

Q:

What are the issues and mistrusts in US-Pakistan relations after withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

Ans:

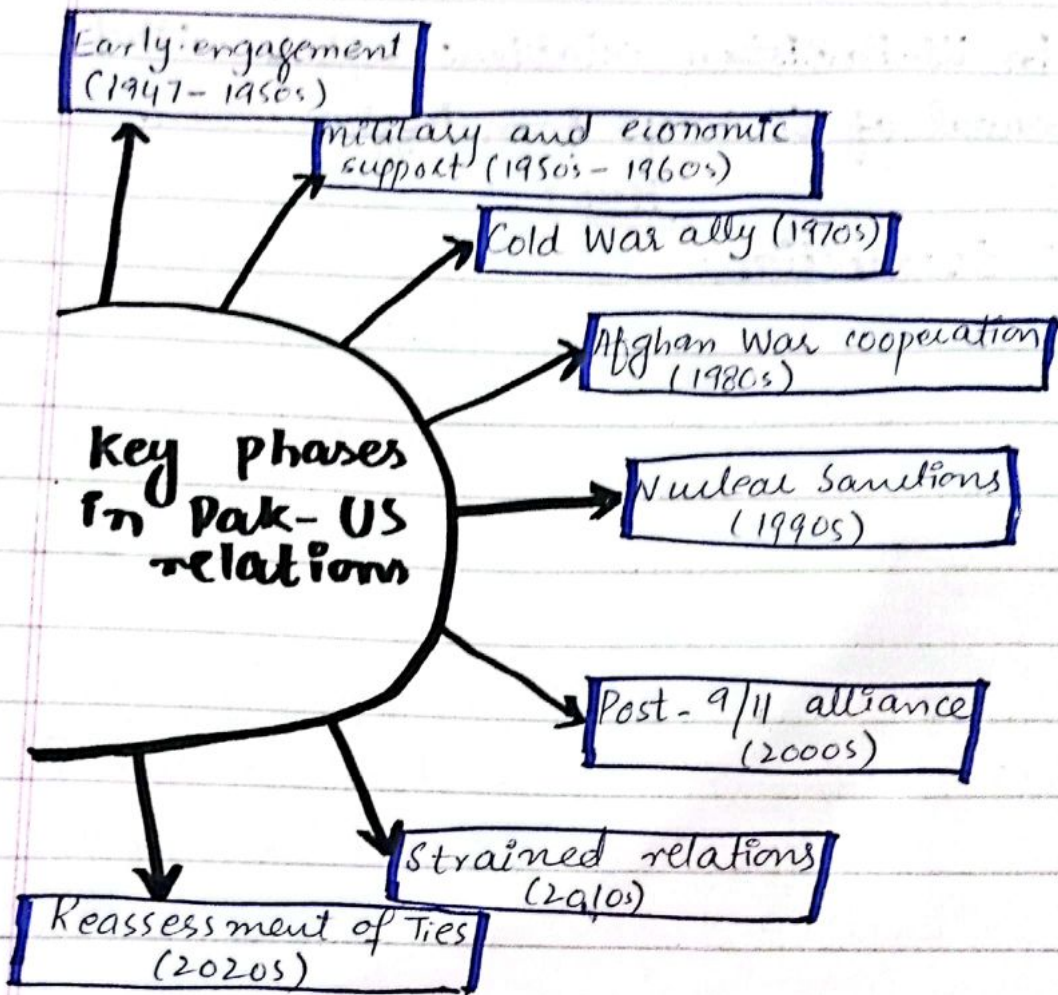
Introduction:

The US-Pakistan relationship has undergone significant changes following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. The end of the US military presence in the region has led to a shift in dynamics, with Pakistan seeking to redefine its relationship with the US. It can be rightly said that the relationship between Pakistan and the United States has been a complex one since the inception of Pakistan in 1947.

Overview of the key phases in the Pakistan-US relations:

Throughout the history, the relationship has been described as a "roller coaster", characterized by close coordination and lows marked by deep bilateral estrangement. The future of U.S.-Pakistan relations continues to evolve with changing geopolitical dyna-

miles.



The U.S. was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Pakistan. Pakistan had the option to align with either the Soviet Union or the United States and chose the latter. Pakistan signed the **Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement** with the U.S. in 1954. The U.S. established a Military Assistance Advisory in Pakistan and provided military aid. Moreover, Pakistan was a key ally. Both Pak. and U.S. remained members of **SEATO** and **CENTO**.

for the U.S. during Cold War. The U.S. supported Pakistan during the 1971 war with India, despite imposing an arms embargo. Both the countries cooperated in funding and financing the anti-communist Afghan mujahideen. The U.S. sanctioned Pakistan for its nuclear weapons program, and the relations between both countries ^{were} strained due to Pakistan's **nuclear tests in 1998**.

After the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan became a major **Non-NATO ally** in U.S. war on terror. The substantial military and economic support was provided by the U.S. to Pakistan in 2000s. During 2010s, the relationship faced challenges due to issues like the **Osama Bin Laden** raid. Public opinion in both countries soured, with many Pakistanis viewing the U.S. unfavourably. Later, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan led to a reassessment of the bilateral relationship. Pakistan's role in the Afghan Peace process and Taliban takeover has been a focal point.

Post Afghanistan US-Pakistan relations:

Taliban's Resurgence and Pakistan's role:

The Taliban's swift takeover of Afghanistan has strained relations between the US and Pakistan. Pakistan's historical ties with the Taliban raise suspicions about its role in the group's resurgence. The US closely scrutinized Pakistan's actions during the Taliban's rise to power.

The China factor: Widening gaps between US-Pakistan relations:

Due to surging engagement of China in South Asia, drive by CPEC project of BRI, Pakistan-China ties deepened. The CPEC has strengthened Beijing-Islamabad relationship. This doesn't aligns with Washington's strategy to counter China's growing power, thus, it had potential impact on US-Pakistan relations.

Growing US-India ties; Downgrading US-Pakistan relationship:

Pakistan has strained relations with India especially

after the revocation of **Article-370** and US hesitates to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan on the issue of **IIOJK**. Instead, US is cultivating India to counterweight China's growing power. This has significantly downgraded US-Pakistan relationship.

Washington's changing priorities added fuel to already strained relations between Pakistan and the US:

The focus of Washington has shifted from South Asia to Asia Pacific aiming to counter China's increasing power. The **Congressional Research Document** stated that:

"The early focus of Biden Administration on Quadri-lateral Security Dialogue, or 'Quad' made Pakistani leaders concerned about diminishing importance of Pakistan to Washington."

This change in priority strained US-Pakistan relationship.

US' allegation of Pakistan's lukewarm efforts in the war on terror:

Pakistan joined war on terror because of coercive diplomacy of US but it never received appreciation for its role in the war on terror and that the costs of participation (for its role) in the war incurred on it were huge and irreparable. Washington accused Pakistan of hosting the Taliban and other terrorists and showed that Pakistan extended only lukewarm support in the war on terror. This hurted Pakistan's sentiments and the relations between the two weakened further.

Diverging interests of both the countries remained obstacles for fostering good relationship:

The relationship between the two countries was driven by ad hoc security concerns only, with both

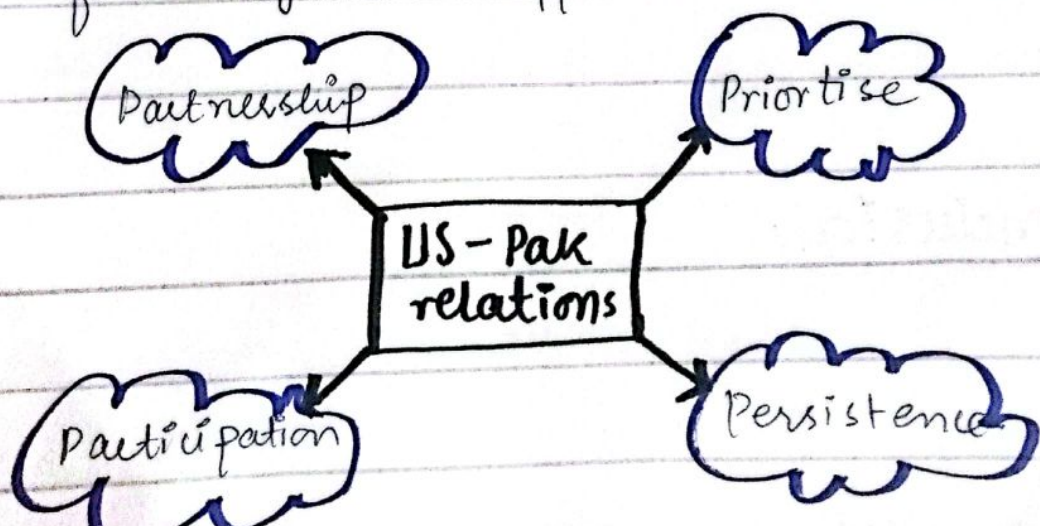
countries needing each other. After ^{the} US withdrawal from Afghanistan, both the US and Pakistan hardly share any strategic or economic interests. This caused "lopsided" relationship between the two countries. The then PM Imran Khan said:

"The relationship between the United States and Pakistan was "lopsided" and that because the US felt that they were giving aid to Pakistan, they felt that Pakistan then had to do US' bidding."

PM Imran Khan, June 2021

Recommendations for improving Pak-US relationship:

The relationship between the US and Pakistan can be improved by following 4 Ps Approach.



Prioritise :-

Both countries should prioritise bilateral relationships independent of external factors.

Partnership:-

The areas for realistic bilateral cooperation should be identified. A people-to-people approach should be followed to strengthen the trust deficit hindered relations.

Participation:

There should be great cooperation to address human security needs, benefiting South Asia and beyond.

Persistence:

Both countries should craft a comprehensive bilateral framework to bring persistence and to foster sustainable bilateral ties.

Conclusion:

The relationship between ^{the} US and Pakistan faced a trajectory of ups and downs. This inconsistency can be attributed

to various external factors. But now both countries should traverse these challenges and move forward, fostering sustainable bilateral ties.

Q:

How do you see Pak-Afghan Relations in the wake of repeated attacks by TTP and ISKP in Pakistan using Afghan land against Pakistan and in return Islamabad decided to pull out Afghan refugees?

Ans:

Introduction:-

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has historically been fraught due to longstanding border disputes and mutual accusations of harboring insurgents. The return of Afghan Taliban to power in August 2021 was initially perceived by Islamabad as a potential turning point that could usher in improved security dynamics. However, the subsequent escalation in TTP and ISKP attacks within Pakistan has belied such expectations. It reveals the

complex nexus of insurgency that transcends borders and challenges the idea that the Taliban in Afghanistan would be willing to help Pakistan with its security problems.

Compounding these security concerns is Pakistan's decision to expel Afghan refugees, a move that has sparked international criticism and raised ethical questions about the treatment of vulnerable populations.

The expulsion, ostensibly aimed at curbing terrorism, has instead highlighted the intricate interplay between human rights and national security, while potentially exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

The TTP and ISKP attacks, and the expulsion of Afghan refugees have influenced the geopolitical landscape and the internal stability of both nations.

Overview of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations:

- Initial tensions and Durand line controversy:

Upon Pakistan's creation, Afghanistan was the only country to vote against its admission to the United Nations, reflecting immediate tensions. Moreover, Afghanistan

has historically disputed the Durand line, which is the internationally recognized border.

- Cold war dynamics (1950s-1970s) and Pashtunistan issue:

Afghanistan supported the Pashtunistan movement, which claimed territories within Pakistan, leading to cross-border tensions. The relationship was also influenced by the Cold War, with Afghanistan leaning towards the Soviet Union and Pakistan aligning with the United States.

- Soviet Invasion and Mujahideen support:

During the period of 1979-1989, Pakistan played a key role in supporting the Mujahideen fighters against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

- Taliban emergence and Pakistani support (1990s):

Pakistan was one of the few countries to recognize the Taliban government in Afghanistan but the relations between the two were complex due to mutual security concerns.

- Post-9/11 Scenario and War on Terror (2001-2021):

The U.S led war on terror in Afghanistan impacted Pak-Afghan relations, with Pakistan being key ally for NATO forces while dealing with its own Taliban insurgency.

- Taliban's return and security challenges:

The 2021 return of the Taliban in Afghanistan has led to renewed security challenges for Pakistan, particularly with the rise of TTP and ISKP activities.

- Refugee crisis and Diplomatic strains:

Pakistan's decision to repatriate Afghan refugees due to security concerns has added a layer of complexity to the bilateral relations.

Pak-Afghan relations in the wake of TTP and ISKP attacks and refugees crisis:

TTP and ISKP attacks: A Resurgence of Cross-Border Terrorism:

The TTP, an offshoot

of the Afghan Taliban, has historically targeted Pakistani state and civilian entities. The ISKP, although a relatively new player in the region, has quickly gained notoriety for its brutal attacks. Both groups have exploited the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan to launch operations, leading to a significant increase in terrorist activities. In 2023, there was a **69% surge in terrorist attacks**, resulting in 974 deaths and 1351 injuries. This uptick in violence creates tensions between Pak-Afghan relations and underscores the growing challenge that Pakistan faces in curbing terrorism within its borders.

Pakistan's military stance and Afghanistan's response:

Pakistan's military has publicly declared its readiness to combat these threats. **General Asim Munir**, the Pakistan's chief of Army staff, emphasized the military's commitment to safeguarding Pakistani citizens, even at the cost of strained relations with Afghanistan. However, the Afghan Taliban have dismissed claims

that the TTP operates from Afghan territory and have distanced themselves from responsibility for Pakistan's security.

Historical and ongoing border disputes:

The Durand Line, the contentious border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, remains a significant point of contention. Disagreements over the demarcation have led to issues such as smuggling and accusations of interference in internal affairs. The porous nature of the border is cited by Pakistan as a conduit for terrorists infiltrating the country to conduct subversive activities.

The Afghan Taliban's Stance on Terrorism and the TTP:

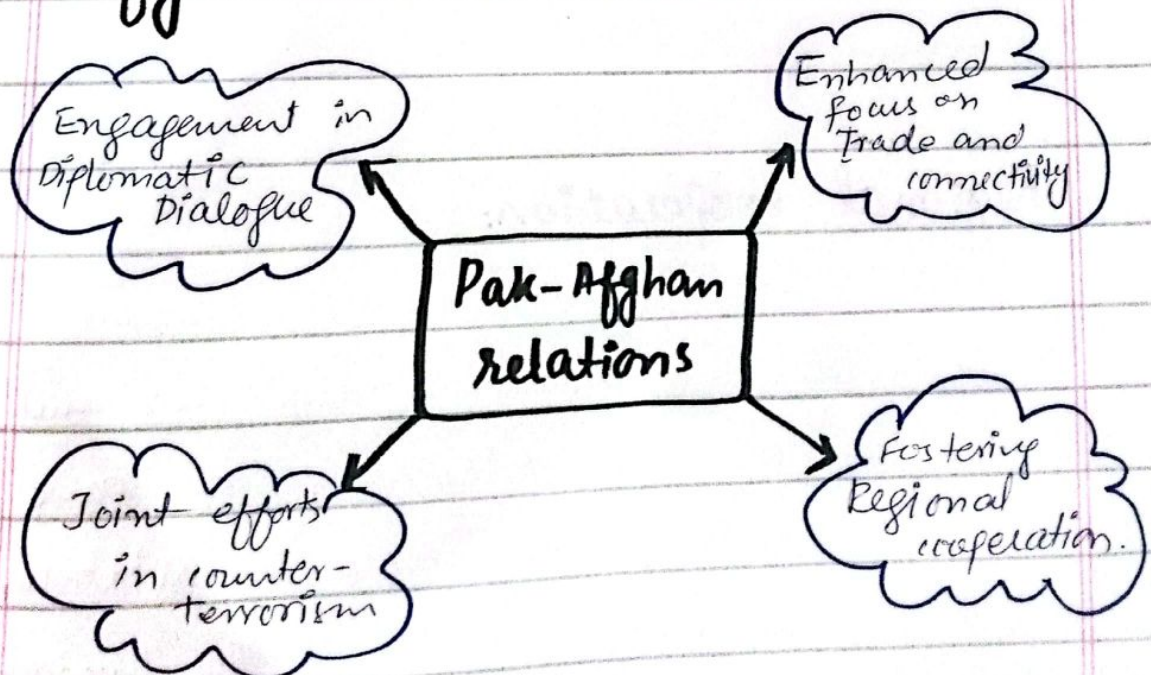
The Afghan Taliban have maintained that they do not allow Afghan territory to be used against other countries. Despite this, there is evidence of the TTP's presence in Afghanistan and its connections to Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban's reluctance to cut

against the TTP has raised concerns about their commitment to combat terrorism and their sincerity towards Pakistan.

Afghan Refugees' Expulsion from Pakistan:

Pakistan's decision to expel "illegal Afghan nationals" has been met with controversy and criticism. This move has damaged the goodwill among some Afghans towards Pakistan and is unlikely to resolve the terrorism issue. The expulsion has also exacerbated the humanitarian crisis.

Recommendations to improve Pak-Afghan relations:



Trade and connectivity:

Boosting trade relations by reducing trade barriers, simplifying customs procedures can promote smoother cross-border trade and improve relations between the two countries.

Engagement in Diplomatic Dialogue:

Regular visits and dialogues between leadership can build trust and understanding. Moreover, addressing shared concerns, security interests, and connectivity under BRI like initiatives can foster smooth Pak-Afghan relations.

Joint efforts in counter-terrorism:

Both countries should focus on political settlement and should collaborate on security concerns and counter-terrorism efforts.

Regional cooperation:

Engaging with regional stakeholders to facilitate dialogues and to address the shared concerns can pave the way for improved bilateral relations and contribute to stability in the broader

region.

Conclusion:

The resurgence of the TTP and ISKP, along with the expulsion of Afghan refugees, has created a multifaceted challenge for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. However, the situation can be settled by following a nuanced approach that balances security concerns with humanitarian considerations. Furthermore, regional cooperation and dialogue can also contribute to address these issues.