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"Pak-Afghan Relations amid rising terrorist Attacks and Pakistan's decision to deport Afghan refugees"

Introduction:

Since the takeover by Taliban and establishment of Taliban's government in Afghanistan, there has been surge in terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Pakistan has time and again tried to negotiate with Taliban government to control the attacks by Afghanistan based terrorist groups like TTP-chapter and ISK-P. Pakistan has asked Taliban government to not let the Afghan soil to be used against Pakistan, but these efforts seem futile as instead talks and negotiations, the intensity of attacks in Pakistan has only increased. Assessing the situation, Pakistan has resorted to a policy

decision of deportation of undocumented Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

- Resurgence of TTP and Taliban's disregard for its commitments to control militancy:

In the recent years Pakistan has seen a dramatic surge of 51% in terrorist attacks, mainly in KPK and Balochistan. 75 attacks have been recorded after May 2023 and TTP has taken their responsibility. This is disturbing for the internal security of Pakistan. Pakistan has tried to remind Afghanistan of its commitments of Doha Accord but the Taliban government seems very reluctant to resolve TTP issue and fulfil its commitments.

Pakistan also accuses Taliban government to support terrorist groups like TTP, ISK-P, who want to destabilize security in Pakistan and have ideology of implementing Shariya in Pakistan while calling the current state practices unlawful.

## Islamabad's decision to pull out Afghan Refugees

In the wake of grave security issues in Pakistan and inaction by Taliban government to contain terrorist groups, Pakistan resorted to different policies, an important decision of which is deportation of undocumented Afghan refugees.

### • Government directive and Security concerns:

Analyzing the terrorist attacks, interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti mentioned that majority of attacks in Pakistan have been facilitated by Afghan refugees in Pakistan, mainly in KPK and Balochistan. There's a rise in militant activity by groups like TTP, BLA, BFA, USKP etc. Government in response issued a notice to illegally present, undocumented refugees in Pakistan to leave voluntarily by end October or they'll be forcefully deported. This decision is imposed on hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees.

- Deportation of Afghan refugees and diplomatic tensions b/w Afghanistan and Pakistan:

After Pakistan implemented the decision of deporting Afghan refugees after the given deadline, Afghanistan Kabul responded bitterly. In a statement by Taliban Spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid, he asked Islamabad to reconsider its decision and asked Pakistan to resolve its internal issues instead of blaming refugees involvement.

"Afghan refugees have no involvement in any militant activity, Pakistan should resolve its security issues instead of blaming."

- Statistics of Afghan refugees and criticism from Human rights watch:

According to this recent decision, Pakistan will be deporting more than 1.2 Million Afghan Refugees which has activated international human rights watch.

This issue is a double sword for Pakistan as managing Afghan Refugees

is an economic burden during poor economic situation of Pakistan and a security threat to Pakistan.

- The Afghan Refugees Conundrum =  
An analysis:

Afghan refugees started crossing border in 1979 for the first time when Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Pakistan accommodated these refugees and took care of them. Later on, in the second phase, Afghan refugees came to Pakistan in large numbers when US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 in war against terror. Pakistan catered for almost 4 million Afghan refugees during this time. The problem of managing them was created which was managed with the help of UNHCR.

Now that Afghanistan has its own government, there is a confusion around refugee status of Afghan refugees. Pakistan is just in its approach to maintain peace and security but is it the only way to restore it?

• The dilemma around deportation:

Around 95% of all refugees in Pakistan, are Afghans. Most of them came in 1979 and have been here. Now they claim Pakistan to be their homeland and have a generation that has only seen Pakistan as ~~their~~ its country.

However, Pakistan highlights security issues as the main cause. Pakistan's previous involvement with extremist entities makes its position more vulnerable, now that terrorist groups have safe heaven in ~~the~~ Afghanistan due to Taliban government and a rising support from inside Pakistan.

• Conclusion:

Terrorism in Pakistan has seen a dramatic surge in recent years owing to Taliban rise in Afghanistan. The decision of deporting Afghans is quite big and can have dire consequences for national security of Pakistan. The situation could have dealt in a better way by speeding up the registration process of refugees and

by better management all along. Since Pakistan has implemented the decision with effect from Nov. 1, 2023, now it's imperative for Pakistan to maintain good diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, strengthen its internal security, increase collaboration with China and Russia to fight terrorism in the region effectively.

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### US-India Strategic Partnership and its implications for Pakistan

#### • Introduction:

Post Cold-War, ~~the~~ ~~the~~ US-India relationship has strengthened on many fronts. After 2000, the US-India relations <sup>have</sup> seen a turn towards "friendly collaborations" on different fronts like military, economy and technology. The growing US-India strategic partnership is primarily to contain China as China has been emerging as an economic competitor to USA in Asia.

USA fearing that China will replace its hegemony in Asia, started a strategic partnership with India to contain the influence of China. This relationship b/w US and India has assumed the shape of complex interconnectedness. This US-India strategic partnership is not only trying to contain China but it has far reaching impacts on Pakistan as India's increasing capability is destabilizing the balance in the South Asia.

- Indo-US strategic partnership in defense:  
India and USA entered different defense treaties in order to strengthen military cooperation. The important ones are as follows:

- General security of military information agreement - GSOMIA:

US and India signed this treaty in 2002 to share the military intelligence information. It also encompasses military exercises that will be performed jointly.



- Defense Technology and Trade Initiative:

According to DTII, US and India came out of traditional buyer-seller relationship and increased strategic partnership on transfer of defense technology and arms trade.

- Civil Nuclear Initiative:

According to this initiative USA transferred civil nuclear technology to India and facilitated its use for India.

- Ballistic Missile Cooperation:

USA is cooperating with India greatly on the defense front and is facilitating India's acquisition of modern missile technology.

India got PAC-2 and with PAC-3 India will acquire the antimissile technology.

George W. Bush and Obama administration have been instrumental in increasing strategic partnership with India. India's defense expenditure with USA has increased to more than \$8 billion.

## • Indo-US strategic partnership in Trade and Technology:

India and US have partnered on other fronts like trade and technology. India and US trade has recently been around \$190 Billion. Moreover, there is bilateral cooperation on advanced technologies like AI, semiconductors, telecom etc.

## • More areas of cooperation:

India and USA are in a complex interdependence as they are cooperating on other areas like healthcare, green energy, climate change etc.

## • Main purpose is to contain China:

This strategic partnership is mainly based on the principle of containing<sup>in</sup> China and decreasing its influence and halting its expansion. A recent step in this domain is India - Middle East - Europe corridor, a counterbalance to BRI.

## Implications for Pakistan:

1- Security dilemma for Pakistan = USA is disturbing balance of power in SAAs. India is acquiring more and more power militarily which is creating security chaffan for Pakistan and disturbing the military balance of power in the region.

2- India's increasing violence in IIOJK. Increasing military capability is making India more confident to exert military pressure in IIOJK and with the support of USA suppress the cause of IIOJK.

• Arms Race in the region.

Pakistan is at vulnerable position as India acquires modern technology and intelligence sharing so it might resort to an arms race with India.

## Policy options:

- Enhancing cooperation with China and Russia:

Pakistan should enhance its cooperation with China and Russia in order to acquire more military capability to counter India's increasing hegemony in region.

- Better ties with USA:

Pakistan should re-establish better ties with USA and maintain good diplomatic relations with her so that the issue of Kashmir is not neglected.