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Q5(e)

How does the recent takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban impact India's strategic interests?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy

Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy: India's position on the recent crisis in Afghanistan, Iraq and West Asia, growing relations with US and Israel; vision of a new world order.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the implications of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan for India's interests
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

August 2021 ended India's two-decade Republic partnership in Kabul.

Terrorism and Pakistan's strategic depth are the sharpest Indian fears.

Chabahar-Central Asia connectivity needs a workable Afghan landmass.

Aid projects became stranded assets of influence.

Policy is a recognition-versus-engagement dilemma, not a restored embassy as before.

Introduction

The Taliban took Kabul in **August 2021** as the United States left. India's interests there are terrorism, connectivity, a friendly balance against Pakistan's depth, and the safety of past investments. The takeover damaged all four at once.

Body

Immediate hits

- The Republic that hosted Indian aid, the parliament building, and the Zaranj-Delaram road collapsed.
- Embassy drawdown and the loss of a political partner in Kabul erased twenty years of presence.
- Pakistani influence and the risk of anti-India groups finding space rose in New Delhi's threat perception.

Core interests

- **Terrorism:** Indian concern is Lashkar, Jaish, and other groups using Afghan soil, not only Afghan civil war.
- **Connectivity:** **Chabahar** and a land path to Central Asia need a usable Afghanistan. The Taliban freeze that bet.
- **Strategic denial:** India does not want a Pakistan-run western neighbour. It also does not want a chaos that exports fighters.
- **People:** minorities, women, and Indian-origin workers affect reputation and consular load.

Policy dilemma

- Engage the Taliban for access and counter-terror pledges, or stay out and lose the board.
- UN sanctions, recognition, and humanitarian aid are the diplomatic tools. None restore the 2001-21 Republic.

Flow diagram

Taliban 2021 -> Republic collapse
Republic collapse -> Terror risk
Republic collapse -> Connectivity Chabahar hit
Republic collapse -> Pakistan depth fear
Terror risk -> Indian interests
Connectivity Chabahar hit -> Indian interests
Pakistan depth fear -> Indian interests

Conclusion

The Taliban takeover set back India's aid footprint, western connectivity, and counter-terror buffer. Implications are a harder Pakistan-facing map and a choice between pragmatic contact and principled distance. Interests did not disappear. The partner did.

Facts & figures

August 2021

Taliban entry into Kabul after the US-led withdrawal, collapsing the Islamic Republic.

Zaranj-Delaram

Indian-built highway meant to link Afghanistan to Iran's Chabahar route.

Chabahar

Indian bet on a Pakistan-bypassing corridor that still needs Afghan transit to reach Central Asia.

Non-recognition

India, like most States, did not rush to recognise the Taliban government while keeping humanitarian and security watch.