

Current Affairs

QNO: 2

Reason and beneficiaries of Pak-Iran tensions & ways to de-escalate tensions to attain normalcy

Introduction :-

In an unprecedented move, Iran launched air strikes in Pakistan. Pakistan, notwithstanding attack on its sovereignty and territorial integrity retaliated. Later, brotherly gestures were exchanged and both states seemingly solved issues amicably. However, it must be noted that all of it happened in the middle of a major middle-eastern conflict. On one hand, the states were exchanging missiles, and on the other hand, the FM and caretaker PM of Pakistan were holding a meeting. Also, a joint naval exercise was being carried out in the background.

According to Iran, it attacked militant group in Pakistan which resulted in the death of two minors. Similarly Pakistan attacked the terrorist-separatist organisation, BLA in Iran. There could be another aspect of unfinished Iran-Pakistan gas-pipeline or to draw Pakistan into the middle-eastern conflict. Terror groups and their funding states must have benefitted from this rift. So, there is a need to de-escalate tensions through trade and diplomacy.

Reasons of Pak-Iran tensions:

~~Reasons of Iranian attack~~

- Presence of militant groups on both sides of the border.
- Indian presence in Iran
- To drag Pakistan in wider middle-eastern conflict
- To revive relations
- To revive Iran's pariah status
- force Pakistan to re-think its relations with the West.
- Pakistan retaliation

~~Reason~~

1- To neutralize militant group:-

~~Reason~~

Iran attacked Pakistan due to presence of anti-Shia militant group in Pakistan. This was the official stance of Iran. Iran targetted the hideouts of the militant group. On January 16 Iran carried out missile attacks in Baluchistan. It hit on two strongholds of the militant group Jaish al-Ahli. Reportedly, it was involved in terror attacks

in Iran.

2- Increasing terrorist attacks in Iran :-

Iran had increasingly faced terrorist attacks, including assassination attempts. Interestingly, Iran suffered from two major bombings - the same month in Kerman, Iran resulting in more than 90 casualties. However, IS took the responsibility. Even though they were carried out by IS, Iran attacked another terrorist group in Pakistan.

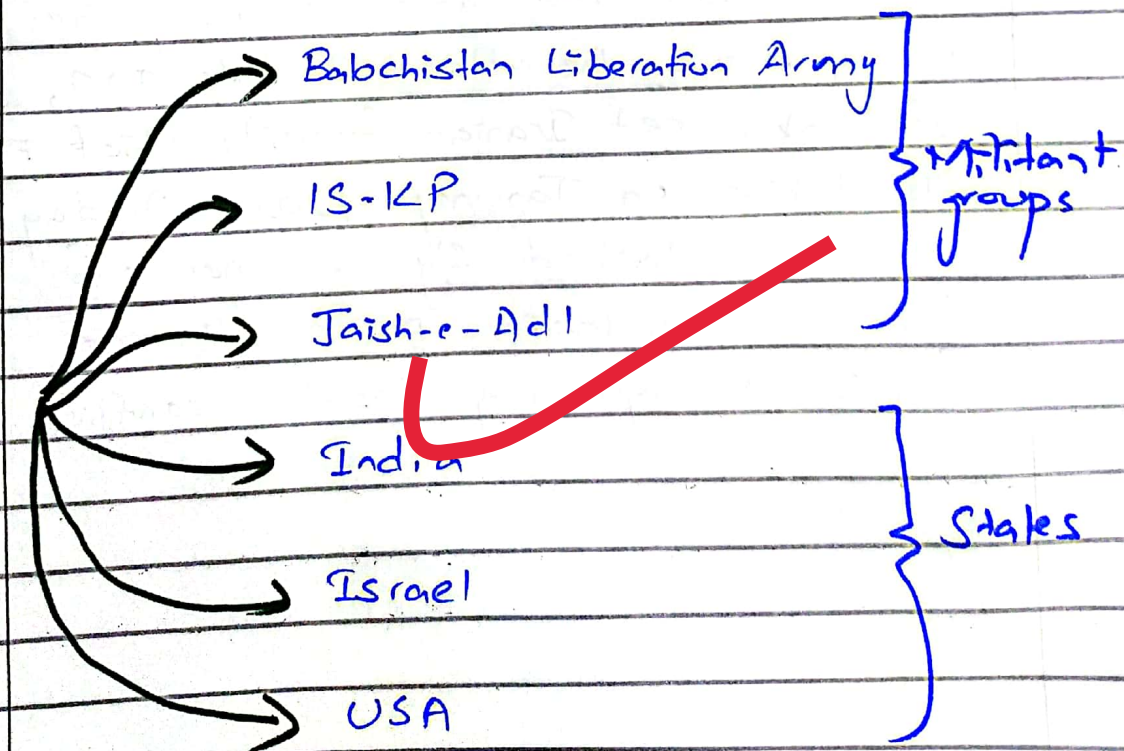
3- Indian presence in Iran :-

One of the major aspect of this conflict is that the Foreign Minister of India had met Iranian Security Chief a day before the attack. India's FM, Jaishankar met Iranian Security Chief FM, Abdollahian on January 18, 2024. A day later Iran attacked Syria, Yemen and Pakistan. Thus, Indian presence in the Iran is conflagrating Pak-Iran conflict.

To drag Pakistan into the middle-eastern conflict:-

Although Pakistan supports Palestine in the current Middle-eastern war, the support is diplomatic in nature. On the other hand, Iran continuously threaten Israel for consequences. It might be possible that Israel Iran wants to enhance the Axis of Resistance against Iran. Iran might be seeking to "broaden the ongoing regional conflict and decided to draw Pakistan into the mix" (Asfandiyar Mir, Making sense of Iran-Pakistan cross-Border Strikes, 2024).

Beneficiaries of Iran-Pakistan tensions:-



Militant groups as benefitting from the cross-border attacks

The militant and terrorist groups on both sides of the border benefitted from the cross-border attacks. Deteriorating relations between the countries would benefit such groups the most. As in the absence of relations, the militant groups will carry out their nefarious operations easily. Terrorism has increased in both countries.

Pakistan saw a surge of 8% in terrorist attacks from the previous year (CIPS Security Report; 2023). Similarly, Iran has faced major terrorist attacks. Most ~~upsurge in~~ attacks in Pakistan were carried out by BLA and ISK-P.

India as a beneficiary of Pak-Iran tensions:-

Pakistan

India has a long history of de-stabilising Pakistan through Iran and Afghanistan. The Indian-financed terrorists cross the porous Pak-Iran border to carry out terrorist attacks.

The ^{arrest} presence of Kulbhushan Yadav, an Indian Intelligence officer is a major example of India using Iranian soil to target Pakistan. Furthermore, it is also an attempt to isolate Pakistan. Indian

officials have time again repeated their aim to isolate Pakistan from the rest of the world. ~~It is also~~ This attempt was exactly that. It was clear from Indian statement on Pak-Iran rift. It stated that we have zero-tolerance towards terrorism and underkind actions that countries take in their self-defence. While others urged to show restraint, India gave an encouraging statement.

Israel & USA as beneficiaries :-

USA is increasing its presence in middle-east, specifically through Israel and directly in the Red Sea. Iran support Houthi rebels who are attacking trading vessels in the Red Sea in support of Palestine. Consequently, Iran's attack on Pakistan and retaliation may prove to detract Iran from the Middle East and focus on its own border security. Similarly, Israel wants both Pakistan and Iran away so it can continue its genocidal regime in Palestine.

Ways to deescalate tensions: -

- Diplomacy
- Trade as a peace constituency
- Trilateral arrangements
- Revising OIC
- Enhancing intelligence ^{sharing} operation
- Establishing a multilateral anti-terrorist organisation
- Pakistan to mediate Iran-West JCPOA 2.0 agreement.

1- A mature use of diplomacy: -

Pakistan and Iran have shown a mature display of diplomacy in dialling down the conflict. Iran they have went further and warned other states who benefitted from it. In official statements both countries have agreed to respect each other's sovereignty and indicated foreign elements as 'third countries' who benefitted from the conflict.

Trilateral arrangements to sustain peace :-

Even though the situation is relatively peaceful, there is a need to sustain it.

Both countries can make trilateral peace agreements by bringing China closer. This will also be a win-win for regional peace and security.

Enhancing intelligence sharing :-

Both countries need to enhance intelligence sharing and inform each other about terrorist hideouts. Consequently, the terror element will cease to exist paving a peaceful region in the future.

Reorganizing OIC to solve the non-state threat

Organisation of Islamic States (OIC) needs a major overhaul. It needs to tackle every problem faced by the Muslim countries. It needs to be more than a talk shop. There is an increasing need to establish an anti-terrorist sub-organisation to tackle the threat of terrorism in the Muslim world. All Muslim Ummah needs to be in agreement in this regard.

Add more arguments.....

Conclusion:-

The world is increasingly unstable due to plethora of conflicts. Pak-Iran cross-border attacks occurred due to non-cooperation, militant groups and ~~even~~ Indian presence in the region. Many terrorist organisations and states benefitted from the attacked. However, the conflict has subsided owing to superb diplomacy. ~~while~~ ~~Peace~~ There is a need to sustain peace and normalcy through dialogue, trilateral as well as multi-lateral.

QNO 15

Pak-Afghan Relations in the wake of TTP and ISKP attacks, use of Afghan land against Pakistan, and Pakistan's decision to pull out Afghan Refugees.

Introduction:-

Afghan Taliban did not meet the expectations of Pakistan. nor did they kept their deal of Doha Accords Agreement. In fact, the opposite happened. Militant factions have been emboldened in the Afghan-ruled

Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Ever since Taliban came to power, terrorist attacks have increased. Consequently, Pak-Afghan relations have deteriorated as the Afghanistan land have been used against Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan decided to deport Afghan refugees. to display their anger and give a tit-for-tat reply to Taliban for non-cooperation.

Pak-Afghan Relations in the wake of terrorist attacks & Use of Afghan soil against Pak.

- Attack on Pakistan's civilians
- Attack on Pakistan's security apparatus
- Emboldened TTP
- Increasing assertiveness of ISKP
- Attacks on foreigners
- Propaganda (Hybrid war) against Pakistan
- Border clashes
- Non-recognition of Durand Line.

1- Emboldened TTP under Taliban Rule:-

TTP has increased its foothold in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Greatly emboldened by an insurgent group's rule in Afghanistan, TTP is optimistic in taking control of Pakistan's North-western regions. TTP has benefitted -the most of all foreign extremist groups from Taliban take over (UNSC's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 2020). Hence, TTP is remobilised in Afghanistan under Taliban's shadow.

2- Increased presence of ISKP in Pakistan:-

ISKP has established itself as a major non-state terror group in Pakistan. It is involved in many attacks against Pakistan. It is doing so by attacking Shia groups -thereby giving rise to sectarian strife. They get support from TTP factions (Interior Ministry, 2023)

3- Use of sophisticated weaponry by terror groups:-

Terrorist groups are using sophisticated weaponry to carry out attacks inside Pakistan. This indicates support from other enemy states. US

weapons were left in Afghanistan as they left in haste. Pakistan took this matter to UN. Pakistan demanded "investigation into how TTP acquired sophisticated weapons" either from illicit arms market or from entities that wants to destabilise Pakistan (Usman Jadoon, Pak's Permanent Representative, 2023).

4. Strong state response:-

Post Admist growing insecurity in Pakistan, Pakistan has issued strong statements against Afghan Taliban. "We can act on International law to defend ourselves" (former FM, Bilawal Bhutto) Similarly COAS Arim Munir condemned "involvement of Afghan nationals" in conducting attacks on Pakistan's soil. For Bajaur attack.

5. Emergence of new terrorist groups:-

A recently emerged militant outfit, Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP) has emerged. It is responsible for carrying out a number of attacks on Pakistan. It carried out suicide attack on a military checkpoint in DI Khan that led to 23 casualties.

of Pakistan's security forces (ISPR, Dec 2023). It is collectively TJP is responsible for 7 deadliest attacks resulting in 66 casualties. It is a globally recognised terrorist group having sanctuaries on Afghan soil. (Ayaz Gul, Pakistan Presses Taliban, 2023). Hence a number of terror groups are appearing that use Afghan's soil to launch attacks inside Pakistan.

Pakistan's decision to pull out Afghan Refugees

- An International Law perspective
- A humanitarian perspective
- A foreign relation perspective
- A national security perspective
- Pakistan's 'red-line' on terrorism

International law perspective :-

Pakistan did not violate international law as it expelled out the refugees. This is because Pakistan is not a signatory to 1951 convention relating to status of refugees. However, certain parts of the convention are of customary law which are instructive to non-parties. According to

a. Lawful expulsion :-

The 1951 convention states that countries should not expel if refugees have 'credible' threat of persecution. The cumulative reports by UN in 2023, Afghan refugees can return as there is no serious threat to them in Afghanistan anymore.

b. 'National Security' exception

States increasingly rely on national security exception to limit the broader application of international law. Specifically after 9/11. Australia in 2004 made 'non-refoulement' protection ineffective through legislation regarding illegal immigrants. Pakistan can do the same. COAS Asim Munir also revealed involvement of Afghan nationals in terrorist attacks.

b. Responsibility of Refugees:

After Taliban takeover, Taliban's government restored 1964 Afghan constitution. According to the document, Afghan government is fully responsible for providing security to its citizens.

2- A humanitarian perspective:-

Pakistan carried out expulsion operations deportation drive against illegal immigrants. They deported thousands of immigrants who had spent their lives in Pakistan. Pakistan expelled more than 375,000 Afghans (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Although, Pakistan had the right to expel them, it left a bitter taste for Pakistan.

3- A foreign relation perspective:-

Foreign relations deteriorated between the countries as a result of mass expulsion. Taliban government did not welcome this move. Similarly, people-to-people contact also faced a set-back. Afghanistan after winning cricket match against Pakistan in ICC World cup, dedicated his win

to -the Afghan refugees sent back to Afghanistan by ~~from~~ Pakistan (Ibrahim Zardari, Oct 2023). Diplomatic relations in all facets following immigrant deportation.

4- Pakistan's 'red-line' on terrorism:-

Pakistan engraved red-line on terrorism by expelling illegal immigrants. Pakistan had repeatedly asked Taliban government to take action on terrorist group which it did not do. Pakistan showed its assertiveness on terrorist issue. It was also imminent on national security fronts. While it may seem inhuman, it was important for Pakistan to set its boundaries.

Conclusion:-

Afghan Taliban have deviated from its commitment of weeding out terrorist organisations. As a result, its relations with Pakistan, region and the world are suffering. Pak-Afghanistan relations have experienced a nose-dive as a result of increasing terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Illegal immigrants were expelled out as a result and the future of these relations are in limbo.

Good attempt!!