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## **Delhi Regional Security Dialogue: NSAs' Agenda on Afghanistan**

### **Why in news?**

India is hosting the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue that will explore firming up a common approach for dealing with the changed realities in Afghanistan.

### **What is the meeting about?**

- The idea of such as dialogue was first mooted in 2018, when the US decided to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.
- The first and second meetings were hosted by Iran in 2018 and 2019 to shore up multilateral cooperation on security among the key players in the global 'East'.
- The current meeting will be chaired by India's National security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval.
- Invitations were sent to Afghanistan's neighbours such as Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and other key players including Russia, and China.
- But Pakistan has announced that it would not attend the meeting while China has cited scheduling issues to convey that it will not participate.

### **Why is this meeting significant?**

- The meeting that is being hosted by the National Security Council Secretariat would be the first time that all Central Asian countries, would be participating in this format.
- With security concerns pertaining to Afghanistan weighing heavily on New Delhi's mind, it is important to discuss on the Afghanistan's current situation and the future outlook.
- Since stability in Afghanistan is essential for a balanced regional approach, the discussions on Afghanistan is a necessity.
- India is hosting this regional summit as it regards itself as a neighbour of Afghanistan, given its legal and Parliament-mandated claim on Pakistan-

occupied Kashmir.

- It is different from other processes on Afghanistan such as the **Heart of Asia process or the Moscow format** as it is among the heads of the security establishments in these countries.

*The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) ministerial conference is part of the Istanbul Process (2011) - a regional initiative on security and cooperation for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan that was launched in Turkey.*

*The Moscow Format was established in 2017 as a six-party mechanism involving Russia, Afghanistan, India, Iran, China and Pakistan which later expanded with the inclusion of more countries.*

### **What is the agenda of this meeting?**

- The Eurasian allies will explore in finding a common approach for cooperation against increasing threats of terrorism, radicalization and drug trafficking following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul.
- The meeting is in the direction of calling for a unified international response to address the security and humanitarian challenges facing Afghanistan.
- It is expected to deliberate on cross-border movement of people from Afghanistan as well as the threat emerging from the military equipment and weapons left behind by the US forces in that country.
- Issues relating to humanitarian aid will definitely be a part of the discussions.

### **What are the challenges on the table?**

- **Challenges for New Delhi**
  - Terrorism within Afghanistan and its spilling beyond its borders
  - Radicalisation and extremism in the population in Afghanistan, and in each of these countries
  - Cross-border movement of people, including ordinary Afghans and Taliban fighters
  - Drug production and trafficking
  - Vast amount of weapons and equipment left behind by the US and its allies in Afghanistan
- **Absence of Pakistan** - New Delhi notes that a credibility gap exists between Pakistan's intentions and actions and without its presence in the

table would not address this issue.

- **Absence of China** - Although China had attended both previous meetings, its absence now sends out a signal that it doesn't want to associate with any process led by India.
- **Taliban not invited** - India chose not to invite the Taliban, since none of the participating countries have so far officially recognised the Taliban regime yet.
- **Security interests** - The challenge for India is to protect its national interests and security interests and to frame an approach to deal with an uncertain present and future in Afghanistan.

### **What are the expected outcomes of this meeting?**

- India feels that the high-level participation at the meeting reflects the widespread concern of regional countries about the situation in Afghanistan and their desire to coordinate with each other.
- India wants Afghanistan not to allow itself as a safe haven for terror, an inclusive administration and to protect the rights of minorities, women and children.
- New Delhi is hoping to emerge as the location for future dialogue processes with the expansion of the grouping by including other influential players such as the US.
- It is anticipated that this might enhance the pressure on the Afghan government to adhere to basic global norms of respect for human beings whether they be minorities or women.

### **References**

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