

Current Affairs

Mock June 2023

Q7 Critically evaluate the implications of Ukrainian war on Pakistan. What options do you see for Islamabad to follow in its relations with Russia?

Introduction:

The war between Ukraine and Russia started in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine. The conflict escalated into a full-scale war between the Ukrainian government and Russian-backed separatists in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk - Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022 under the pretence of national security - This war has given birth to several issues like economic implications for parties involved and exclusively for atomic states and one of them are global oil prices. The economic sanctions imposed by Western states on Russia will further determine the disruption in the supply Brent Crude oil and other exports by Russia. While Ukraine, which is the largest productive state of wheat and sunflower and other exports, will bring enormous challenges to the world economy inclusive Pakistan.

The crisis has far-reaching implications for the world, including Pakistan.

This crisis has far-reaching implications for the world including Pakistan. The conflict has already resulted in increased tensions between Russia and NATO, and has the potential to destabilize the entire region. This crisis has significant economic and political implications for entire world including Pakistan. The surge in global oil prices, disruptions in the supply of agricultural products, and decrease in foreign investment could lead to serious economic problems for Pakistan. Additionally, the crisis could lead to ~~an~~ increased arm sales, strained relationships with Russia, and heightened tensions with India. One of the most significant economic impacts of this crisis is global oil prices. As a result of the sanctions imposed on Russia, there will be a disruption in the supply of Brent Crude oil, which could lead to a global shortage of oil. This shortage could result in higher prices for oil and gas, which would increase the cost of living for people in Pakistan.

The conflict could disrupt the supply of goods:

Ukraine export wheat, sunflower oil, and other agricultural products. The conflict could disrupt the supply of these goods, which could lead to higher prices and food shortages in Pakistan. The blockade of Ukrainian ports by Russia has further exacerbated the situation as it has prevented

Ukrainian exports. This has put pressure on countries like Pakistan to find alternative suppliers for essential commodities such as wheat. As a result, the government may need to cover any shortages with expensive wheat imports, which could have significant economic implications for the country.

The conflict could lead to decrease in foreign investment in Pakistan

The crisis could lead to a decrease in foreign investment in Pakistan, as investors become wary of investing in countries that are politically unstable. The ongoing crisis could also have significant political implications for Pakistan. For example, the crisis has

already led to increased tensions between Russia and NATO. Moreover, Pakistan has ~~always~~ traditionally been an ally of Russia, and the current crisis could strain their relationship. The conflict could lead to increased tension between Pakistan and India, as both countries compete for Russia's support.

In addition, Pakistan could face pressure from the US and its allies to take a stance against Russia, which could further complicate the country's foreign policy.

The crisis could have significant impacts on the Pakistani economy.

Russia and Ukraine war has had significant impacts on the Pakistani economy. There has been a difference in the supply and demand

DATE: ___/___/___

of other commodities, which has led to concerns among Pakistani industrialists. The increase in prices of raw materials such as oil, wheat, and steel will not only affect industrial sector but also have a cascading effect on other sectors of economy, including the construction industry. The shortage of exported goods from Ukraine could also lead to price increases and shortages of essential commodities, which could directly affect the common man.

Options for Islamabad to follow in its relation with Russia:

It is important for Pakistani Government to take measures to mitigate the potential impacts of the conflict, such as diversifying trade relations with other countries and finding alternative sources for essential commodities.

Pakistan has no politico-strategic dispute with ~~China~~ Russia.

From the last 20 years Pakistan-Russia business forum and Pakistan-Russia Business Council platforms voice Russia as our neighbour. Pakistan has no politico-strategic dispute with Russia after the end of the Afghan war. Even in Cold war days in the late 1999 Pakistan had direct flights to Moscow of Aeroflot, and PIA had its

its flight to London via Moscow - These were stopped. It's time to revive these flights to facilitate business and trade between the two countries.

The opponents of any relationship with Russia should understand that every country establishes its trade and diplomatic relations for mutual interest and in this scenario the country comes first. If India is taking oil and energy from Russia, which has now reached the level of 1.4 million barrels, then why not Pakistan. There is immense scope to build up the trade and industry relationship for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

Pakistan will have to be aggressive in its endeavours if it wants to develop a beneficial mutual relationship.

In the areas of oil exploration, railway engineering and laying new railway lines for super-fast trains, chemical industry, urban transport systems based on electric, IT industry, film and art, aviation, education; there is immense scope to build up the ~~total mutual~~ relationship for mutual benefit of the two countries. Education is not only cheaper and has the same standard which is acceptable in the EU. However, knowing the

past experience, the government of Pakistan will have to be aggressive in its endeavours if it wants to develop a beneficial mutual relationship. It must also be a friendly relationship with Russia that will benefit both strategically, financially and much cheaper logistically. A special monitoring desk has to be established to ensure the policy decisions are pushed. There will be external pressures as well to be met with.

Pakistan has the option for to development of business cooperation with Russia.

In the past, with the little warmth Russia had been very helpful to giving Pakistan in the building of steel Mills and in power generation - They helped in the seventies in the search of oil and gas. Pakistan also received military equipment to a limited extent including the helicopters. Russia is an over \$30 billion consumer market. Pakistan has the opportunity to tap this market through land routes through transit in Afghanistan and Central Asia -

A couple of years back Inter Ras, the leading electric supplier company of Russia, had shown interest in supplying electricity to Pakistan through a transmission line. Now with Afghanistan in a

relatively stable condition under Taliban, arrangements can be made to construct this transmission line -

According to the Oil and Gas Research Institute in Moscow they have the data available ~~for~~ of the survey carried out provided the government of Pakistan shows some interest. With the changing scenario, when Russian companies are trying to find ~~to~~ avenues of investment because of the Ukraine America conflict a lot of money is being pumped into Dubai, Turkey and in various investment projects. Why not in Pakistan? It can be done to explore gas and oil as public-private infrastructure.

Similarly, a few years back a delegation of Russian railways had come to Pakistan and they were exploring joint ventures with Pakistan Railways. Having no positive response, things didn't move forward - Time has come that we explore and invoke the Russian railway coming to Pakistan. They be invited either to upgrade the existing tracks or build new lines besides MLT, like Swader Karachi, Peshawar Jalalabad and onwards other loop lines including upgradation of Karachi Quetta lines and linkage with Central Asia by railway line. Also, there is a scope for

DATE: ___/___/___

cooperation in the aviation sector, media, film industry and education scholarships - Pakistan can benefit from having electric tram services on existing roads to save the cost of expensive overhead infrastructure. Finally the immediate action should be establish direct air link and the banking system support any future endeavours in the business.

Conclusion:

The history of Pak-Russia relations depict lost opportunities, mostly by the Pakistani decision-making elite at the cost of rationality and national interests. Pak-Russia relation deserves rational understanding and a bold start.

However, in this globalized world, no state can live in diplomatic and economic isolation. Therefore, this new-found love for Russian should not again be compromised with rationality and national interests. Pakistan in its 're-visit' and 're-formed' foreign policy should have an even-handed approach to all great powers, near and distant, to fulfill their national security objectives.

Q6

Being the immediate neighbour it is important for Pakistan to keep good relations with Iran. Critically evaluate the hurdles and identify opportunities for Iskandari and Tehran to establish comprehensive engagement with each other.

Introduction:

Pakistan - Iran bilateral relations are rooted in historical linkages and based on religious, linguistic, cultural linkages and spiritual affiliation. Relations between Pakistan and Iran have by and large remained positive. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan after independence. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran, Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize the new dispensation. The two countries have supported each other at critical junctures in their history.

Iran and Pakistan became part of the US led Baghdad pact in 1955. Iran gave Pakistan full political and diplomatic support during India's 1965 and 1971 wars. Iran helped in restoring diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in 1963.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought substantial changes in Iran - Pakistan relations. Both countries condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan but backed

opposite Afghan factions - Iran supported the non-Pash-tun section, while Pakistan supported the Mujahideen, primarily Pash-tun. When the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the gap remained intact; the countries continued supporting opposite factions of the warlords, further widening the trust deficit. When the Taliban moved into Mazis Sharif after taking over Kabul, they killed several Iranian diplomats and Shia Hazaras in the north. This broke ties between the Taliban and Iran and harmed relations between Pakistan and Iran.

Another area of disagreement was the matter of access to the mineral-rich Central Asian states. Pakistan views Gwadar and Karachi's port of Qasim as the shortest routes, while Iran claims Chabahar and Bandar Abbas to be the apt links for communication with the outside world.

Hurdles for establishment of relationship between Pakistan and Iran:

9) Shia - Sunni factor

Among the instances in Pak-Iran relations, the Sunni - Shia rift is one of the causes of divergence between the two states. Iran, a country with a Shia majority, believed in supporting Shias in Pakistan and engaging

them in conflict zones to serve its interests. Alex Vatanka writes about how this factor hampers Pak-Iran relations:

The menace of Shia-Sunni violence is not only a catastrophe for the Pakistani nation, but it is also a yardstick to measure the readiness and abilities of Tehran to act as a protector of the Pakistani Shia. The Iranian authority go out of their way to bear the mantle of the global champion of Shia Muslim. However, while the plight of Pakistani Shias has become a rallying cry for some aspects of the Iranian regime, Tehran's actions sorely match its most fervent rhetoric about the suffering of Pakistan's Shia (Vatanka, Iran and Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy and American Influence, 2015)

Iran believes that Shia community is under repression in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and they shall be helped.

- India - Iran Strategic Partnership
- b) ~~Pakistan - Saudi Relations as a factor~~
Iran's close relations with India concern Islamabad, like Saudi-Pakistan cooperation, and this closeness is a bother for Tehran. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been rivals for a long time. Pakistan does not want to antagonize its relations with either state.

Now the relations between Iran and KSA are becoming good which is good for Pakistan also.

Pakistan wants to thwart any Indian effort against Pakistan from the Iranian side. Pakistan cannot afford to allow India to make its political, strategic and economic foothold strong in Iran which will threaten Pakistan's interest and security. Hence, it wants good relations with Tehran for strategic and economic factors.

India established its Bandar Abbas consulate in 2002, a source of concern for Islamabad. Through this consulate, India can monitor the movement of ships through the Persian Gulf. The presence of Indian engineers at Chabahar and of Indian military advisors and intelligence officials in Iran confers on India significant access to Iran. This access is essential for India's ability to project power vis-à-vis Pakistan and Central Asia. It gives India a better way to keep an eye on Pakistan and even lets India use Iran to launch non-conventional operations against Pakistan.

d) Sunni Insurgents: A big bottleneck in improving Pak-Iran Relations. Sunni Insurgents who operate in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province are severe concern for Tehran. Iran blames Pakistan for extending support to these organizations.

or at least providing them with a haven in Balochistan. However, Pakistan has denied sheltering militants on its soil or turning a blind eye to them. Even more clashes occurred between Pakistani and Iranian border forces in October 2014, when Iranian guards entered Pakistani territory, claiming to be looking for militants who had fled to Pakistan.

Jundullah is a violent movement against Iran, and many people blame it for terrorist attacks that happened in Iran. Iran ~~demanded~~ summoned Pakistan's envoy to Tehran to make a strong protest Pakistan's failure to dismantle Jundullah's network on its territory (MIR, June 1, 2009). However, the two countries adopted a policy of covering the issue. Time and again, from Pakistan, Iran has been demanding concrete steps to contain Jundullah's activities. Pakistan has made sincere efforts in this regard - Jundullah's issue has severely affected Pak - Iran relations in the new millennium.

Opportunities for Islamabad and Tehran to establish comprehensive engagement with each other.

Several ~~cooperative~~ factors could lead to close cooperation between both states -

Taliban factor

One, the Taliban factor, has been critical in both states relations. There was divergence in the past over the Taliban. However, there has been close contact between the Taliban and Tehran the last several years because their interest converged in Afghanistan. The Taliban's modest approach towards other ethnic groups, especially Shias, was vital for Tehran.

Similarly, Iran and Taliban wish for the US to leave Afghanistan. This convergence has positive impacts on Pak-Iran relations. Afghanistan is a place where Tehran and Islamabad can work together and get closer to each other.

Sectarian Conflict:

Second, the sectarian conflict in Pakistan is under control, which has been a severe concern for Pakistan.

Tandullah activities are minimal and Pakistan's border with Sistan-Baluchistan is relatively secure.

Previously, Iran was concerned about the Tandullah insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan. In the same way, there is a problem with the Zainabiyun Brigade, and Tehran

needs to rethink its policy of sending Pakistanis to fight in Syria.

c) China - Iran Partnership

Third, the China-Iran 25 years Comprehensive Partnership will bring Tehran close to Beijing and Pakistan. The China-US competition brought China and Iran close to each other.

Similarly, a close friendship between Pakistan and China could bring Tehran and Islamabad into the same page. China, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan can work for connectivity and trade with each other.

d) Iran and India gap.

A gap between Iran and India could change Pak-Iran relations. When China and Iran came close, it affects Iran-India relations. Hence, China-Iran closeness and a gap between India and Iran could provide prospects for Pak-Iran relations.

Conclusion:

The post-9/11 strategic environment of the region brought new opportunities and challenges for Iran and Pakistan, affecting their bilateral and multilateral relations. Pakistan and Iran's interests and concerns are interlinked in the

DATE: ___/___/___

new regional and global environment - Although Pakistan was a close ally of US, it did not allow the US any facilities for any adventures against its neighbours, such as Iran - Iran - US confrontation is not the interest of Pakistan. The region was volatile, which badly affected Pakistan's internal security. Both Iran and Pakistan are the victims of terrorism. The appropriate way to eliminate this menace is to promote close bilateral cooperation, intelligence sharing, and mutual trust between the countries. Besides, they should work for the socio-economic uplift of the deprived class of society, where terrorism ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~constantly~~ ^{constantly} thrives. Pakistan and Iran have no territorial or other significant disputes, and their relations are traditionally friendly. Pakistan's threat perception is from India, not from Iran. Iran stood by Pakistan in times of trouble. However, any step Iran takes in collaboration with India must keep Pakistan's concerns in mind. The friendship between China and Iran will also help make things better between Pakistan and Iran.