



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS),
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Russia's Pivotal Role in Afghan Peace Process:

An Overview

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The geopolitical realities and alliances worldwide have been changing continuously right from the beginning of the 21st century. The ground realities in Afghanistan and its neighboring countries have followed the same topsy-turvy trend



for the past two decades. In present times, Russia has gained its stature as a vital political force in the Afghan peace process. Russian government's multi-pronged approach for restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan encompasses the effective execution of its foreign policy initiatives and steps taken by it for Afghanistan's reconstruction. In the following lines, it has been elaborated that how Russia has become a trustworthy and recognized stalwart of peace and stability in Afghanistan during recent years by following robust multilateral plans.

Russia's Role in Afghan Peace Process:

- Efforts for Pragmatic Power-Sharing Agreement between Warring Afghan Parties:

The USA disregarded the Afghan Taliban in the aftermath of its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. It tried to decimate them even though the latter has remained a valid party in the Afghan conflict for decades. However, the Russian government has





remained highly rational in its approach towards ending hostilities in the country. It has invited all the important domestic and international parties involved in this conflict to pursue a durable power-sharing agreement without any prejudice.¹

- **Role in Implementation Peace Agreement between the USA and Taliban:**

The agreement for the systematic withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan was signed on 29th February 2020. However, this agreement has many facets which need to be implemented through prudent diplomatic negotiations and broader regional cooperation. For example, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban has been a sore spot in this peace process. The Russian government has sincerely worked for fulfilling this task in recent years for its advantages and enhanced benefits for the other potential regional partners. For achieving this significant goal, Russia has held several meetings with various factions involved in the Afghan conflict. In this context, many proposals were presented in a recently held meeting between the American-backed Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban. For example, the Russian government's idea for an interim administration to accommodate both parties for amicable power-sharing.²

¹ Sheikh, Salman. "Russia Stakes Its Claim to Afghan Peace Process." [asiatimes.com](https://asiatimes.com/2021/03/russia-stakes-its-claim-to-afghan-peace-process/). Asia Times, March 24, 2021.

² AFP. "Moscow Looks to Play a Role in Afghan Peace Process." [DAWN.COM](https://www.dawn.com/news/1613153), March 18, 2021.

- **Potential Role of Russia for Resolving the Afghan Conflict:**

The USA invaded Afghanistan with great vigor and overmuch confidence in 2001. However, this war has cost them much during the last couple of decades and has proved this whole endeavor futile. Consequently, the USA is now eager to withdraw from Afghanistan and is looking for credible regional countries around Afghanistan to clean up their mess after their hasty withdrawal in the coming months. The US government has shown its eagerness to work with the Russian government to seek a guarantee for the amicable resolution of the Afghan conflict to expedite this process. US special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad recently visited Moscow to support Russia's Positive role in the peace process. Such desperate acts resonate Russia's influential role vis-à-vis this conflict that is expected to continue in the coming months.³

By having a general overview of Afghanistan's history, it becomes clear that the people living herein have never accepted foreign rule and policies in their land. USA's futile attempts to subjugate the Afghan people during the



last two decades have proved to be the latest manifestation of this reality. In this regard, the Russian government fully understands this reality and has always insisted

³ Korybko, Andrew. "Why the US Recognises Russia as a Key Player in the Afghan Peace Process." *tribune.com.pk*. The Express Tribune, March 16, 2021. <https://tribune.com.pk/author/11177/andrew-korybko>



on listening to the Afghan people and their various representatives rather than forcing unrealistic foreign ideas. So far, this policy has remained successful for the Afghan parties involved in this conflict. Russia's mediation efforts have increased significantly during recent years.⁴

Russia's Role in Afghanistan's Socio-economic Reconstruction of Afghanistan:

For many years, Russia has been actively pursuing to expand its investments in Afghanistan for its socio-economic development and rebranding its image in Afghanistan. The connection between Russia's economic development initiatives and its pursuits of soft power in the country was revealed most compellingly by its increased role in assisting Afghanistan's infrastructure development during recent years. The profitability of Russian investments for Afghanistan's socio-economic developments is still uncertain. However, the initiatives for socio-economic reconstructing in Afghanistan by launching new projects and reviving the old ones have once more asserted their efficacy for robust development after complete US withdrawal.⁵

In 2014, the Russian government compiled 140 Soviet-era projects that hoped to rehabilitate Afghanistan's future. Due to these and other such projects, the tide has slowly started to turn in Afghanistan, and many Afghan government officials have

⁴ Ibrahim, Said Sabir. "Can Russia Help Bring Peace to Afghanistan?" [cic.nyu.edu](https://cic.nyu.edu/news/Can-Russia-Help-Bring-Peace-to-Afghanistan). Center on International Cooperation | NYU, November 2, 2018. <https://cic.nyu.edu/news/Can-Russia-Help-Bring-Peace-to-Afghanistan>

⁵ Ramani, Samuel. "Russia's Soft Power Push in Afghanistan." [thediplomat.com](https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/russias-soft-power-push-in-afghanistan/). The Diplomat, January 13, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/russias-soft-power-push-in-afghanistan/>



accepted Russia's positive role in their country's rebuilding during the recent years.⁶ Apart from all these vital efforts, the Kremlin has also decided to write off 90% of Afghanistan's debt worth billions of US dollars and was piled up due to the military sales by different Afghan governments during the 1970s and the 1980s.⁷ Recently, Russia is eager to keep Afghanistan stable in the aftermath of US withdrawal. It is expected that Russia will try to ensure its economic interests to assimilate Afghan people in their socio-economic affairs.⁸

Conclusion:

The Russian government and people have strived hard during the past three decades to get back their rightful stature in this region. For doing so, Kremlin's prudent minds have devised a policy for achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan through all the socio-economic and political ways possible. In this aspect, these efforts have provided great dividends to the Afghan people and the wider region surrounding this country. However, these peace-keeping and reconstruction efforts aimed at stabilizing Afghanistan must continue under the facilitation and guidance of current Russian leadership. In this context, ever-lasting peace can prevail for the region's inclusive economic development.

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⁶ Sieff, Kevin. "Russia Hopes Infrastructure Projects Will Build Bridges in Afghanistan." theguardian.com. The Guardian, April 7, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/07/russia-afghanistan-investment-kabul-karzai>

⁷ "Russia and Afghanistan." understandingwar.org. Institute for the Study of War, n.d. Accessed April 12, 2021. <http://www.understandingwar.org/russia-and-afghanistan>

⁸ Aliyev, Nurlan. "How Russia Views Afghanistan Today." warontherocks.com. War on the Rocks, October 19, 2020. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/russias-contemporary-afghan-policy/>