



Mains Practice Question

Q. The US's exit from Afghanistan has triggered Taliban emergence, geopolitical flux and thus, instability in the region. Discuss the options available for India to deal with the issue. (250 Words)

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Approach

- In introduction write the developments related to the US's exit from Afghanistan.
- Discuss how US's exit has triggered Taliban emergence, geopolitical flux and instability in the region.
- Discuss the option available to India in the present situation.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The speedy withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has been matched by the swift advance of the Taliban across the nation. While the US has confirmed that 90% of the withdrawal is done, the Taliban has claimed that it is in control of 85% of Afghanistan territory.

These developments have moved Afghanistan into the court of regional powers that now have the burden of managing the military vacuum created by the US retreat.

Body

Geopolitical flux and instability in the region

- **Possibility of Civil War:** Taliban itself remains a major variable. If the Taliban does not accommodate the interests of all Afghans, it simply sets the stage for the next round of the civil war in Afghanistan.
- **Chinese Conundrum:** The withdrawal, at a time when China is offering an alternative to the Western model of international governance, is seen in China as a great ideological victory.
 - However, for China, potential Taliban support to the Xinjiang separatist groups is a major concern.
- **Shia-Sunni Conflict:** Iran can't ignore the Sunni extremism of the Taliban and its oppressive record in dealing with the Shia, and Persian-speaking minorities.
- **Pakistani Interference:** With the help of Taliban, Pakistan interference in the internal matters of Afghanistan further aggravate the problem of instability in the Afghanistan and the whole region.

Options For India

- India has three **critical areas in dealing with the Taliban.**
 - Protecting its investments, which run into billions of rupees, in Afghanistan;
 - Preventing a future Taliban regime from being a pawn of Pakistan;
 - Making sure that the Pakistan-backed anti-India terrorist groups do not get support from

the Taliban.

▪ **Short term and Long Term Goals:**

- India's immediate goal should be the safety and security of its personnel and investments.
- The long-term goal should be finding a political solution to the crisis. And if a political solution is not achieved, it should seek non-conventional methods, like what it did in the 1990s, to offer support to its allies within Afghanistan and retain some influence.

▪ **Russian Support:** Russia has cultivated links with the Taliban in recent years. India would need Russia's support in any form of direct engagement with the Taliban.

▪ **Importance of Iran:** When it comes to Afghanistan, Iran is an irreplaceable country. It shares a long border with Afghanistan and has built contacts through several stakeholders in the country, especially the ethnic minorities.

- The original objective of India's Chabahar project in Iran was to create a direct access to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.

▪ **Use of Multilateral Organisations:** Such as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation(SCO) should be used in dealing with the Afghan questions and achieve stability.

- Geography, membership and capabilities make the SCO an important forum to address the post-American challenges in Afghanistan.

▪ **Admin and Military Reforms:** More militancy is witnessed in the region where the state fails to deliver. Thus, Administrative and military reforms within Afghanistan are the need of the hour to tackle the menace of emerging Taliban 2.0.

Conclusion

India, as one of the countries that would be impacted by the consequences of American withdrawal, has to work with regional powers to protect its interests and stabilise Afghanistan.

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