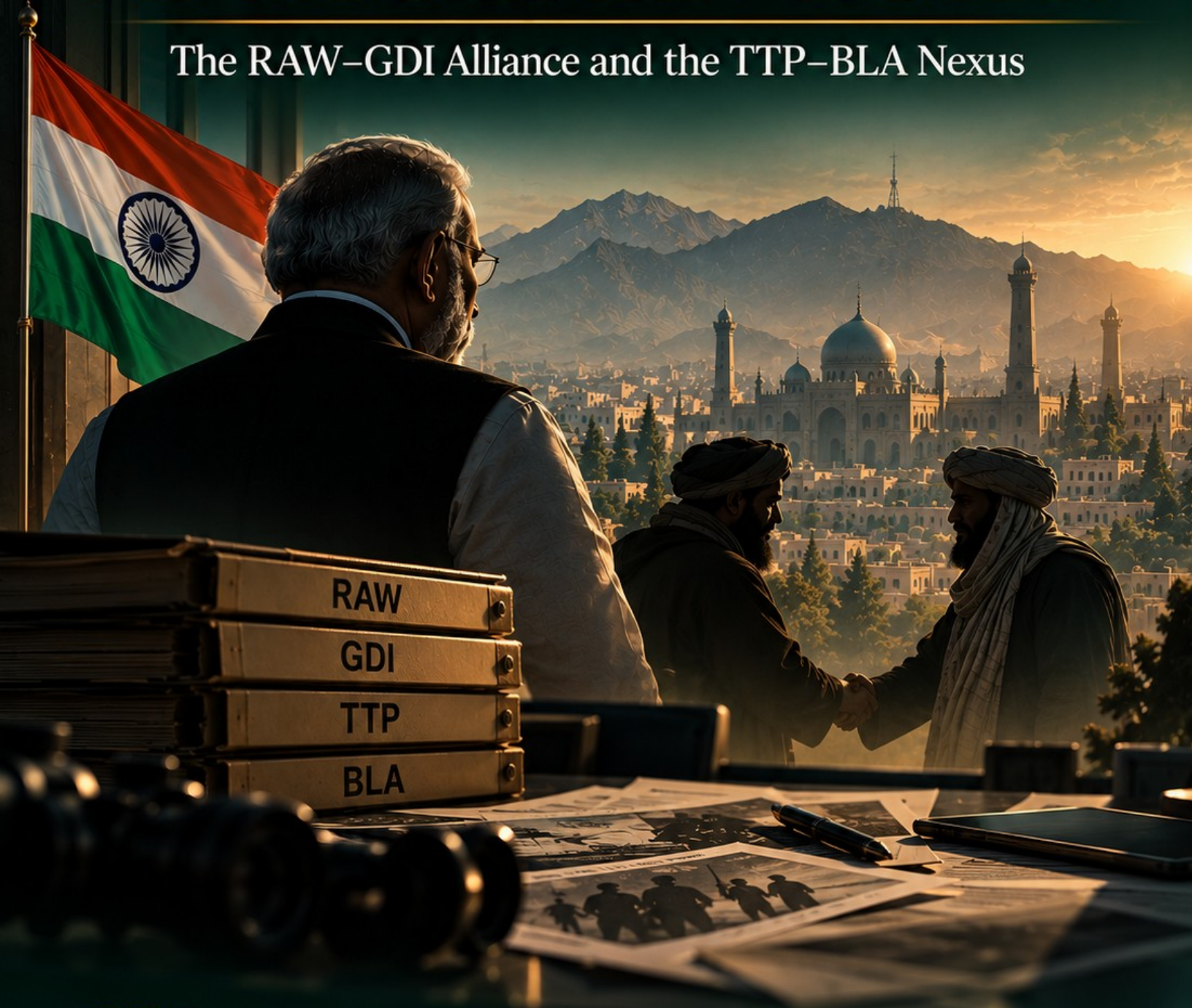


INDIA'S AFGHANISTAN GAMBIT

The RAW–GDI Alliance and the TTP–BLA Nexus



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KEY ARGUMENT

India has changed its policy toward Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of Kabul, but its policy objective has remained the same, that is, to destabilize Pakistan. Having invested heavily in the American-backed governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, New Delhi has pragmatically re-engaged the Afghan Taliban it once accused of bombing its embassy, and has restored a full diplomatic presence in Kabul. Behind this diplomatic presence lies a growing intelligence footprint. Pakistani intelligence reports, as carried by Pakistani media, describe a newly formed alliance between India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI), under whose umbrella the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) are being brought together to strike the Pakistani state, its security forces and its people. This joint project may prove to be the ultimate destabilizing factor in the region's emerging security environment, and Pakistan should be prepared for it.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....5

1. INTRODUCTION..... 6

2. INDIA'S ROLE IN PRE-TALIBAN AFGHANISTAN..... 9

3. WHY IS INDIA ENGAGING WITH THE AFGHAN TALIBAN IT PREVIOUSLY OPPOSED?.....11

4. INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC AND INTELLIGENCE FOOTPRINT IN AFGHANISTAN.....13

5. WHAT DOES INDIA WANT IN AFGHANISTAN?.....14

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN..... 16

7. CONCLUSION..... 18

ENDNOTES.....19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- India closed its embassy in Kabul within two days of the Taliban takeover in August 2021, but never abandoned Afghanistan as a strategic space. A technical team returned in June 2022, and by October 2025 the mission had been upgraded to a full embassy ^[1,2].
- During the American-backed governments of 2001–2021, India invested some \$3 billion in Afghanistan, trained and equipped the Afghan National Army, and worked closely with the Afghan intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), in competition with Pakistan ^[3,4,5].
- Since the Taliban takeover, India has pragmatically embraced the Afghan Taliban it once accused of bombing its embassy in 2008, seeking to exploit the growing wedge between Kabul and Islamabad ^[6,7].
- Citing a classified Pakistani intelligence report, *The News International* reports that a RAW–GDI alliance is facilitating a BLA–TTP nexus, with RAW allegedly contributing more than \$7.8 million to bankroll coordinated attacks in Balochistan ^[8]. Pakistan's military has separately stated that a Taliban governor hosted militant leaders in Kandahar in August 2026 ^[9].
- India's stated reasons for its presence in Afghanistan, monitoring anti-India militants and reaching Central Asia through Chabahar, are an implicit admission of a sizeable intelligence footprint in Afghanistan and Iran ^[10,11].
- Pakistan should build a coherent strategy for monitoring Afghanistan-based terror groups that RAW comes into contact with, launch a sustained campaign to expose India's role, and place intelligence sharing with regional states on a sound footing. It should also press, in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Moscow Format, for the TTP to be treated as a regional threat in the same way as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), and propose a TTP-specific mechanism within the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).

1. INTRODUCTION

Within two days of the Taliban takeover of Kabul, the Indian government closed its embassy in Afghanistan on August 17, 2021. All staff, including the Ambassador, were withdrawn to New Delhi. But India never abandoned the effort to re-enter Afghanistan as a strategic space. On June 23, 2022, the Indian government sent a technical team to reopen its embassy in the city with the stated aim of overseeing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan ^[1]. This was largely seen as the first step towards restoring India's full diplomatic presence in the war-torn country. By October 2025, this technical mission had been upgraded to the level of India's full diplomatic presence in Kabul ^[2].

The Indian media and think tanks viewed the Taliban takeover of Kabul as the point at which India lost its partner, when the government of former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled Kabul. Quite pragmatically, India rebuilt its engagement with the Afghan Taliban regime. Literature produced by Indian think tanks often describes this shift in India's strategy from non-engagement towards "calibrated functional cooperation," driven by security, regional realignment and connectivity considerations ^[6].

Indian strategic planners saw a strategic opportunity in post-9/11 Afghanistan. With the United States (US) military controlling the security apparatus of the newly formed Afghan state structure, and with the US media in full swing accusing Pakistan of everything that went badly in Afghanistan, India emerged as one of the largest donors to the newly formed Afghan government, with assistance of \$3 billion. This financial assistance was earmarked for development and reconstruction efforts in the war-torn country ^[3].

Indian planners invested heavily in Afghanistan as part of their strategic competition with their South Asian rival, Pakistan. This included imparting training and supplying military equipment to the US-trained Afghan National Army (ANA) during the American occupation of Afghanistan. All this investment appeared to be going down the drain when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in the wake of the American withdrawal.

India's obsession with taking its competition with Pakistan in the Afghan strategic space to its logical conclusion compelled it to diplomatically embrace the Afghan Taliban. The exchange of high-level visits between Kabul and New Delhi is clear evidence of how India wants to leverage the situation created by the growing wedge between the Taliban regime and the Pakistani government.

Since then, India has been going all out to use terror groups based in Afghanistan against the Pakistani government, military and people. For this purpose, it has increased its diplomatic and intelligence presence in Afghanistan. There is no publicly available information about the Indian government providing any military assistance to the Afghan Taliban government, but there have been reports about India's increased diplomatic and intelligence presence on Afghan soil. Apparently, India's diplomatic

and intelligence presence in Afghanistan is aimed at ensuring the role of Afghan territory as a conduit for Indian access to the Central Asian market through the Iranian port of Chabahar. The Indian media and strategic community also claim that an Indian presence in Afghanistan is needed to keep an eye on anti-India militant groups based in Afghanistan. But more sinister motives have recently come to light with the open cooperation between India's RAW and the Taliban intelligence agency, the GDI. There are reports that RAW has provided financial assistance to Taliban intelligence to ensure that two terror groups, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), cooperate with each other in hitting Pakistan ^[8].

India has dramatically increased its diplomatic and intelligence footprint in Afghanistan. The Indian media cite the country's need to keep an eye on anti-India terror groups based in Afghanistan as the reason behind the government's decision to upgrade its intelligence footprint in the country. Beyond this, the Indian media is completely tight-lipped about what kind of interaction Indian diplomats are having with the Taliban state machinery in Afghanistan. Pakistani media reports, directly quoting Pakistani intelligence officials, revealed that at least three high-level meetings have taken place between RAW officials and GDI leaders, in which plans to compel the TTP and BLA to cooperate in their terror strikes against the Pakistani state and military have been chalked out ^[8,12].

There is little doubt that the newly formed GDI–RAW alliance poses a threat to regional stability. Their joint project of facilitating cooperation between terror groups, including the TTP and BLA, to hit the Pakistani state and security forces may prove to be the ultimate destabilizing factor in the emerging security situation in the region. What are India's larger objectives in cultivating a relationship with the Afghan Taliban? How can Indian intelligence piggyback on the Indian government's strategy of using Afghanistan as a route to Central Asia? Why is India willing to deal with anyone who is in control of Kabul? This policy brief answers these questions.

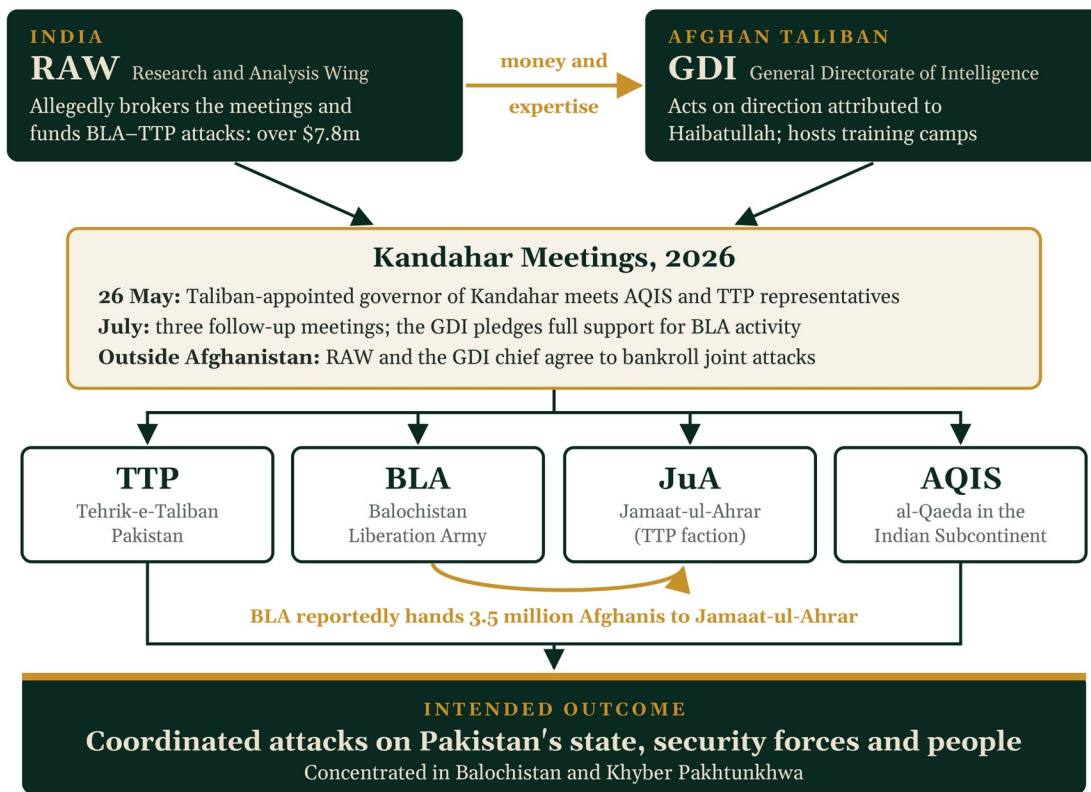
From Karzai to the Taliban: India stays in Kabul

Milestones in India's engagement with Afghanistan, 2001–2026



The Alleged Network: How RAW and the GDI Bind the TTP and BLA

As described in a classified Pakistani intelligence report carried by The News International, September 2026



Source: classified Pakistani intelligence report, as reported by The News International, 19 September 2026. India and the Taliban deny the allegations. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Pakistan's military media wing, separately stated that a Kandahar meeting of the BLA, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and others took place on 26 August 2026.

2. INDIA'S ROLE IN PRE-TALIBAN AFGHANISTAN

During the period of the American-backed Afghan government, Indian officials repeatedly expressed fears that Afghanistan might return to the days when its soil was used for terrorist attacks on regional countries. According to the United Nations (UN) Security Council Monitoring Team's reports, more than 20 regional and international terrorist groups remain active on Afghan soil under the Taliban at present ^[13].

There has been a sea change in India's policy towards Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of Kabul, but its policy objective has remained the same, that is to destabilize Pakistan. Pakistani officials and leaders have been reminding the world that India has remained focused on destabilizing Pakistan as the prime objective of its Afghan policy. This was India's strategy when the American-backed government was in power in Kabul, and it remained India's strategy when the Taliban were in control of the Afghan capital ^[14].

India invested heavily in Afghanistan during the Karzai and Ashraf Ghani governments to build its base in Afghan society. India's strategy in Afghanistan during the American occupation was not normal diplomatic activity. It was part of a plan to politically and economically dominate war-torn Afghan society by pushing its rival Pakistan out of Afghanistan's strategic space. The vituperative campaign of the American media against Pakistani state institutions greatly helped India in this strategy. The classic example of this support was observed in July 2008, when a suicide bomber attacked the Indian embassy in Kabul, killing the Indian military attaché. The American media and American security officials blamed the Afghan Taliban for carrying out the bombing with the assistance of Pakistani intelligence. This campaign greatly helped India consolidate its position in pre-Taliban Afghanistan ^[15].

"India is the fifth-largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan with over \$2 billion in pledged support. Assistance has focused on infrastructure, engineering, training, and humanitarian needs. India constructed the Afghan parliament building, part of the interprovince Ring Road, electrical lines, and the Salma Dam, among others. India has also trained Afghan civil servants in Indian academies." ^[16]

There have been several Pakistani media reports describing Indian RAW collaborating with the intelligence agency of the American-backed Afghan governments to fund terrorist activities in Pakistan ^[17]. According to Pakistani media reports, RAW was channeling funds through Afghan intelligence to the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan to launch suicide bombers against the Pakistani government, military and people.

2.1 India's military assistance to the Afghan National Army

Indian military assistance to Afghanistan's American-backed government consisted of providing training to military personnel, supplying weapon systems, and helping the Afghan National Army

(ANA) enhance its defense capability. India's Ministry of External Affairs reported in 2015 that Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Ashraf Ghani that India supported Afghanistan in "strengthening its defensive capabilities," and specifically mentioned the Mi-25 helicopters and expanded training opportunities for Afghan security and defense forces ^[16]. In March 2017, Reuters reported that India was considering paying for repairs to 11 Afghan Mi-35 helicopters and seven transport aircraft, a project with an estimated cost approaching \$50 million ^[17]. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported in November 2015 that Afghanistan was poised to receive four Russian-made Mi-25 attack helicopters from India ^[5]. Many Afghan army personnel were trained in Indian military academies. However, Indian dreams of keeping officers loyal to India in key positions in the Afghan government fizzled out when the Afghan National Army evaporated into thin air after Taliban fighters entered Kabul.

2.2 India's intelligence cooperation with Afghan intelligence, 2001–2021

Indian intelligence closely cooperated with Afghanistan's intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), during the governments of former Afghan Presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. Reports by think tanks describe Indian attempts to interact with the Afghan Taliban during the Karzai government using NDS connections ^[6]. Afghan intelligence officers were regularly sent to Indian intelligence academies for training between 2001 and 2021. Some of these officers have been inducted into the Taliban intelligence services in the post-American withdrawal period. However, reports in the international media suggest that these former NDS officers are not in control of the Taliban intelligence services. The Taliban leadership is in control of the intelligence agency, the GDI, which is now cooperating with Indian RAW, although both Indian and Taliban officials deny that there has been any cooperation between RAW and the GDI. In this connection, the silence of the otherwise very vocal Indian media is very puzzling.

3. WHY IS INDIA ENGAGING WITH THE AFGHAN TALIBAN IT PREVIOUSLY OPPOSED?

This dramatic shift in India's policy towards the Afghan Taliban makes one thing clear that India wants to remain engaged with whoever is in control in Kabul. It has been a treacherous journey from accusing the Taliban of the 2008 suicide bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul to Indian intelligence cooperating with Taliban intelligence in efforts to create an alliance between the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ^[8].

India wants to remain engaged with whoever is in control in Kabul.

Citing a classified Pakistani intelligence report, Pakistan's leading newspaper, *The News International*, reported that it was under the umbrella of the RAW–GDI alliance that the BLA–TTP "nexus took root around 2025, built on Afghan training camps already operating with backing from Afghanistan's General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI). Acting on direction attributed to Taliban supreme leader Sheikh Haibatullah Akhundzada, the GDI moved to formally weld the BLA to the TTP and other militant outfits, with India's RAW helping broker meetings to line up outside financing for the BLA" ^[8].

The newspaper reported that "the paper trail laid out in the document is quite granular. On May 26, 2026, it says, Mullah Shireen, the Taliban-appointed governor of Kandahar, met with al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and TTP representatives to secure backing for BLA operations. Three follow-up meetings took place that July: at the first, the GDI pledged full support for BLA activity inside Pakistan; at the second, held at a TTP compound in Kandahar, the BLA reportedly handed over 3.5 million Afghanis to the group Jamat-ul-Ahrar; and at the third, a sit-down between RAW and the GDI chief held outside Afghanistan, a decision was allegedly taken to bankroll coordinated BLA-TTP attacks across Balochistan, with RAW contributing more than 7.8 million US dollars" ^[8].

Reported meeting	Venue	Reported outcome
26 May 2026	Kandahar	Taliban-appointed governor of Kandahar meets AQIS and TTP representatives to secure backing for BLA operations.
July 2026, first meeting	Afghanistan	GDI pledges full support for BLA activity inside Pakistan.
July 2026, second meeting	TTP compound, Kandahar	BLA reportedly hands over 3.5 million Afghanis to Jamat-ul-Ahrar.

Reported meeting	Venue	Reported outcome
July 2026, third meeting	Outside Afghanistan	RAW and the GDI chief allegedly agree to bankroll coordinated BLA–TTP attacks across Balochistan, with RAW contributing more than \$7.8 million.

Source: classified Pakistani intelligence report, as reported by *The News International* ^[8]. Pakistan's military spokesman separately stated that a Kandahar meeting of the BLA, AQIS and other militants took place on 26 August 2026 ^[9]. The Taliban deny the allegations.

The Indian media, on the other hand, cite two primary reasons for the increased Indian diplomatic presence in Afghanistan. First, they say India needs intelligence about anti-India groups based in Afghanistan. Second, India needs access to all parts of Afghan territory for continued access to Central Asia. This is, in fact, an implicit admission of an increased Indian intelligence footprint not only in Afghanistan, but in other parts of West Asia. As early as 2016, Pakistan's Interior Ministry sent Iran a formal reference seeking an investigation into the alleged RAW presence in Chabahar. Pakistani Interior Ministry officials were quoted as saying that a RAW network was operating from the port city ^[10]. In this way, Indian intelligence activities seem to be witnessing an increased presence in both Iran and Afghanistan. There is a possibility that Indian intelligence activities might piggyback on the larger project of India seeking access to the Central Asian market through the Iranian port of Chabahar and through Afghan territory. Seeking market access to Central Asia will largely be seen as a much more legitimate activity than Indian RAW penetrating Iranian and Afghan society. Secondly, keeping an eye on anti-India militant groups based in Afghanistan is a task that can hardly be performed by non-specialist diplomats. This is the job of intelligence officers, not diplomats. Here, the Indian media and think tanks are implicitly admitting that India has a sizeable intelligence footprint in the Taliban's Afghanistan.

The News International's report on Indian RAW's collaboration with the Taliban intelligence service is based on a classified Pakistani intelligence report. It provides credible information about how RAW is providing funding and technical expertise for Taliban intelligence to facilitate a TTP–BLA working alliance against the Pakistani state. One of the developments that confirms the BLA–TTP alliance is the cultural shift in the insurgency in Balochistan, wherein terror organizations like the BLA have started using suicide bombing as a tool in their fight against Pakistani society and the state. Over the past few years, the BLA has launched several suicide bombings targeting security forces and Chinese nationals in Balochistan. Security experts believe the BLA has learned the techniques of suicide bombing from the TTP and under the cultural influence of the Pakistani Taliban ^[18]. The Pakistani government has submitted several dossiers to international organizations containing evidence of the BLA's and TTP's reliance on Indian RAW for training, financing and weapons ^[19].

4. INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC AND INTELLIGENCE FOOTPRINT IN AFGHANISTAN

There has been an intense debate in the regional and international media on whether the diplomatic outposts established by the Indian government in Afghan towns bordering Pakistani territory during the Karzai government were ever used for covert operations against the Pakistani state. The establishment of diplomatic outposts in Afghan border towns has not been in dispute. Pro-India commentators and the Indian government itself denied that those outposts were supporting the BLA in their fight against Pakistani security forces. Pakistani commentators have been equally vocal in alleging that these outposts were established to fuel the insurgency in Balochistan. However, a few facts need to be considered before judging these allegations and counter-allegations.

Afghan intelligence's support for, and hosting of, Baloch rebels in Afghanistan was admitted at the highest level while American-backed governments were in power in Kabul. According to a leaked US diplomatic cable, Afghan President Hamid Karzai admitted to US and UN officials that his intelligence had been providing sanctuary to Baloch separatist leaders ^[20]. In Pakistan, it was widely believed that Baloch insurgents were sheltered under Indian patronage in Afghanistan during the Karzai era. RAW's patronage of the Afghan intelligence apparatus during the American-backed governments in Kabul was common knowledge. Later, several of these Afghan intelligence officials joined the Taliban intelligence services, so there has been some continuity between the intelligence services of the American-backed governments and those of the Taliban regime in Kabul.

Initially, "after the August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan by the Afghan Taliban, the Baloch separatists who had established bases in the southern parts of Afghanistan before the American withdrawal were told by the Taliban leadership to vacate their bases in the south. They temporarily shifted their bases to Iranian Balochistan." There have been reports that Baloch separatists re-established bases in Afghanistan as relations between Islamabad and Kabul deteriorated ^[21].

Pakistani media reports about Indian RAW's plan and strategy to use Taliban intelligence to facilitate a TTP–BLA alliance introduce a qualitatively different security environment in the region. There is no longer any doubt that the TTP and BLA are cooperating on the ground. A classified report of Pakistani intelligence, as reported by Pakistani media, establishes that the GDI is facilitating this newly formed alliance between the TTP and BLA. RAW, in turn, is facilitating and financing the GDI's involvement in this joint RAW–GDI project ^[8,9].

5. WHAT DOES INDIA WANT IN AFGHANISTAN?

India's strategic community sees Afghanistan as providing strategic depth to India, which has no geographical link with Afghan territory. It is not conventional military depth. Afghan territory provides India with geographical access around Pakistan. Pakistani territory blocks India's direct access to Central Asia and, to some extent, to Southwest Asia. Approached through the Iranian port of Chabahar, Afghanistan's territory acts as India's access route to Central Asia ^[1].

The question is whether India can prevent Afghanistan from becoming strategically allied with Pakistan. The Pakistani government's dispute with the Afghan Taliban over how to deal with the TTP provided India with a god-sent opportunity to wean the Afghan Taliban away from Pakistan. The headstrong Taliban leaders can squarely be blamed for what happened between Pakistan and Afghanistan during the past few years over the question of how to deal with TTP fighters, who started trekking their way back into Pakistani territory after the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021. It seems that India may succeed in creating a permanent gulf between the Afghan Taliban government in Kabul and the Pakistani government in Islamabad.

It seems the Indian government's strategy from the very beginning was aimed at preventing Pakistan from monopolizing Afghanistan's external connectivity. The closest Pakistan came to achieving this objective was when the Afghan Taliban took control of Kabul after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. This was the time when Pakistan's political and military leaders were talking about making Pakistan a connectivity hub between South Asia, Central Asia and Southwest Asia. Obviously, such an enterprise could not be accomplished without taking the Afghan leadership on board and without bringing peace to Afghanistan. The headstrong Taliban leaders proved to be the biggest obstacle in this way. Indian intelligence intrigues and India's disruptive role in the region were another obstacle to this project, which could have been a win-win for everyone in the region.

India sees the Iranian port of Chabahar as an access route to Afghanistan and Central Asia without dependence on Pakistani territory. The Indian strategic community sees Chabahar as providing an alternate route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The twin objectives of disrupting Pakistan's strategy of making the country a connectivity hub and developing an alternate route to Central Asia explain why Indian strategic planners are ready to deal with anyone who is in control of Afghanistan. First, they established strategic relations with the American-backed governments of Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. Later, they started going out of their way to establish relations with the Afghan Taliban regime. The same Taliban whom they had earlier accused of bombing the Indian embassy in Kabul, and whom they had repeatedly vowed to block from coming to power again in Afghanistan.

Indian media and strategic circles often portray India's footprint in Afghanistan as a security necessity, citing the need to monitor organisations that New Delhi identifies as threats, particularly Jaish-e-

Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Such assessments are rooted primarily in India's own security threat perception, while Afghanistan's militant landscape is considerably broader, involving a range of regional and transnational organisations, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State Khorasan (ISIL-K), and al-Qaeda-linked networks.

According to the UN Monitoring Team's reports, Afghanistan at present hosts more than 20 regional and international terror groups, which have training facilities inside the war-torn country ^[13]. The question that needs to be answered is whether the uncertain security environment of Afghanistan would allow India to turn its counter-terrorism capability into an offensive intelligence capability, given the close alliance between the GDI and RAW. Secondly, all the active militant groups, which the Indian media dubs as anti-India, could be turned against Pakistan. After all, India has been using the TTP as a proxy against Pakistan, no matter how vehemently the Indian strategic community blamed the Taliban for acting as a regional destabilizing force in the past.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

6.1 Countering India's footprint in Afghanistan

India could be working on a three-pronged strategy in Afghanistan as part of its age-old strategic competition with Pakistan. It has been making attempts to cultivate relationships with Afghan strategic and security institutions. It is working round the clock to support anti-Pakistan groups in Afghan society. There is a possibility that Indian intelligence might develop connections with Afghanistan-based terror groups and then use these groups against Pakistan. India is already using the TTP against Pakistan. In the future, India might use its relations with the Afghan Taliban to increase its intelligence visibility in Afghan society.

India's three-pronged approach	Pakistan's response
Cultivating relationships with Afghan strategic and security institutions	A coherent strategy for monitoring the Afghanistan-based terror groups with which Indian RAW comes into contact
Supporting anti-Pakistan groups in Afghan society	A sustained international campaign to inform the world of the role Indian intelligence is playing in Afghanistan
Developing connections with Afghanistan-based terror groups and using them against Pakistan	Intelligence sharing with regional states on developments in Afghanistan, placed on a sound footing

On the intelligence front, Pakistan needs to develop a coherent strategy for monitoring the Afghanistan-based terror groups with which Indian RAW comes into contact. Pakistan should also launch a massive campaign to inform the world of the dirty role Indian intelligence is playing in Afghanistan. Secondly, Pakistan should establish intelligence sharing about developments in Afghanistan with regional states on a sound footing. All the regional states have deep concerns about the security situation inside Afghanistan.

6.2 Making the TTP a regional security concern

Pakistan adopted a regional approach to dealing with the problem of terrorism in Afghanistan when its premier intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), organized a moot of regional intelligence chiefs in Islamabad ^[22]. Intelligence officers from Iran, Russia, China and the Central Asian states participated in this conference. The idea that came out of it was to assist the Taliban in dealing with the terrorism threat by providing them with real-time intelligence. Of course, the Russians and the Central Asian states were more concerned about the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) in northern Afghanistan. At the recent Moscow Format meeting, Russia gave the Afghan Taliban a clean chit on the terrorism count ^[23]. This has happened at a time when factions within the Taliban are helping the TTP launch terror attacks inside Pakistan from across the international border.

The Russian move to give the Afghan Taliban a clean chit is based on its reading of the Afghan Taliban's draconian measures to curb Salafi groups in Afghan society. The Taliban's operations against ISIS-K, which is itself a Salafi group and from which Russia and the Central Asian states perceive a threat, seem to be the basis of the Russian government's satisfaction with the Taliban regime.

Pakistan should not abandon its efforts to make terrorism, and the threat it faces at the hands of the TTP, a regional security concern for all of Afghanistan's neighbors. Pakistan has in the past successfully convinced regional governments to treat the TTP as a regional security threat, not only because of the latter's alliance with international terror groups but also because of the way it has collaborated with ISIS in the past. The Russian move of supporting the Afghan Taliban should not distract Pakistan from these efforts.

If ISIS-K in northern Afghanistan is a threat to Central Asia, the TTP in eastern and southern Afghanistan is a threat to Pakistan, and it should be eliminated.

Russia wants the elimination of the ISIS-K threat from northern Afghanistan, and it believes the Afghan Taliban have done a good job with their anti-Salafi operations. The same rule should be applied to the TTP. If the rise of ISIS-K in northern Afghanistan is a threat to the Central Asian states, Russia's security backyard, the increased activity of the TTP in eastern and southern Afghanistan is a threat to Pakistan, and it should be eliminated. This principle should be the basis of diplomacy in regional forums like the SCO and the Moscow Format to tackle the problem of terrorism in Afghanistan.

6.3 A TTP-specific mechanism within SCO-RATS

At the last meeting of the Council of the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), held in Islamabad in September 2026, the forum formulated rules for dealing with terrorism, separatism and extremism ^[24]. It was decided that the SCO would work to improve information infrastructure and future joint counter-terrorism activities in the region. Pakistan should propose a TTP-specific regional mechanism within SCO-RATS.

7. CONCLUSION

The alliance between RAW and the GDI is taking shape and will, in turn, influence the trends in the regional security situation. In particular, it will influence the behavior of terror and militant groups based in Afghanistan. The Taliban is a former terror organization which has recently assumed the responsibilities of the Afghan state. India's RAW, on the other hand, has been in the business of using terror groups, which the Indian government ostensibly opposes and criticizes, against the Pakistani state, military and population. There is a great chance that India will utilize its footprint in Afghanistan to influence the behavior of terror groups based there. Pakistan had better be prepared for this.

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