

Q What are the implications of the intersection of the Durand Line, the Grand Trilateral Strategy, and the Indo-Pacific Quad on the trajectory of Pak-Afghan Relations, considering the historical legacies of the Pashtunistan dispute, the Taliban's Ideological affinities with Pakistani Islamists groups, and the competing geopolitical interests of regional and extraregional powers in the context of the ongoing Great Game 2.0?

Introduction:

The intersection of Durand Line, the Grand Trilateral Strategy and the Indo Pacific Quad has a significant influence on Pak-Afghan relations while considering the historical legacies and geopolitical interests, a detailed analysis is as follows:

Durand Line and Pashtunistan dispute:

- Durand line, is 1640 km long border b/w Pakistan & Afghanistan and was demarcated in 1893, is the main source of contention between both of these countries.
- It separated the Pashtun and Baloch tribes at the border areas. Now after the independence in 1947, Afghanistan started Pashtunistan movement that demanded the separate Pashtun state which raised security concerns towards Pakistan.

Taliban's Ideological Affinities with Pakistani & Islamist groups:

- Afghan talibans and Pakistani taliban, both reared up in Pakistani madrassas. They both ^{have} shared ideological beliefs.
- Both of them have faith in Sunni Deobandi Islam. They have strong ties with each other.
- Taliban's affinities with TTPs also ~~etc~~ enhances security concerns for Pakistan. Also both countries have accused each other ^{of} harboring

terrorists groups, shows both countries have trust issues with each other.

Grand Trilateral Strategy :

- It actually involves the strategic partnership between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan to address mutual security, economic and political concerns.
- China wants to extend CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) and wants to maintain its influence in the region.
- Pakistan has its own security concerns ~~not~~ regarding to secure its western border and also wants to use it to boost its economy.
- Afghanistan, by joining this ~~bilateral~~ trilateral strategy, will also get benefits. Like it will be advantageous to its infrastructure development, it will attract foreign investors and also enhance trade and connectivity.
- It will be beneficial for both Pakistan & AFG to combat terrorism and maintain peace and stability in the region.

Indo-Pacific Quad:

- It is a strategic forum comprising (US, India, Japan and Australia). It wants free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.
- It is counter-balancing China.
- US has its own concerns through this. Firstly, it wants to maintain its influence in the region. Secondly, it wants to make sure of no more terrorist groups in Afghanistan.
- India's involvement in Quad is seen by Pakistan as to encircle it strategically. Its strategic alignment with US and AFG raises security concerns for Pakistan.
- Afghanistan's alignment or opposition with the Quad will significantly influence Pakistan & Afghanistan relations.

Competing Geo Political interest:

- If you see it regionally, China wants to extend CPEC and maintain its influence in the region. However it wants stability in the region.
- On the other side India wants to maintain

its influence in the region and by maintaining close ties with Afghanistan, it wants to destabilize Pakistan by supporting TTPs.

- And Pakistan wants peace in the region and wants to protect its western border and further use it to progress economically. For which Pakistan wants stability in AFG as it is impossible otherwise.
- And if we see geopolitical interest extra-regionally, so US wants to have its influence in the region after its troops withdrawal. On the other side Russia also wants to have control or connection with the Central and South Asia

Conclusion:

In the context of Great Game 2.0, it is very difficult to maintain balance between cooperation & competition. As Grand Trilateral Strategy, on one side, offers economic opportunities and connectivity but on the other side it also raises concerns over China's growing influence. Meanwhile Quad offers regional stability and infrastructure development, also raises competition against China's BRI (Belt and Road Initiative). So both Pakistan and Afghanistan needs to navigate these challenges carefully and actively, if they want peace and prosperity in the region.
