, it doesn’t have much of political clout across the country to convince Washington to take up a new approach that might place the Afghan government in a key interlocutor role. The next round of peace talks, which are due to begin in Doha later this month, are not likely to change much when it comes to the Taliban changing their position. The prevailing frustrations, shared accusations, and differences among the stakeholders are expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future. However, the fact that peace talks have continued on for months can be called a progress itself, even though there is little to no hope of a major breakthrough anytime soon.

#### The problem is that India is absent in these negotiations due to a lack of credibility -- Ruchi Kumar indicates in 2019 that:

Ruchi Kumar & Hikmat Noori, 2-28-2019, Foreign Policy, Afghans Are Cheering for an Indian Win,” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/28/afghans-are-cheering-for-an-indian-win/>, Date Accessed 4-26-2019 // AS

But many Afghans also see the Pakistani establishment as a key supporter of the Taliban insurgency in their country. New air and sea routes are connecting Afghanistan to the wider region, reducing previous dependency on Pakistan, and Afghans fear that Pakistan is looking to widen its leverage. Afghanistan even protested a scheduled meeting between the Taliban and Pakistan earlier this month, raising the issue with the U.N. Security Council, stating it “amounts to the official recognition and legitimization of an armed group that poses a serious threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan.” Pakistani Foreign Minister S.M. Qureshi told U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that India’s airstrikes could affect the ongoing Afghan peace process. On the other hand, India is viewed favorably by many Afghans as the enemy of their enemy. India’s investment—of more than $3 billion—in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, as well as several smaller development projects, has bolstered India’s popularity. Pakistan’s connection to terrorism alarms Afghans. “Pakistan has been using terrorism as a tool and tactic,” said Rahmatullah Nabil, a former Afghan spy chief and current contender in the upcoming Afghan presidential elections. Nabil not only approves of India’s airstrikes but feels that they should have happened sooner. “India should have done this much earlier,” he said. “I hope Iran will also take action against Jaish-ul-Adl. Because if the U.S. leaves the region—and we hope they leave behind a good legacy— but if they simply withdraw, that will give the sense of victory to all terrorist networks not just in the region but on the other side as well.” Nabil claims that, according to his confidential sources, there are 45 to 48 terrorist networks in Pakistan created for different purposes. Nabil is cheered by a stronger India, seeing it as a power that can pressure Pakistan enough for Afghanistan and the United States to gain leverage in the peace talks. Recalling the vacuum left behind after the Soviet withdrawal that gave rise to various powers and internal conflict, Nabil urged the United States to seek guarantees from Pakistan and set up a system of oversight to ensure that the terrorist groups are neutralized before they withdraw. “My main worry right now is not about the Taliban or U.S. withdrawal but that Pakistan will turn into a bully in the region” after the United States withdraws, he said. “They will start thinking that they were the ones who defeated Russians, and now they are the ones to defeat the U.S. and NATO. They have an expansionist agenda, and they are armed.”

#### Granting India a permanent seat on the UN Security Council provides India a necessary boost in soft power to give them more leverage and influence in regional negotiations – specifically it would build the climate of trust that is missing in status quo negotiations. McClory concludes on April 14:

Jonathan Mcclory, 4-14-2019, "Until 2016, India was on course to break into soft power group of 30 nations. Then it fell," ThePrint, https://theprint.in/opinion/until-2016-india-was-on-course-to-break-into-soft-power-group-of-30-nations-then-it-fell/221298/, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

In the absence of immediate solutions, it would be wise to focus on what the Indian government can control in the more short term. One action that would immediately benefit India’s soft power is an expansion of its diplomatic network, as well as the number of international cultural missions of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. India would benefit significantly from more international platforms to engage global audiences and communicate not only what India has to offer the world in terms of its wider cultural offer, but also articulate its values, aspirations, and a clear vision for India’s positive role in the world. Extrapolating from the international polling data on perceptions of India’s foreign policy – where it ranks 42nd out of 60 countries – there seems to be a lack of understanding around what India wants from the world, and what it stands to contribute. Again, a larger diplomatic network with expanded platforms for articulating India’s aspirations and vision would be a boon for Indian soft power. With greater understanding and more familiarity, international publics are likely to increase their trust in India and see it as a potential partner. In combining India’s excellent digital reach with a greater international diplomatic presence, India will be better able to explain itself and its aims to the world, as well as leverage new platforms to engage international audiences with its formidable cultural assets. Results would not come overnight, but if resources could be mobilised, the returns on investment for India’s influence abroad would be significant.

#### This missing influence is the crucial internal link to successful negotiations as Chowdhury wrote on March 29 that:

Prasenjit Chowdhury, 3-29-2019, "India can’t avoid talking to Taliban in current scenario," WION, https://www.wionews.com/opinions/india-cant-avoid-talking-to-taliban-in-current-scenario-206413, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

Having conceded that, it is prudent for India to find a mechanism to begin talks with the Taliban not when they appear as non-state actors but when they are legitimate stakeholders of the reconciliation process. Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib had already lambasted Khalilzad for “delegitimising” the Ashraf Ghani government by keeping it outside the loop. Having a pacifist worldview, New Delhi’s posture to “participate in all formats of talks which could bring peace and security in the region” would stand it in good stead. The Taliban are virtually from the Pashtun tribe, which comprises Afghanistan’s dominant ethnic group. Taliban is not one monolithic group that can prevent groups like al-Qaeda from operating or resist the emergence of a new similar terrorist group seeking to build an emirate. Due to the same reason, it is no longer subject to ISI’s machinations, having many clones and offshoots with differing loyalties, notably the Al-Khorasan and the Tehrik-e-Taliban which is a breakaway group from the original Taliban created by the Pakistan government only to become the latter’s sworn enemy as evident in the fissures between Afghan Taliban and Pakistan. With the conflict in Afghanistan entering a critical phase, political leaders begin to recognise that all stakeholders need to engage with the Taliban to negotiate a sustainable peace. India must learn to drift with the tide. Afghanistan is too important a country to remain outside India’s strategic bounds.

#### The alternative to successful negotiations is catastrophic. Dawood Azami concludes on April 1 that:

Dawood Azami, 4-1-2019, "Will talks with the Taliban bring peace or chaos?," BBC News, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47733079, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

The current peace efforts could see the Taliban participating in a new set-up in Afghanistan. This would mean the end of fighting and the formation of an inclusive Afghan government – [be] a win-win for Afghans, the US and regional players. But the alternative is dire - a probable intensification of conflict and instability in a country strategically located in a region with a cluster of major powers including China, Russia, India, Iran and Pakistan. Another round of chaos could well result in the emergence of new violent extremist groups. Afghans and the rest of the world would have to deal with a possible security vacuum in which militant groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State found fertile ground. Increased production of drugs and the overflow of refugees would pose serious challenges not only to Afghanistan but also to the whole region and the rest of the world.

## IDEA

US –Taliban coming to table for peaceful negotiation of troop withdrawal

India key to that deal

Soft power key to India leverage in deal

No India means Pakistan gets involved

Pakistan influence on Taliban bad

India key to ceasefire?

## To Cut

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/us-withdrawing-troops-from-afghanistan-instead-of-whining-softly-india-must-be-hard-headed-and-hard-hearted-too/>

<https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2019/02/16/as-world-courts-taliban--is-pakistan-gaining-an-edge-over-india-.html>

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/us-taliban-talks-a-tricky-situation-for-india-in-afghanistan-47798/>

## Abby Cut Cards

### Afghanistan Doesn’t Want Pakistan

Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 2-17-2019, “Afghanistan protests to UN on Pakistan's role in Taliban peace talks,” The Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/afghanistan-protests-to-un-on-pakistans-role-in-taliban-peace-talks/articleshow/68039197.cms>, Date Accessed 4-26-2019 // AS

Afghanistan has lodged a strong complaint with the UN Security Council against Pakistan for the latter's role in recent months in facilitating Taliban negotiations alleging that the process is a violation of sovereignty of the landlocked country. A strongly-worded complaint was lodged by the Afghan Permanent Mission in New York with UN Security Council, ET has learnt. The Afghanistan government alleged in the letter (dated Feb 15) that Pakistan's official engagements with Taliban is happening in a manner which is a violation of national sovereignty of Afghanistan. "These engagements, which are taking place under the pretext of support for peace efforts in Afghanistan, are void of any degree of coordination and consultation with the Government of Afghanistan," alleges the letter, a copy of which is available with ET. The Afghan government emphasises in the letter that it supports all efforts at peace provided it conforms to the principle of Afghan ownership and leadership of the process. India, too has espoused, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. Referring to the Pak move to invite Taliban delegation to meet PM Imran Khan, the Afghan government in its letter regretted that this amounts to official "recognition and legitimisation of an armed group that poses serious threat to security and stability of Afghanistan". The letter further alleged that members of the group are sanctioned by the UN Security Council 1988 Committe's Sanctions Regime. The Afghan government also suggested that Islamabad should undertake decisive action against terrorist groups on Pak territory which is a threat to Pakistan itself, Afghanistan and wider region. The letter regretted that Pakistan's passivity in counter-terrorism has profound impact on security of the region. Incidentally, the letter by Afghan government to the UN Security Council was despatched ahead of Saudi Crown Prince Md Bin Salman's proposed meeting with the Taliban delegation in Islamabad on Monday.

### Afghanistan Supports India \*\*\*

RUCHI KUMAR, and HIKMAT NOORI 2-28 (Foreign Policy, Afghans Are Cheering for an Indian Win,” 2019 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/28/afghans-are-cheering-for-an-indian-win/>, Date Accessed 4-26-2019 // AS

But many Afghans also see the Pakistani establishment as a key supporter of the Taliban insurgency in their country. New air and sea routes are connecting Afghanistan to the wider region, reducing previous dependency on Pakistan, and Afghans fear that Pakistan is looking to widen its leverage. Afghanistan even protested a scheduled meeting between the Taliban and Pakistan earlier this month, raising the issue with the U.N. Security Council, stating it “amounts to the official recognition and legitimization of an armed group that poses a serious threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan.” Pakistani Foreign Minister S.M. Qureshi told U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that India’s airstrikes could affect the ongoing Afghan peace process. On the other hand, India is viewed favorably by many Afghans as the enemy of their enemy. India’s investment—of more than $3 billion—in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, as well as several smaller development projects, has bolstered India’s popularity. Pakistan’s connection to terrorism alarms Afghans. “Pakistan has been using terrorism as a tool and tactic,” said Rahmatullah Nabil, a former Afghan spy chief and current contender in the upcoming Afghan presidential elections. Nabil not only approves of India’s airstrikes but feels that they should have happened sooner. “India should have done this much earlier,” he said. “I hope Iran will also take action against Jaish-ul-Adl. Because if the U.S. leaves the region—and we hope they leave behind a good legacy— but if they simply withdraw, that will give the sense of victory to all terrorist networks not just in the region but on the other side as well.” Nabil claims that, according to his confidential sources, there are 45 to 48 terrorist networks in Pakistan created for different purposes. Nabil is cheered by a stronger India, seeing it as a power that can pressure Pakistan enough for Afghanistan and the United States to gain leverage in the peace talks. Recalling the vacuum left behind after the Soviet withdrawal that gave rise to various powers and internal conflict, Nabil urged the United States to seek guarantees from Pakistan and set up a system of oversight to ensure that the terrorist groups are neutralized before they withdraw. “My main worry right now is not about the Taliban or U.S. withdrawal but that Pakistan will turn into a bully in the region” after the United States withdraws, he said. “They will start thinking that they were the ones who defeated Russians, and now they are the ones to defeat the U.S. and NATO. They have an expansionist agenda, and they are armed.”

### India Pushing for Peace at SC

Press Trust of India 3-9 (“Irreconcilable guns need to be silenced in Afghanistan: India tells UNSC,” 2019, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/irreconcilable-guns-need-to-be-silenced-in-afghanistan-india-tells-unsc/story-B8KQfl17HrDKoiA7IMykyO.html)

India has supported the recent move of the unity government in Afghanistan for peace talks with the Taliban, saying the “irreconcilable guns” in the war-torn country need to be silenced. At the 2nd Kabul Process Conference on February 28, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani called on the Taliban to participate in peace talks to “save the country” while offering security and incentives like passports to insurgents who take part in the negotiations. Ghani had said a ceasefire must be agreed on and the Taliban should be declared a political group. “The Afghan Government’s willingness for peace is despite the fact that armed groups have identified themselves and demonstrated to all of us that they are the irreconcilables,” India’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Syed Akbaruddin told the UN Security Council during an open debate on Afghanistan. “These efforts of the Afghan government calling on the armed groups to cease violence and join the national peace and reconciliation process that would protect the rights of all the citizens, including women, children and the minorities, deserves the full support,” he said on Thursday. Akbaruddin, however, said it should be clear to the armed opposition that there will be no tolerance for those who continue violence. “Any violence needs a robust response. The irreconcilable guns need to be silenced,” he said. He said India had invested over $2 billion in Afghanistan since 2002 in reconstruction and development of the country. “A strong focus of our work has been on nearly 550 High Impact Community Development Projects which run across areas such as education, health, agriculture and irrigation, power and energy,” he added. “All these have a direct bearing on the improvement of lives of all Afghans including girls and women specially so for projects in education and healthcare sectors,” the top Indian diplomat said. Welcoming the focus of the Security Council on linkages between extremism, terrorism, drug production and illegal exploitation of natural resources of Afghanistan, he said the increase in cultivation of poppy in areas under the control of the Taliban and the outfit’s involvement in virtually all aspects of the opium trade suggested that it was akin to a drug cartel. “We hope that the Council will better utilize the range of tools available to it to deal with these trans-national networks of drugs, terrorism and crime,” he said. Akbaruddin said that despite the international community’s efforts, those supporting the terrorists affecting Afghanistan have not been deterred. “There are still those who provide sanctuaries to support the dark agendas of terrorist organisations like the Taliban, Haqqani Network, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, LeT and JeM.Indeed the challenges posed by cross border terrorism emanating from safe havens and sanctuaries to Afghanistan and to our region must be addressed,” Akbaruddin said. A resurgent Taliban has been blamed for much of the uptick in violence in Afghanistan since the US and NATO forces ended their combat missions in 2014. A Taliban attacker killed over 100 people and injured more than 230 others after driving an ambulance filled with explosives into the heart of the city on January 27. The Taliban claimed the responsibility of the attack. A week before the ambulance attack, militants stormed a luxury hotel in Kabul, killing 22 people, including 14 foreigners.

### India Limited Role Now

 M Reyaz 4-10 (India Times, “INDIA:Will Afghanistan's 'Friend' India Be Left As The Biggest Loser In The Ongoing Taliban Talk?,” 2019, https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/will-afghanistan-s-friend-india-be-left-as-the-biggest-loser-in-the-ongoing-taliban-talk-364968.html)

Although, Afghanistan signed its first bilateral strategic pact with India in 2011, there has been little headway largely because New Delhi was apprehensive of angering Islamabad. These apprehensions were not completely unfounded since Taliban forces, allegedly at the behest of Pakistan, have attacked Indian workers employed in many of the development projects, most notably building highway that would reduce Kabul’s reliance on Karachi airport, its Embassy in Kabul as well as consulates in Jalalabad and Herat. As the NATO and western powers decided to negotiate with the ‘Good Taliban’, New Delhi, maintained that it did not distinguish between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Taliban. This principled position may have given India moral high ground, but in peace negotiations, consequently, New Delhi has often found itself in dark like Kabul. Afghanistan’s neighbours like Iran, or Russia and increasingly now Uzbekistan, appear more active and visible in negotiations than India. India, however, did send two seasoned diplomats — former High Commissioner to Pakistan TCA Raghavan and former Ambassador to Afghanistan Amar Sinha — to ‘Moscow process’, a separate informal meeting of several senior Afghan politicians with about 15 Taliban representatives in November 2018 as observers in ‘non-official’ capacity. Trump administration had earlier nudged India for greater role in Afghanistan although New Delhi has maintained that they have no plans of sending their military, except as peace-keeping force, that too only when Afghan Government formally seeks them. After dragging its feet for several years, during 2015-16 India had finally gifted four Mi-24s to the Afghan armed forces. According to reports, some of these have since been grounded as they developed technical faults and spare parts are not easily available. India has also agreed to deliver four more gunship helicopters to Afghanistan by July, this year. India’s main concerns are spill-over effects of a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul in the likely situation of a deal with Taliban where they are accommodated in the administration as it has limited channel of communication with them. India had relied too much on the US, and hoped that they would not hastily leave Afghanistan. Meanwhile, New Delhi is once again caught napping to the rapidly changing political realities in Kabul as they seem to have no concrete framework of engagement. Their only saving grace is several old and young influential Afghan politicians, and common citizens, who have great deal of trust in India’s commitment to sustainable peace.

### India Needs to Act

SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA 3-18 (“The Limits of India’s Soft Power in Afghanistan,” Fair Observer, 2019, https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central\_south\_asia/afghanistan-taliban-peace-talks-india-south-asia-security-news-00081/)

The externally mediated peace talks face opposition from the Ghani administration and also a large chunk of the Afghan civil society groups who are concerned with the loss of the gains and freedoms achieved in last 17 years. A fractured Taliban and Pakistan’s own problems in the neighborhood may slow the process down considerably. Therefore, New Delhi still has time to effect broad changes in its approach that will outlast any regime change in Kabul. It needs to be two-pronged. Firstly, India needs to help build the credibility and extend the writ of the Afghan government by improving its governance potential. This can be done by increasing the number of small development projects (SDPs) with greater interface with Afghan ministries to deliver the basic services in remote provinces. In discussions with the locals in Afghanistan, it is evident that while the urban elite favor large-scale projects, people in the provinces prefer SDPs that provide basic health, education, agriculture and irrigation services. A shift from high visibility projects to small-scale sustainable initiatives with integrated business plans and some amount of accountability measures would be necessary. Secondly, India needs to focus on institution building. As Afghanistan prepares for another round of presidential elections currently scheduled for April, allegations of fraud and misconduct are bound to resurface. There is a need to help the country conduct a free and fair vote. As witnessed in 2014, another messy election result will only add to the dynamics of conflict, with fissures that can further polarize the country. New Delhi cannot afford to simply build symbolic structures like the country’s current parliament without aiding the establishment of democratic institutions, systems and processes. Moreover, the absence of institutions in conflict mediation and justice has made people, particularly at the peripheries, turn toward the Taliban for instant justice. Strengthening the judicial sector and supporting the indigenous High Peace Council will provide an institutional mechanism for any meaningful reintegration and reconciliation processes and help prevent subversion from within. The fact that New Delhi maintains a wait-and-see policy has led to considerable disillusionment among a large number of Afghans. India’s traditional support base in the north is swinging away, while support among the Pashtuns remains ambivalent. The promises made during the signing of the Agreement of Strategic Partnership in October 2011 — the first to be signed by Afghanistan with any country — had led to heightened expectations that are yet to be met. While the soft power approach has worked to a certain extent, New Delhi will need to shift to a smart-power approach to translate these short-term gains into long-term benefits.

## Jeff Cut Cards

#### UNSC link card - India soft power

Jonathan Mcclory, 4-14-2019, "Until 2016, India was on course to break into soft power group of 30 nations. Then it fell," ThePrint, https://theprint.in/opinion/until-2016-india-was-on-course-to-break-into-soft-power-group-of-30-nations-then-it-fell/221298/, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

In the absence of immediate solutions, it would be wise to focus on what the Indian government can control in the more short term. One action that would immediately benefit India’s soft power is an expansion of its diplomatic network, as well as the number of international cultural missions of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. India would benefit significantly from more international platforms to engage global audiences and communicate not only what India has to offer the world in terms of its wider cultural offer, but also articulate its values, aspirations, and a clear vision for India’s positive role in the world. Extrapolating from the international polling data on perceptions of India’s foreign policy – where it ranks 42nd out of 60 countries – there seems to be a lack of understanding around what India wants from the world, and what it stands to contribute. Again, a larger diplomatic network with expanded platforms for articulating India’s aspirations and vision would be a boon for Indian soft power. With greater understanding and more familiarity, international publics are likely to increase their trust in India and see it as a potential partner. In combining India’s excellent digital reach with a greater international diplomatic presence, India will be better able to explain itself and its aims to the world, as well as leverage new platforms to engage international audiences with its formidable cultural assets. Results would not come overnight, but if resources could be mobilised, the returns on investment for India’s influence abroad would be significant.

#### India key

Prasenjit Chowdhury, 3-29-2019, "India can’t avoid talking to Taliban in current scenario," WION, https://www.wionews.com/opinions/india-cant-avoid-talking-to-taliban-in-current-scenario-206413, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

Having conceded that, it is prudent for India to find a mechanism to begin talks with the Taliban not when they appear as non-state actors but when they are legitimate stakeholders of the reconciliation process. Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib had already lambasted Khalilzad for “delegitimising” the Ashraf Ghani government by keeping it outside the loop. Having a pacifist worldview, New Delhi’s posture to “participate in all formats of talks which could bring peace and security in the region” would stand it in good stead. The Taliban are virtually from the Pashtun tribe, which comprises Afghanistan’s dominant ethnic group. Taliban is not one monolithic group that can prevent groups like al-Qaeda from operating or resist the emergence of a new similar terrorist group seeking to build an emirate. Due to the same reason, it is no longer subject to ISI’s machinations, having many clones and offshoots with differing loyalties, notably the Al-Khorasan and the Tehrik-e-Taliban which is a breakaway group from the original Taliban created by the Pakistan government only to become the latter’s sworn enemy as evident in the fissures between Afghan Taliban and Pakistan. With the conflict in Afghanistan entering a critical phase, political leaders begin to recognise that all stakeholders need to engage with the Taliban to negotiate a sustainable peace. India must learn to drift with the tide. Afghanistan is too important a country to remain outside India’s strategic bounds.

#### Soft power key

Shanthie Mariet D’Souza, 3-18-2019, “The Limits of India’s Soft Power in Afghanistan,” , <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/afghanistan-taliban-peace-talks-india-south-asia-security-news-00081/>, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // AS

In the last 17 years, India has been a strong advocate for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. With more than $3 billion [pledged](https://www.livemint.com/news/world/new-delhi-likely-to-back-ashraf-ghani-s-call-for-kabul-taliban-talks-1548874889665.html)as development assistance to various infrastructure and capacity building projects, India aimed to accrue good will of the Afghans through its soft power, being careful not raise the ante for Pakistan. The strategy worked until the announcement of a US drawdown in 2014 and the setting in of uncertainty associated with the security vacuum. Since then, India’s predicament continues to bring up new challenges with each passing year. The debate in New Delhi has intensified over whether good will alone is a sufficient condition to protect India’s interests. Although over the years strategists have advocated some degree of military involvement, the government has steered clear of that path. India has [provided](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-gives-four-military-helicopters-to-afghanistan-before-key-meet/articleshow/55668974.cms) some security training and helicopters, which, as far as the Afghans are concerned, is by no means a game changer. Moreover, Afghanistan’s stability is not only challenged by the Taliban-led insurgency alone, but also by internal power reconfiguration in the face of an impending presidential election and the scramble among external powers to hurry along the peace process in order to be able to withdraw. It appears that in the shifting sands of internal and external power play, New Delhi remains a mere spectator. New Delhi’s policy of supporting the regime in Kabul and elite buy-in has demonstrated its inherent limitations. The credibility of the National Unity Government (NUG) is at an all-time low. Although the bickering between the two camps in the NUG has led to governmental inertia, New Delhi has maintained its policy of non-interference while at the same time increasing the amount of development assistance without any preconditions. Without improving the basic service delivery and helping extend the writ of the Afghan government, the aid-only policy will make no tangible difference on the ground. New Delhi’s stated policy of support for indigenous Afghan-led peace efforts is proving to a lip service when the Afghan government is kept out of such negotiations. New Delhi [attempted](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/delhi-in-tizzy-over-us-taliban-talks-in-kabul/story-XLvj3533nLXSN9p7ZWQvfI.html) to find a place at the negotiation table by sending two senior retired diplomats to the [talks in Moscow](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/afghan-peace-conference-india-shares-table-taliban-181109092419577.html) last November. Yet the move was [restricted](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/taliban-talks-in-moscow-india-to-attend-at-non-official-level/article25445933.ece) by its curious distinction between official-nonofficial participation, with the Indian representatives attending unofficially. It is perhaps indicative of the beginning of a policy change in New Delhi. However, India is yet to explore its leverage with the Taliban, particularly those within the armed group who have accepted the utility of Indian projects and assistance in the provinces. The externally mediated peace talks face opposition from the Ghani administration and also a large chunk of the Afghan civil society groups who are concerned with the loss of the gains and freedoms achieved in last 17 years. A fractured Taliban and Pakistan’s own problems in the neighborhood may slow the process down considerably. Therefore, New Delhi still has time to effect broad changes in its approach that will outlast any regime change in Kabul. It needs to be two-pronged. Firstly, India needs to help build the credibility and extend the writ of the Afghan government by improving its governance potential. This can be done by increasing the number of small development projects (SDPs) with greater interface with Afghan ministries to deliver the basic services in remote provinces. In discussions with the locals in Afghanistan, it is evident that while the urban elite favor large-scale projects, people in the provinces prefer SDPs that provide basic health, education, agriculture and irrigation services. A shift from high visibility projects to small-scale sustainable initiatives with integrated business plans and some amount of accountability measures would be necessary. Secondly, India needs to focus on institution building. As Afghanistan prepares for another round of presidential elections currently scheduled for April, allegations of fraud and misconduct are bound to resurface. There is a need to help the country conduct a free and fair vote. As witnessed in 2014, another messy election result will only add to the dynamics of conflict, with fissures that can further polarize the country. New Delhi cannot afford to simply build symbolic structures like the country’s current parliament without aiding the establishment of democratic institutions, systems and processes. Moreover, the absence of institutions in conflict mediation and justice has made people, particularly at the peripheries, turn toward the Taliban for instant justice. Strengthening the judicial sector and supporting the indigenous High Peace Council will provide an institutional mechanism for any meaningful reintegration and reconciliation processes and help prevent subversion from within.

#### Impact card – conflict + terror groups

Dawood Azami, 4-1-2019, "Will talks with the Taliban bring peace or chaos?," BBC News, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47733079, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

The current peace efforts could see the Taliban participating in a new set-up in Afghanistan. This would mean the end of fighting and the formation of an inclusive Afghan government - a win-win for Afghans, the US and regional players. But the alternative is dire - a probable intensification of conflict and instability in a country strategically located in a region with a cluster of major powers including China, Russia, India, Iran and Pakistan. Another round of chaos could well result in the emergence of new violent extremist groups. Afghans and the rest of the world would have to deal with a possible security vacuum in which militant groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State found fertile ground. Increased production of drugs and the overflow of refugees would pose serious challenges not only to Afghanistan but also to the whole region and the rest of the world.

#### India key to deal

Barnett R. Rubin, 1-27-2019, "Everyone Wants a Piece of Afghanistan," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/11/everyone-wants-a-piece-of-afghanistan-russia-china-un-sco-pakistan-isi-qatar-saudi-uae-taliban-karzai-ghani-khalilzad-iran-india/, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // AS

Indian officials also participated in the November round of the Moscow Process, the first time that India has joined a meeting with Taliban representatives, as India has long regarded the Taliban as an integral part of the terrorist networks sponsored by Pakistan with the primary goal of targeting India. Russia and Iran long echoed the same position as India against any engagement with the Taliban, but as their view of the Taliban has shifted, India has become more isolated. India strongly supported Trump’s pro-Indian South Asia strategy but has chafed at U.S. restrictions on its dealings with Iran and Russia. India is also re-evaluating its relationship with China. It is wary of increased Pakistani influence in Afghanistan through any process that includes the Taliban, but it is also exploring possibilities of cooperation with China, including on projects in Afghanistan. India is the largest regional donor to Afghanistan. And according to public opinion surveys, it is the most popular foreign country in Afghanistan, but it lacks a common border and has little leverage over the actors involved in negotiations. (Territory claimed by India as part of the Kashmir dispute does border on Afghanistan, but that territory, now including the provinces of Gilgit and Baltistan, has been under Pakistan’s control since 1947.) Through cooperation with Iran in developing the port of Chabahar, however, India has developed a transit route to Afghanistan that evades Pakistan, helping Afghanistan achieve a major strategic objective of decreasing dependence on its eastern neighbor.

HARSH V. PANT, And AVINASH PALIWAL 2-19 (“India’s Afghan Dilemma Is Tougher Than Ever,” Foreign Policy, 2019 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/19/indias-afghan-dilemma-is-tougher-than-ever/>, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // AS

India has never been able to make up its mind about Afghanistan, and now the stakes are higher, and more pressing, than ever. Should it engage, officially or unofficially, with Pakistan-backed groups such as the Afghan Taliban—or not? An unfolding breakthrough between the United States and the Taliban, which seems to promise a full U.S. troop withdrawal in 18 months if the Taliban pledge an enduring cease-fire, makes this long-standing dilemma suddenly especially acute.

Officially, India maintains support for an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led reconciliation process. New Delhi wants the Kabul government to be the key player in the talks with the Taliban.

India’s Afghanistan policy is not driven by ideological or humanitarian concerns. It is driven by a desire to limit Islamabad’s influence in Afghanistan. This is because increased Pakistani influence in Afghanistan may not only lead to a reduced Indian presence but will also make India more susceptible to Pakistani-inspired terrorism and marginal in the wider region. As the most recent terrorist attack on Indian security forces in Kashmir, which claimed the lives of more than 40 personnel, underscored, India will be the first target of those who see in a U.S. withdrawal a Taliban victory. The suicide bomber was reportedly inspired by the “Taliban victory” in Afghanistan.

India’s room for maneuver in Afghanistan is constrained by structural aspects, such as its limited material capacities, reputational concerns, and lack of geographical contiguity. Unlike the United States, for instance, India does not have the financial resources to support state building in Afghanistan. In reputational terms, it values its role as a constructive regional player that has helped build the capacity of the Afghan state in economic, political and military terms.

New Delhi requires partners both outside and inside Afghanistan to protect its presence and interests in the war-torn country. That led to an alliance with the Afghan communists in the 1980s, alongside the Soviet Union, and a similarly futile effort in the 1990s, when it threw its weight behind the so-called Northern Alliance with support from Iran and Russia.

India’s latest choice of partner has been the Kabul government alongside the United States. Since 2001, under the security umbrella of U.S.-led NATO forces, India has built a sizable developmental and considerable intelligence footprint in Afghanistan, spending more than $2 billion in aid and infrastructural development, and reopened consulates across the war-torn country.

From a security perspective, the training of Afghan police, army, and intelligence officers, as well as its consular presence, offered India insight into the ground realities of the Afghan war. But in response to such inroads, outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Haqqani network, supported by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, began targeting Indian personnel and installations. What began as a series of kidnappings in 2005 of Indian workers building the Zaranj-Delaram highway in the Afghan province of Nimruz transformed into targeted attacks against the Indian Embassy and consulates after 2008.

Today, with Iran, Russia, China, and the United States directly engaging with the Taliban, and the credibility of the Kabul government at an all-time low, India is heading toward yet another crisis in Afghanistan. In the 1980s, after the Soviet withdrawal, India supported the beleaguered regime of Mohammad Najibullah until the end. The then-external intelligence chief, A.K. Verma, had reassured Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 that Najibullah would last a “long time” with Soviet support.

It took India’s embarrassing failure to save Najibullah from being ousted in April 1992, and the mujahideen takeover of Kabul soon after, for New Delhi to officially recognize the new rulers. In the same way, as the mujahideen factions went to war with each other and the Taliban rose from Kandahar to take over most parts of the country with Pakistani support, India chose to back the officially recognized government from 1992 on, refusing to shift tack in light of the Taliban’s visible military successes.

The hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 in 1999 by Pakistan-based militants raised questions about the acuity of India’s decision to avoid even an informal channel with the Afghan Taliban or have some credible presence in Afghanistan’s Pashtun heartlands. The plane was taken to Kandahar, which was then under the Taliban’s control. After seven days of tortuous negotiations, India released three top militants—including Masood Azhar, the leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad—to secure the release of all passengers. Still, with support from Iran and Russia, and with the United States becoming increasingly preoccupied—and paranoid about—with Islamist militancy, New Delhi felt no urgency to accommodate the Taliban.

But now, when much energy, lives, and capital have been exhausted, and the United States is unwilling to fight a forever war, India is feeling the need to reconsider its options. India today is much more confident about its ability to shape regional developments, given its strategic partnership with the United States and significant investments in Afghanistan over the last two decades.

However, India is unlikely to change its position. Because Indian policymakers know that no deal—definitely not the one being crafted between the U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Taliban’s chief negotiator, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and his ISI handlers—that favors one entity (e.g., the Taliban) over the other (e.g., the Kabul government) is likely to succeed. They also know that peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan are unlikely, especially with Pakistan involved. A combination of domestic compulsions and regional insecurities is likely to make Pakistan party to another round of violence in Afghanistan, not long after the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Pakistan’s own botched approach thus makes India’s conservative support of Kabul a success. Talking to the Taliban, then, becomes a secondary political tactic rather than a central policy dilemma. After all, what all can India gain from talking to the Taliban that it cannot by consolidating relations with allies within the Kabul government? If the aim is to ensure a strategic balance between Afghanistan and Pakistan, then India needs to support Afghan political factions that—at the least—stand their ground against Pakistan.

And while it has eschewed them in public, India has had backdoor contacts with the Taliban. Indian intelligence and diplomats reached out in 2005 after the killing of Indian workers, forming a tentative understanding that led to a temporary decision not to target each other’s personnel. But that relationship failed thanks to the Taliban’s ultimate dependence on Pakistan.

Outside the public eye, the authors have been told in private conversation that India has reached out again in recent months. But the Taliban remain unable to guarantee the protection of Indian interests and installations after a U.S. withdrawal. These are big red lines for New Delhi. If these protections can be credibly promised, public engagement remains a possibility. If not, India will stick to its guns. Despite continuing to officially dissociate itself from the Taliban, New Delhi has underlined that it “will participate in all format of talks that could bring about peace and security the region.”

As New Delhi gears up for a new set of equations in Afghanistan, it will have to work closely not only with the United States to ensure that Pakistan doesn’t get a free hand in managing the Afghan transition but also with other regional stakeholders, such as China, Russia, and Iran, to ensure that the balance in Afghanistan’s polity is maintained.

The Afghan war is far from over. As a neighbor that, unlike the United States, does not have the luxury to disengage at will, New Delhi is likely to seek the protection of its material interests at a minimum in the short term—which includes the denial of Afghan soil as a training ground for anti-India militants by the ISI. In the medium to long term, it will seek to expand its space for maneuver by exploiting the inevitable fissures that are expected to surface between the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan. The ultimate goal will be the same as it always has been—keeping Pakistan from running the show.

#### UN Key to boost soft power

Jonathan Mcclory, 4-14-2019, "Until 2016, India was on course to break into soft power group of 30 nations. Then it fell," ThePrint, https://theprint.in/opinion/until-2016-india-was-on-course-to-break-into-soft-power-group-of-30-nations-then-it-fell/221298/, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

In the absence of immediate solutions, it would be wise to focus on what the Indian government can control in the more short term. One action that would immediately benefit India’s soft power is an expansion of its diplomatic network, as well as the number of international cultural missions of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. India would benefit significantly from more international platforms to engage global audiences and communicate not only what India has to offer the world in terms of its wider cultural offer, but also articulate its values, aspirations, and a clear vision for India’s positive role in the world. Extrapolating from the international polling data on perceptions of India’s foreign policy – where it ranks 42nd out of 60 countries – there seems to be a lack of understanding around what India wants from the world, and what it stands to contribute. Again, a larger diplomatic network with expanded platforms for articulating India’s aspirations and vision would be a boon for Indian soft power. With greater understanding and more familiarity, international publics are likely to increase their trust in India and see it as a potential partner. In combining India’s excellent digital reach with a greater international diplomatic presence, India will be better able to explain itself and its aims to the world, as well as leverage new platforms to engage international audiences with its formidable cultural assets. Results would not come overnight, but if resources could be mobilised, the returns on investment for India’s influence abroad would be significant.

#### The problem is that India’s soft power is low as Jonathan McClory indicates on April 14 that:

Jonathan Mcclory, 4-14-2019, "Until 2016, India was on course to break into soft power group of 30 nations. Then it fell," ThePrint, https://theprint.in/opinion/until-2016-india-was-on-course-to-break-into-soft-power-group-of-30-nations-then-it-fell/221298/, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // JM

One of the most common criticisms of the annual Soft Power 30 study is the conspicuous absence of India in the rankings. Admittedly, India’s non-appearance in the top 30 countries does give one pause. So much so, it is worth exploring why this is the case, looking ahead to see when India might expect to break into the top 30, and understanding what changes the government might need to usher in to do so. For those unfamiliar with The Soft Power 30, it is an annual study produced by Portland, a strategic communications consultancy, and the University of Southern California’s Centre on Public Diplomacy. The annual report is built around a composite index that assesses the soft power resources of the world’s leading countries through a combination of objective metrics and international polling data. The index – developed around Joseph Nye’s argument that the sources of soft power are based primarily on political values, culture, and foreign policy – is designed to give a comparative snap-shot of countries based on their soft power assets. It is not a measure of absolute influence, but more the potential for influence. Objective metrics are structured into six sub- indices: Culture, Digital, Education, Enterprise, Government, and Global Engagement. International polling data is drawn from nationally representative surveys of 11,000 people in 25 countries, covering every region of the world. Survey respondents rate countries based on a set of factors that are most likely to drive perceptions of a foreign country. These factors include foreign policy, culture, liveability, and technology exports, among others. While the study only publishes a list of top 30 countries, there are a total of 60 countries included in the study, of which India is of course one. The Soft Power 30 has been produced annually since 2015, but it draws on the earlier work of the Institute for Government Soft Power Index which was [published](https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/The%20new%20persuaders_0.pdf) in collaboration with Monocle Magazine from 2010 to 2014. The 2016 edition of The Soft Power 30 report identified India as ‘a country to watch’, arguing that an [upward lift](https://portland-communications.com/pdf/The-Soft-Power-30-Report-2016.pdf) in its ranking (from 2015 to 2016) was likely the start of a trend that would see it break into the top 30 in the near future. Surprisingly, this prediction has failed to materialise. Not only has India not built on its earlier momentum, its overall ranking has actually fallen since 2016. So, what happened and how can India reverse the trend? There are several factors at play driving what feels like an underperformance in the Soft Power 30 index for India. The first is that we need to recognise there is at least some element of Western bias to the concept of soft power, as [developed](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/joe_nye_wielding_soft_power.pdf) by Joseph Nye. As conceived, and as borne out in some (but not all) of the Soft Power 30 metrics, developed-economy countries do enjoy an advantage. This, in turn, puts India at a relative disadvantage. The other aspect of the index to bear in mind is that it is a composite measure, aggregating data across a diverse range of soft power metrics to produce a single score for each country. Thus, an especially poor performance in several of The Soft Power 30 sub-indices drags down a country’s total score. But this does not mean that such a country will not have clear strengths and useful tools in its array of soft power assets. Bearing those caveats in mind, a breakdown of India’s performance across The Soft Power 30 can provide insights into both the factors dragging down India’s overall ranking, as well as the country’s soft power strengths that can serve India’s foreign policy priorities if used effectively. India’s biggest challenge, in terms of soft power assets – as assessed by The Soft Power 30 index – stem from the ‘harder’ elements of soft power. Said differently, it is systemic issues like corruption, poverty, inequality, gender inequality, and pollution that weigh on global perceptions of India[n], and thus its soft power. Often the most commonly covered topics on India in international media focus on these more negative stories. Subsequently, these issues have an outsized impact on international views of India, and not in a positive way. Table 1 below provides India’s relative ranking and scores for each of the objective data sub-indices.

#### And their soft power is key to their leverage in Afghan negotiations. D’Souza wrote in March that:

Shanthie Mariet D’Souza, 3-18-2019, “The Limits of India’s Soft Power in Afghanistan,” , <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/afghanistan-taliban-peace-talks-india-south-asia-security-news-00081/>, Date Accessed 4-25-2019 // AS

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India has [provided](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-gives-four-military-helicopters-to-afghanistan-before-key-meet/articleshow/55668974.cms) some security training and helicopters, which, as far as the Afghans are concerned, is by no means a game changer. Moreover, Afghanistan’s stability is not only challenged by the Taliban-led insurgency alone, but also by internal power reconfiguration in the face of an impending presidential election and the scramble among external powers to hurry along the peace process in order to be able to withdraw. It appears that in the shifting sands of internal and external power play, New Delhi remains a mere spectator. New Delhi’s policy of supporting the regime in Kabul and elite buy-in has demonstrated its inherent limitations. The credibility of the National Unity Government (NUG) is at an all-time low. Although the bickering between the two camps in the NUG has led to governmental inertia, New Delhi has maintained its policy of non-interference while at the same time increasing the amount of development assistance without any preconditions. Without improving the basic service delivery and helping extend the writ of the Afghan government, the aid-only policy will make no tangible difference on the ground. New Delhi’s stated policy of support for indigenous Afghan-led peace efforts is proving to a lip service when the Afghan government is kept out of such negotiations. New Delhi [attempted](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/delhi-in-tizzy-over-us-taliban-talks-in-kabul/story-XLvj3533nLXSN9p7ZWQvfI.html) to find a place at the negotiation table by sending two senior retired diplomats to the [talks in Moscow](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/afghan-peace-conference-india-shares-table-taliban-181109092419577.html) last November. Yet the move was [restricted](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/taliban-talks-in-moscow-india-to-attend-at-non-official-level/article25445933.ece) by its curious distinction between official-nonofficial participation, with the Indian representatives attending unofficially. It is perhaps indicative of the beginning of a policy change in New Delhi. However, India is yet to explore its leverage with the Taliban, particularly those within the armed group who have accepted the utility of Indian projects and assistance in the provinces. The externally mediated peace talks face opposition from the Ghani administration and also a large chunk of the Afghan civil society groups who are concerned with the loss of the gains and freedoms achieved in last 17 years. A fractured Taliban and Pakistan’s own problems in the neighborhood may slow the process down considerably. Therefore, New Delhi still has time to effect broad changes in its approach that will outlast any regime change in Kabul. 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There is a need to help the country conduct a free and fair vote. As witnessed in 2014, another messy election result will only add to the dynamics of conflict, with fissures that can further polarize the country. New Delhi cannot afford to simply build symbolic structures like the country’s current parliament without aiding the establishment of democratic institutions, systems and processes. Moreover, the absence of institutions in conflict mediation and justice has made people, particularly at the peripheries, turn toward the Taliban for instant justice.

#### Yet,

## Sophie Cut Cards

#### Taliban should not have power as McGuire indicates

DJ McGuire, 3-19-2019, “Appeasing the Taliban is a bad idea”, Bearing Drift, <https://bearingdrift.com/2019/03/19/appeasing-the-taliban-is-a-bad-idea/>, Date Accessed 4-26-2019, // SDV

The “other side,” of course, is the Taliban: the shelterers of Osama bin Laden, allies of his al Qaeda, and de facto jailers of the Afghan people from 1996 to 2001. Much of rural Afghanistan still suffers under their reign. Many isolationists and realists will insist that last part is not really relevant. They will say how a regime treats its own people shouldn’t matter. They couldn’t be more wrong. Tyrannical regimes have always chafed by comparison with the United States and its fellow democracies. In the 21st Century, they have found it easier to team up against us and – in the case of Vladimir Putin – attack our democracy itself. Allowing the tyrants another victory – even a small one – is deeply unwise absent a major benefit to American interests. In short, any claim that the Taliban has ended or will end its alliance with al Qaeda is folly. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attack are just as tied to the Taliban now as then. Any “deal” would be as useless as the Munich 1938 deal.

#### Appeasing Taliban could lead to another 9/11 scenario

DJ McGuire, 3-19-2019, “Appeasing the Taliban is a bad idea”, Bearing Drift, <https://bearingdrift.com/2019/03/19/appeasing-the-taliban-is-a-bad-idea/>, Date Accessed 4-26-2019, // SDV

The long-term affect for America could be devastating. The alliance that launched the most deadly attack on American soil could end up in exactly the same position a mere two decades after the attack. The message would be unmistakable: the United States is no longer willing to defeat its enemies, no matter how badly those enemies strike. Or, as a certain president remarked: “We don’t win anymore.”