



Mains Practice Question

Q. It is almost a year of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Discuss the current scenario in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime and the significance of Afghanistan for India. **(250 Words)**

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Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about Taliban rule in Afghanistan.
- Discuss the current scenario in Afghanistan.
- Discuss the significance of Afghanistan for India.
- Conclude your answer by giving a way forward.

Introduction

The Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist political and military organisation operating in Afghanistan. They have dominated Afghan polity for quite some time and feature regularly in international affairs.

The Taliban have been fighting against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul for around 20 years. After the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan the Taliban once again took over the control of Afghan polity.

Main Body

Current Situation in Afghanistan under The Taliban's Rule

- **Lack of Finance:** The Taliban took over a readymade country, but administering a nation of 32 million requires capacity and finances. The Taliban are short on both.
 - Many wealthy people, and those of the middle class with means and education, including civil servants, have **fled the country**, not wishing to be part of the Taliban regime.
- **Non-Recognition of Regime:** The international community has not yet recognised the regime formally, and sanctions, including travel bans on many Taliban, remain in place. Their access to international banking and finance is limited.
- **Economy:** In May 2022, the Taliban presented an annual budget based entirely on domestic revenue. No details were given about spending, or how the gap with revenue would be bridged. Most of Afghanistan's revenues are now being raised through customs duties.
- **Security:** Taliban remains nervous about the Daesh or ISKP (Islamic State Khorasan province), which has carried out attacks in Kabul with frightening regularity. The killing of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a Kabul neighbourhood by the US has added to the Taliban's insecurity.
- **Afghan Population & Taliban:** Though there hasn't been much change in the Taliban's attitude towards civil society from the time they last ruled in Kabul, but unlike 20 years ago, outright brutalities have not been reported yet. A dress code has been prescribed for both men and women, but it is not strictly implemented.
 - The anti-people action by the Taliban to ban the education of girls beyond class 6 in school, and to make it difficult for women to work met with protest by women demanding "Education, Employment and Bread".

Significance of Afghanistan for India

▪ Economic and Strategic Interest:

- Afghanistan is a gateway to the oil and mineral-rich Central Asian republics.
- Afghanistan's main advantage is its geography, as anyone who is in power in Afghanistan controls the land routes connecting India with Central Asia (via Afghanistan).
- Located at the heart of the historic Silk Road, Afghanistan was long the crossroads of commerce between Asian countries connecting them to Europe, and enhancing religious, cultural, and commercial contacts.

▪ Developmental Projects:

- The massive reconstruction plans for the country to offer a lot of opportunities for Indian companies.
- Three major projects:
 - The **Afghan Parliament**, the **Zaranj-Delaram Highway**, and the **Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam)**, along with India's assistance of more than USD 3 billion in projects, hundreds of small development projects (of schools, hospitals and water projects) have cemented India's position in Afghanistan.

▪ Security Interest: India has been the victim of state-sponsored terrorism emanating from Pakistan supported terrorist group operating in the region (e.g., Haqqani network). Thus, India has two priorities in Afghanistan:

- To prevent Pakistan from setting up a friendly government in Afghanistan, and
- To avoid the return of jihadi groups, like Al-Qaeda, which could strike in India.

Way Forward

After the Taliban takeover, India is **caught in the middle of this dilemma divided between restoring Afghanistan as a strategic priority** in its policy and the practical hurdles on the ground. Herein, India needs to come up with a concrete policy option to deal with the Taliban otherwise it will lose the strategic advantage at high tables wherein the future of Afghanistan will be decided.

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