

Q4. Discuss the Contours of Pakistan's Strategic Relations with India and Afghanistan in Detail. Do you Foresee any Serious Security Challenges from These Neighbors in Near Future? Explain Your Opinion with Scholarly Evidences.

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(CSS-2025) Current Affairs

QUESTION # 4**ANSWER****1. INTRODUCTION:**

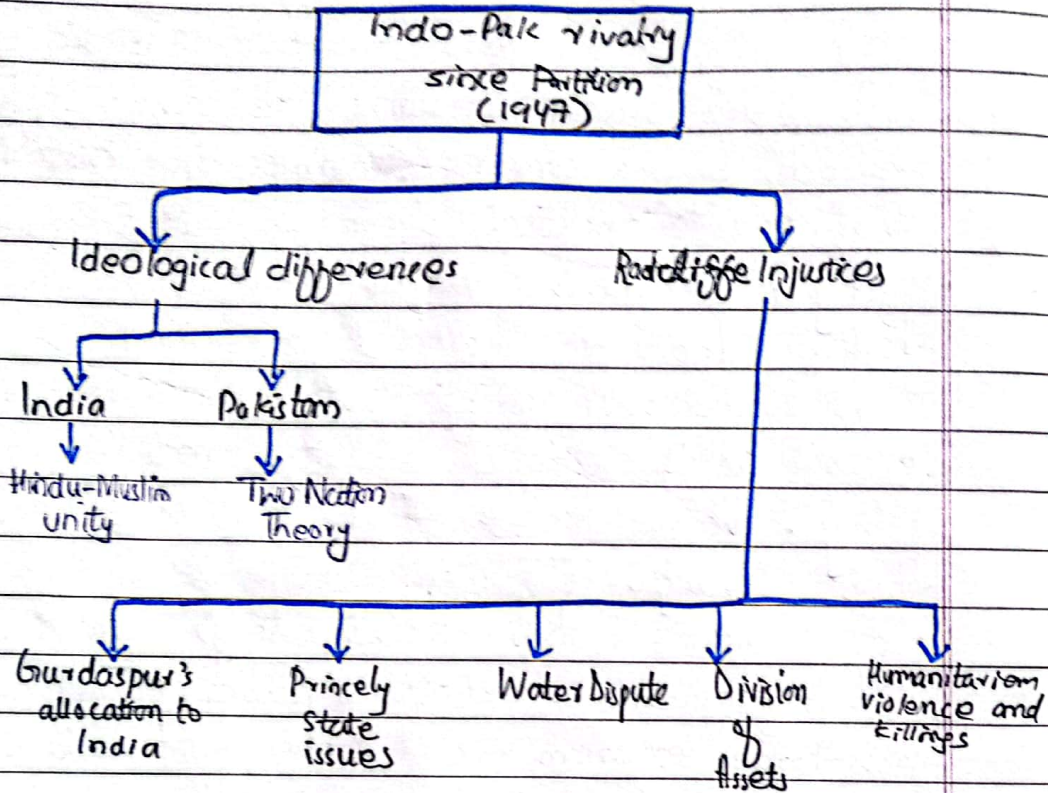
Pakistan's strategic relations with India and Afghanistan are strongly influenced by a complex dynamics of historical and geopolitical dynamics. Most importantly, Pakistan's unique location, which borders India to the east and Afghanistan to the west, makes relations with both countries essential to its national security and foreign policy. Various factors that impacted Pakistan's strategic ties with India and Afghanistan include Kashmir dispute, water conflict, frequent stand offs, border tensions, cross-border terrorism and trade and transit interests. The security concerns that Pakistan may face from its neighbours in future are weaponization of war, satellite based assault, regional isolation, insurgency and infiltration from Afghanistan and Pak-Afghan war over the shared Kabul river. In order to normalize the relations with Kabul and New Delhi, Pakistan must adopt a multidimensional approach that strikes a balance between security considerations, diplomatic engagement and regional collaboration.

2. AN HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF PAKIS-

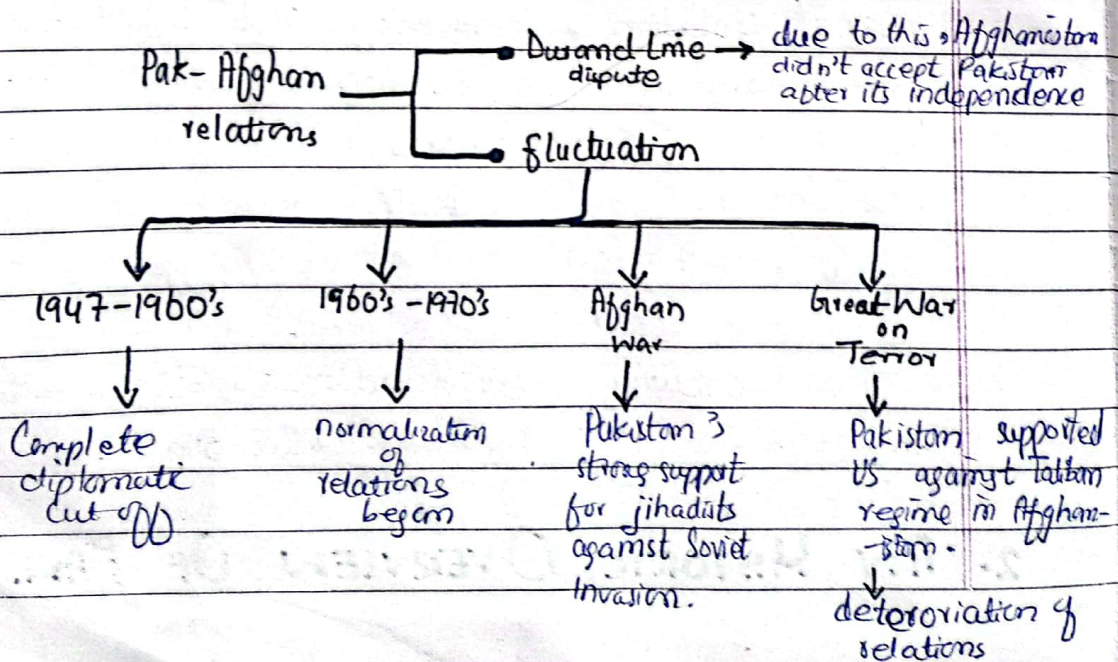
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-TAN'S RELATIONS:

(i) WITH INDIA:



(ii) WITH AFGHANISTAN:



3. CONTOURS OF PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC RELATIONS :

(i) WITH INDIA :

a) KASHMIR DISPUTE, STRAINING RELATIONS :

Kashmir issue is at the heart of Indo-Pak straining relations. The issue has intensified when India abrogated article 370 in 2019 ending the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir. The Express Tribune reported that :

“India's abrogation of Article 370 has effectively ended the constitutional and legal basis of Kashmir's accession to India. Pakistan views it as a breach of Simla Agreement (1972) and UNSC resolution which require the dispute to be settled through dialogue or plebiscite.”

Pakistan took the issue to United Nations Security Council and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Pakistan's ~~current~~ permanent representative to United Nations also highlighted the issue in recent United Nations General Assembly's session. But, due to continual Indian refusal of international mediation and consideration

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of the issue as an internal matter kept the Indo-Pakistans suspended since 2019.

b) Indus Water Treaty, Augmenting Mistrust:

The Indus Water Treaty's abeyance by India unilaterally and construction of Kishanganga and Ratle hydropower plants are the prominent violations of Indus Water Treaty itself, International law and Vienna Conventions. The issue has become a national security issue for Pakistan as it significantly relies on Indus water for agriculture. Pakistan's appealed in Court of Arbitration which gave the decision in Pakistan's favour, stating that competence of Indus Water treaty cannot be affected by unilateral suspension and in the eyes of neutral observers, the treaty very much holds. But India did not accept the ruling of court further widening the mistrust in Indus Water treaty and normalization of relations.

c) SECURITY DILEMMA, THE RECENT

STANDOFF:

India's increasing regional alliances specially the defence partnerships have pushed Pakistan into a security dilemma. Therefore, Pakistan had to increase its military strength through an alliance with China to counter India. The alliance proved to be fruitful when India recently launched attacks on Pakistan, alleging latter of Pakistan terror attack. Although, there was no proof of Pakistan's involvement. Pakistan retaliated under its right of self-defence in UN charter. India faced humiliation globally due to its continuous refusal of a neutral investigation into the matter favoured by Pakistan and violation of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty and integrity.

• FITNA - AL - HINDUSTAN

After the recent standoff, India turned to an indirect war with Pakistan through its proxies. Following the recent clash, the attacks of insurgents increased significantly specially on armed forces. Pakistan army started small scale operations against these Indian backed terrorist and named it "Fitna Al-Hindustan". This prioritization

Hindustan

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of aggression by India over diplomacy has exposed how much Modi's India has deviated from Nehruvian idea of India.

• COMPLICIT SUPPORT FOR SEPARATISTS:

India is further trying to intricate the security dilemma by supporting Baloch separatists in Pakistan through its terror financing. India's Research and Analysis Wing Agent, Kalbhushan Jadhav confessed that India is actively financing and organizing terrorist activities in Balochistan. He also claimed that RAW provided weapons, IEDs and logistical support to Baloch separatists.

(ii) WITH AFGHANISTAN:

a) BORDER DISPUTE AND CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM:

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long international border. Since partition, Afghanistan did not recognize the border which was the first condition to recognize Pakistan as a sovereign country. Also, the border is porous. So, the terrorist groups like IS-K and TTP easily cross the border.

and cause unrest in Pakistan. Thus, the withstanding border dispute and Afghanistan's backed cross-border terrorism are the key reasons of strained relations between two countries.

b) Increase In Transit Trade :

Despite the frequent clashes, both countries are trying to normalize the relations through trade. Since, Afghanistan is a landlocked country so, most of its trade occurs through Wakhan Corridor ^{a route} provided by Pakistan. Pakistan also provided it sea route of Gwadar Port for trade. Recently, a second ^{transit} vessel of Afghanistan called Rose Vessel arrived at Gwadar Port which is a significant development in regional trade and transit facilities.

c) Pakistan - China - Afghanistan Trilateral Meeting :

The recent trilateral meeting paves the way for improved relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan as the latter one decided to be part of CPEC which will increase the regional cooperation and trade significantly between the

two. Through China's collusion, both countries also agreed to improve the bilateral relations as Pakistan highlighted the risk of terror from Afghanistan's soil.

4. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN IN FUTURE:

a) FROM INDIA:

(i) WEAPONISATION OF WATER:

As evident from the recent unilateral abeyance of Indus Water Treaty and Narendra Modi's war mongering narratives claiming that it will not allow any water to a terrorist country, shows the potential threat of water being used as a weapon in future. Current PM also exposed this nefarious idea of India to weaponize water in the near future.

(ii) ^{THREAT} ~~THREAT~~ OF ISOLATION:

India's growing political and diplomatic influence threatens Pakistan of regional isolation as well as global isolation. Due to India's

influence in BRICS, Pakistan could not become a member of it. Similarly, at recent SCO meeting (not attended by China's and Russia's presidents), all the member condemned Pahalgarh terror attack without naming Pakistan. This shows India's strong influence. Another regional organization SAARC remains inactive due to India's refusal to attend session in Islamabad. So, India's growing influence may leave Pakistan at a edge of isolation.

(b) FROM AFGHANISTAN:

(i) DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGE:

Pakistan's recent move of handing over Muhammad Shariqullah, an IS-K affiliate involved in Abbey Gate bombing, to US widened the gap of mistrust - as Afghan land is serving as safe heavens for IS-K and other terrorist groups, thus, Pakistan may face challenges in maintaining diplomatic relations with Afghanistan as Taliban regime in Kabul is not very happy with the move.

(ii) SECURITY CHALLENGE:

As the most active terrorist group, TTP in Pakistan is

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backed by Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, which is most recently targeting armed forces and government officials, despite Pakistan's continuous warning to Afghan government. Kabul did not take any satisfactory measure to avoid use of Afghan land against Pakistan, thus this challenge seems to persist in future too.

(iii) ESPIONAGE THROUGH AFGHAN LANDS.

Afghanistan's ^{constant} inclination towards India will allow easy access to RAW's espionage on Pakistan, another risk that seems to be present in future.

5. CONCLUSION:

Although, the ^{complex} strategic relations of Pakistan with India and Afghanistan are afflicted with serious challenges of future but Pakistan strongly believes in balancing of regional relations. In order to achieve the regional balance, Pakistan has to normalize the relations with its regional countries through a loud and strong diplomacy at regional as well as global level. Only then, Pakistan can become a regional balancer.