

{ Current Affairs }

Question # 1

Despite shared history, culture and religion Pak-Afghan relations remain marred by mistrust and instability. Critically Analyze key issues affecting bilateral ties, particularly after Taliban takeover in 2021. What steps can Pakistan take to ensure strategic stability and mutual cooperation?

{ Solution }

Afghanistan lies in the Northwest of Pakistan. It is a land-locked country. Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2250 km long border known as Durand line. Afghanistan is a Muslim majority country. Most of the trade took place through Arabian Sea via Pakistan.

Despite being a neighbouring Muslim country, the relation between Pakistan and Afghanistan remain marred by mistrust and instability.

Pakistan and Afghanistan Relation

a) Historical overview

1. Opposition in UN

Afghanistan was the only Muslim country who opposed Pakistan's membership in United Nations organization. It was a shaky start for Pak-Afghan relation.

2. Durand Line rejection

Afghanistan rejected the Durand line, which is an internationally acknowledged border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is also considered one of the longest borders extending upto 2250km.

3. Opposed Pakistan for joining SEATO and CENTO

Afghanistan did not favour Pakistan's decision to align itself with western block. Afghanistan also opposed Pakistan for joining SEATO and CENTO.

4. Pakhtoonistan issue

Afghanistan instigated the locals in tribal areas of Pakistan. As a result Pakhtoonistan movement was launched under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar. Afghanistan warned that if Pakistan did not accept the demand for Pakhtoonistan, Afghanistan would have to use other methods. Afghanistan also declared 31st August as Pakhtoonistan day.

5. Taliban

Taliban took over Kabul and Afghan ~~leader~~ government under Najibullah lost control. Pakistan recognized Taliban government. After 9/11 US invaded Afghanistan and setup a new regime under the leadership of Hamid Karzai.

Pakistan and Afghanistan relation post 2021

a) Taliban took over Kabul

In 2021, US withdrew its troops from Afghanistan.

The afghan government under Hamid Karzai lost control. Taliban took over Kabul and Hamid Karzai fled the country. Karzai had often blamed Pakistan for supporting Taliban. He reportedly said

"Taliban leadership is based in Pakistan. This is not a secret"

b) Pakistan accepts Taliban government

Pakistan has always tried to maintain cordinal ties with Afghanistan. Pakistan has always wished for stability in Afghanistan. Instability in Afghanistan is not only a threat for Pakistan but for the whole region. According to Pakistan defense analyst Dr Ayesha

"Afghanistan internal instability is both a cause and consequence of Pakistan's security anxieties"

c) Tribal insurgency in Pakistan

With the rise of Taliban

in Afghanistan, tribal insurgency remerged in Pakistan. Once again, the tribal areas echoed with the demand for Pakhtoonistan. The security situation in the tribal areas of KPK deteriorated. This issue was resolved with the help of Pakistan army and civil administration.

d) TTP attacks in Pakistan

TTP got a strong foothold in Afghanistan. From there it launches terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Islamabad confronted Kabul and demanded immediate action against ~~taliban~~ TTP. However, no meaningful action was taken by Kabul against TTP.

e) Returning Afghan refugees

In 2025, Pakistan sent 800k Afghan refugees back to their country via Torkham border. This step was taken as the result of some stability in Afghanistan.

Steps for mutual cooperation and stability

Following steps can be taken by Pakistan to ensure regional stability and mutual cooperation

a) Enhance diplomatic ties

Islamabad should engage in high level talks with Kabul concerning the matters of trade, anti-terrorism measures, mutual cooperation, and investment in energy and technology sectors. Afghanistan is also one of the main exporters of Pakistani goods. In April 2025, trade reached 119 million between the two countries.

b) Mutual Anti-terrorism operation

Terrorism is threat for the whole region. Pakistan and Afghanistan should engage in mutual anti-terrorism operations to target TTP strongholds in Afghanistan.

c) Combine military drills

Pakistan should engage in combined military drills in ~~at~~ with Afghanistan to enhance military and defense ~~coorpe~~ cooperation.

cooperation between the two countries.

d) Fencing of Durand line

Durand line is one of the largest border extending upto 2250km. This border should be fenced in order to curb smuggling and terrorist activities. Pakistan government has already issued 58 million rupees for fencing of Durand line.

e) Iron-hand policy

Many clashes occurred between Pakistan and Afghanistan on Torkham border and Durand line. In such case Pakistan should adopt iron hand policy against Afghanistan. Any aggression from Afghanistan should be retaliated by Pakistan with equal magnitude.

Pak-Afghan relation has seen many ups and downs. Afghan leaders who tried to maintain friendly relation with Pakistan were overthrown including Noor Muhammad Tarakai and Hafeezullah. For now both countries are on good terms. Afghanistan also remained neutral during

Pakistan and India conflict despite being instigated by India to attack Pakistan. Peace between both Muslim neighbouring countries is essential for growth and prosperity.

Question #2

Discuss the evolving dynamics of Pakistan-Iran relations in the light of regional security developments, including border tensions, energy cooperation, and the impact of US-Iran Hostilities. How can Pakistan maintain a balanced approach between Iran and its Gulf allies

{ Solution }

Pakistan and Iran are Muslim neighbouring countries. Both countries share 805 km long border. Iran is an oil rich country. Pakistan and Iran relation has been characterized by mutual cooperation as well as border tension. Initially both the countries were on good terms with each other. After

Iranian revolution, Pakistan and Afghanistan relations & went through a lots of ups and downs.

Pakistan and Iran relation

a) Historical Overview

1. Iran recognize Pakistan

Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan after its independence in 1947.

2. Iran leader visits Pakistan

Shah of Iran visited Pakistan along with empress Farah Diba.

3. Revolution in Iran

Reza Shah was overthrown as a result of Iranian revolution. Pakistan accepted the revolution as it enjoys the support of Iranian people.

4. Iran - Iraq war

During the Iran - Iraq war, Pakistan adopted a neutral stance.

5. Secretarian Conflicts

Iran supported Shias in Pakistan and tried to export Iranian revolution in Pakistan. As a result Secretarian conflicts emerged in Pakistan.

Pak-Iran energy cooperation

1. MOU signed

Pakistan signed an MOU for cooperation in energy, education, and technology sector.

2. Pak-Iran gas pipeline

Pakistan and Iran signed a contract for the gas pipeline project. It was signed to fulfill Pakistan's energy demand.

3. Electricity import

Pakistan also imported 1100 MW of electricity from Iran in order to meet its energy demand.

Pak-Iran border conflicts

1. Iranian drone shot down

An Iranian drone was shot down by security forces of Pakistan in Panjgur region.

2. Operation Marg bar Samachar

Pakistan retaliated to drone strikes of Iran in Panjgur region. Pakistan launched operation Marg bar Samachar and conducted drone strikes in Iran.

Pakistan and US-Iran hostilities

In 2025, hostilities increased between US, Iran, and Israel.

a) Iran - Israel War

In the early 2025 Israel launched an operation and killed Iranian nuclear scientists as well as the Commander of IRGC. Iran retaliated and conducted missile strikes on ~~Iran~~ under Israel under mission True Promise III. Pakistan openly supported Iran and condemn Israel for attacking Iran.

b) US strikes on Iran

US targeted Iranian nuclear sites and destroyed them using B-2 bomber planes. Islamabad condemned these strikes and supported Iran.

Pakistan's approach to Iran and its gulf allies

The relation between Iran and gulf countries has been under strain.

a) Pakistan, Iran; and Saudia

Pakistan has close ties with Iran and Saudia. However both these countries were not on good terms with each other. Iran and Saudia has been involved in proxy wars due to secretarian conflicts. Recently China acted as a mediator and resolved their mutual conflicts.

b) Pakistan, Iran, and UAE

Iran and UAE also have certain conflicts. Pakistan has often extended its offer to act as a mediator between the two countries.

c Pakistan, Iran, and Oman

Iran and Oman are on good terms with each other. Pakistan also has cordinal ties with both countries.

Pakistan's approach to Iran and its allies

Pakistan wants to extend cordinal relation between Iran and it's allies. Pakistan's foreign policy should be based on enhancement of trade and investment. Recently Pakistan also exported military equipments to Iran. On the other hand, Pakistan should not neglect it's own geopolitical importance and in the favour of Iran. Our prime focus regarding Iran should be the completion of gas pipe line project.

Question # 3

Compare and contrast Pakistan's foreign policy approaches towards Afghanistan and Iran. To what extent have border security, sectarian conflicts, and economic interests

influenced its diplomatic posture towards both neighbours?

{Solution}

Afghanistan and Iran are both neighbouring countries of Pakistan. Afghanistan has been engulfed in civil wars as well as invasion. Iran on the other end had to face sanctions. Pakistan has opted different foreign policy for both these countries.

Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan

Pakistan had to face a lot of security threat from Afghanistan. Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan can be summarized in 3 different stages

a) Post Independence of Pakistan

After independence, Afghanistan opposed Pakistan in United Nations. Despite that, Pakistan still tried to develop cordinal relations with Afghanistan. On the issue

of Durand line, Pakistan adopted a strict policy and did not let Afghanistan lay claim on one inch of its land.

Diplomatic ties between both countries were cutoff when Afghan nationals attacked Pakistan's embassy in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandhar. Diplomatic ties were restored with the help of Reza Shah of Iran who act as a mediator between the two countries.

b) USSR invasion of Afghanistan

The foreign policy of Pakistan changed when USSR invaded Afghanistan. Pakistan opened its borders for thousand of Afghan nationals. Pakistan provided military as well as economic support to Afghanistan against USSR.

During this period Pakistan align itself with the western block and NATO. Pakistan also participated in Geneva talks after which USSR withdrew its troops from Afghanistan.

c) Taliban government

Taliban came to power in Afghanistan twice. The first time Taliban took over Kabul after Najeebullah lost control. Pakistan tried to extend & cordinal ties with the new Afghan regime.

After 9/11 US invaded Afghanistan and overthrew Afghan government. An interim government was setup under Hamid Karzai. Karzai often accused Pakistan for supporting Taliban. He reportedly said

"Taliban leadership is based in Pakistan. This is not a secret"

Islamabad denied all these accusations. When US withdrew its troops from Afghanistan, Taliban took over and Karzai fled the country. Pakistan again accepted the Taliban regime and tried to develop cordinal ties with Afghanistan.

Pakistan's overall foreign policy towards Afghanistan

Overall, Pakistan has always faced security threats from Afghanistan. These security threats range from Taliban to Pakhtoonistan. No proper trade was established in energy sector. Pakistan's foreign policy has always been of caution and defense towards Afghanistan.

Pakistan's foreign policy towards Iran

Pakistan has guided its foreign policy with Iran through international sanctions, sectarian diplomacy etc. Pakistan's foreign policy with Iran can be summarized into 2 phases

a) Before Iranian revolution

Before the Iranian revolution, Iran was ruled by Reza Shah who maintained good ties with Pakistan. Iran was also the first country to recognize Pakistan as an independent state. The monarch of Iran Reza Shah also visited Pakistan in 1950. Both countries were on good terms and their relation was based on trade

and investment.

After Iranian Revolution

After Islamic revolution in Iran, a rise in sectarian conflicts was seen in Pakistan. Both countries were also involved in long term energy projects. Towards Iran our foreign policy was of mutual interest. From time to time there were some security threats from Iran, but they were short lived.

Towards Afghanistan, our foreign policy was guided by due to security issues. Towards Iran our foreign policy was based on mutual interest.