Bagram Airfield

Prelims (GS I) – *Current events of national and international importance.*

Mains (GS II) – *International relations*

Why in news?

Recently, U.S President claimed that China now occupied the Afghanistan's Bagram Airfield, which the US vacated in 2021.

- **Bagram Airfield –** It is the largest airfield in Afghanistan which is situated at 15 Km from Kabul.
- **Location** – Bagram Airfield is located in Parwan province.



- **Strategic importance** – Parwan province provides key connections to multiple Afghan regions through highways and tunnel.
- **Origin** – Built by the Soviet Union in the 1950s during Cold War competition for influence in Afghanistan.

- **Soviet era (1979-89)** – Served as a vital military base during the Soviet-Afghan War.
    - Used for deploying airborne divisions.
    - Base for Sukhoi Su-25 aircraft missions against mujahideen forces.
- **1990s** - Became a frontline in the conflict between Taliban and Northern Alliance, and suffered heavy damage.
- **US occupation (2001-2021)** – U.S occupied this airfield after the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- Over the next two decades, as the "War on Terror" raged on, Bagram became the epicentre of the American presence in Afghanistan.
    - It Expanded the Airfield with new run way, medical facilities and detention facilities.
- **US Withdrawal** – Trump administration signed a deal with Taliban in 2020 for NATO troop withdrawal.
- US forces vacated Bagram on July 2, 2021.
- Taliban took control of the base on August 15, 2021.
- **Significance of Bagram to China** – China has recently strengthened its relations with Afghanistan by approving its ambassadors with Taliban.
- It is significant because China has a sizable Muslim population of its own in the bordering Xinjiang.
- Beijing would want to ensure that radical elements in Afghanistan do not cross over into its own territory.
- To that end, it has attempted to bolster ties within a limited framework and also made some investments in Afghanistan.

Reference

[The Indian Express| Story of The Strategic Air Base in Afghanistan]

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