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DAILY
Editorials &
Articles



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UPSC 360°

The Hindu Unwrapped - Daily Current Affairs Mastery for UPSC CSE (Clear that it's based on The Hindu editorials / news analyses - very aspirant-friendly)

Significance

The incident is significant as it challenges state sovereignty, violates international humanitarian law, and heightens regional instability between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It reflects the growing role of cross-border security actions and weakens trust in global norms. The event also underscores the urgent need for accountability, conflict de-escalation, and stronger international mechanisms to protect civilians.

Pakistan Airstrikes Inside Afghanistan: Sovereignty, International Humanitarian Law & Regional Security Dilemma

- ❖ The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) conducted multiple cross-border airstrikes inside Afghanistan's eastern provinces (Kunar and Nangarhar), targeting alleged hideouts of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Afghan authorities claimed one strike hit a medical facility (hospital) in Khost province, killing at least 12 civilians (including women and children) and injuring over 20 others.
- ❖ Pakistan justified the operation as a "pre-emptive self-defence" measure against TTP militants using Afghan soil for attacks inside Pakistan. The Taliban-led Afghan government strongly condemned the strikes as a "gross violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity" and demanded an immediate apology and investigation.

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- ❖ The incident has sharply escalated bilateral tensions, drawn UN and international concern over possible International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations, and highlighted the persistent Afghanistan-Pakistan security dilemma.

Key Details of the Incident

• Pakistan's Position

- Strikes targeted TTP training camps and launch pads responsible for recent attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.
- Claimed "precision strikes" with no civilian casualties; intelligence-based operation.

• Afghanistan's Position

- Called the strikes "unacceptable aggression" and "violation of sovereignty".
- Alleged direct hit on a civilian hospital; demanded UN fact-finding mission.

• Casualties & Damage

- At least 12 civilians killed, 20+ injured (per Afghan reports).
- Medical facility damaged; disruption of local healthcare services.

• International Reactions

- UN Secretary-General expressed "deep concern" and urged restraint and respect for sovereignty.
- China (key player in both countries) called for "calm and dialogue".
- India monitored developments closely due to regional security implications.

Background: Roots of the Issue

• Historical Afghanistan-Pakistan Tensions

- Long-standing border dispute (Durand Line).
- Post-2021 Taliban takeover: TTP found safe havens in Afghanistan; carried out over 100 attacks inside Pakistan in 2024-2025.

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- **Previous Incidents**

- Similar Pakistani airstrikes reported in 2017, 2022, and 2024.
- Taliban's refusal to act against TTP despite Pakistani demands.

- **Non-State Actors Role**

- TTP (banned in Pakistan) uses Afghan territory for planning, training, and cross-border attacks.
- Weak governance in border regions (FATA-like areas) enables militant sanctuaries.

4. Implications

- **Sovereignty & Territorial Integrity**

- Direct challenge to the principle of sovereign equality (UN Charter Article 2(4)).
- Sets dangerous precedent for unilateral military actions.

- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

- Deliberate or indiscriminate attack on a hospital violates Geneva Conventions (Additional Protocol I).
- Possible war crime; demands independent investigation and accountability.

- **Security Dilemma & Regional Instability**

- Pakistan's "defence" → Afghanistan's "aggression" narrative → cycle of retaliation.
- Risk of broader conflict spillover into South Asia.

- **Human Security Perspective**

- Civilian casualties, especially in medical facilities, highlight failure of state-centric security approaches.
- Displacement, loss of livelihoods, and health crises for border communities.

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- **Geopolitical Implications**

- Strains Afghanistan-Pakistan relations; impacts trade, connectivity, and refugee issues.
- External powers (China, US, Russia) may intervene diplomatically.
- India's concerns: Potential TTP spillover, border stability, and regional peace initiatives.

- **Role of International Organisations**

- UN can facilitate mediation, fact-finding, and humanitarian aid.
- Limited enforcement due to political interests of major powers.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions), Security Dilemma, Non-State Actors
- Data: Durand Line, TTP activities post-2021
- Related: UN Charter Article 2(4), Additional Protocol I to Geneva Conventions

GS-2 (IR)

- India's neighbourhood policy & regional security
- Bilateral relations: Afghanistan-Pakistan dynamics

GS-2 (International Organisations)

- Role of UN in conflict resolution & IHL enforcement

GS-3 (Security)

- Cross-border terrorism & non-traditional security threats

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Essay / Interview

- “Sovereignty vs. Self-Defence: The Afghanistan-Pakistan Airstrike and the Limits of International Law”
- “Human Security in South Asia: Beyond State-Centric Approaches to Conflict”

MCQs

1. With reference to the Afghanistan-Pakistan airstrike incident (March 2026), consider the following statements:
2. Pakistan justified the strikes as self-defence against TTP militants.
3. Afghanistan claimed one strike hit a civilian hospital.
4. The UN Charter Article 2(4) prohibits the threat or use of force against territorial integrity.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

2. The principle of “sovereign equality” is enshrined in:

- (a) Geneva Conventions
- (b) UN Charter
- (c) Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations
- (d) Additional Protocol I

Answer: (b)

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3. Attacks on medical facilities during armed conflict are prohibited under:

- (a) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- (b) Geneva Conventions
- (c) UNCLOS
- (d) Paris Agreement

Answer: (b)

4. The Durand Line is the disputed border between:

- (a) India and Pakistan
- (b) Afghanistan and Pakistan
- (c) Afghanistan and Iran
- (d) Pakistan and China

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "The Afghanistan-Pakistan airstrike incident of March 2026 highlights the tension between state security concerns and principles of sovereignty and International Humanitarian Law." Discuss. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the role of non-state actors like the TTP in perpetuating the Afghanistan-Pakistan security dilemma. How does this affect regional stability in South Asia? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Modern international relations must shift from state-centric to human-security approaches." Analyse this statement in the context of civilian casualties in the recent Pakistan airstrikes on Afghan territory. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Sovereignty, Self-Defence and Civilian Protection: The Afghanistan-Pakistan Airstrike and the Future of Conflict Resolution in South Asia."

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