

CURRENT AFFAIRS - MOCK

Q.6. PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS IN THE WAKE OF REPEATED TERRORIST ATTACKS

• Introduction:

Pak-Afghan relations began in 1947 and the status of both have been described as that of 'inseparable brothers' by Hamid Karzai. However, long-term cordial relations could not be achieved due to several critical matters at hand. As we traverse through history of relations between the two countries, it can be seen that despite sharing a common religion,

race, history, ethnicity and geography several issues such as the Durand line crisis or more importantly terrorism are also seen. For a long period of time terrorism in Pakistan has been associated with Afghans and their militant groups such as TTP, IKSP etc. Even though the attacks had settled after successful military operations, a recent resurgence is seen once again in Pakistan.

• The Afghan Refugee Crisis:

After the war of 1979 and then in the post-9/11 era, Pakistan had opened its warm arms for their suffering Afghani brothers across the border. So much so, that more than 2 million refugees fled into Pakistan. At first they were mere refugees, who sought a place for shelter. However, the real effect of their presence was soon felt.

(1) Insurgence of Terrorism:

Pakistan experienced a fresh wave of terrorism with more than several attacks per day. At first,

such attacks were limited to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA, the peak of it being year 2010-2013. Gradually, these attacks trickled down to other provinces. There was an increased Taliban infiltration who were not only training and attacking through terrorists but also accepted to be behind these attacks.

(2) Increased Arms Production and Klasknikov Culture:

Under the newly settled Afghanis, the local weapon industry thrived developed and thrived. This led to the increased Klasknikov culture. Weapons were easily available to common man even if they did not have licence for it. Not only were they used to open fire at the weddings but also were so readily available that it increased the incidences of local crimes. And so, with the terrorist attacks, local crime rate was also increased.

(3) Population Explosion:

~~#~~ A good amount of ~3.2 million Afghan refugees had settled in Pakistan, some registered and several un-registered. This caused a demographic shift and took a toll on ~~the~~ the economy of Pakistan. They were not only taking up the little amount of jobs there were for Pakistanis but also using the space that was much needed for the development of local people. Moreover, the burden on the local resources had also increased.

(4) Drug Infiltration:

Pakistan saw the worst drug infiltration during these times. The Afghans who grew opium in their homeland, began to sell here. The infiltration was so severe that fatality due to drug abuse was seen commonly all over Pakistan.

• The Current Scenario:

Despite several attempts of getting rid of the terrorism and other ills that came with the Afghans, it

can be seen how nothing has been settled. Intense ~~op~~ military operations were carried out such as Zarb-e-Azb to wipe the name of TTP from Pakistan. However, the recent Afghan rule that was established in 2021, brought about a new wave of issues for Pakistan.

(1) General Elections Afghanistan, 2021:

After the withdrawal of US from Afghanistan, the Taliban came into power. Their long-lost yet undefeated government was established once again. However, the locals who had already suffered greatly at the hands of Taliban rule, once again fled from Afghanistan. Their increased number of people, once again, became the inhabitants of Pakistan. Soon, all the efforts to check terrorism in Pakistan were slowly reversing.

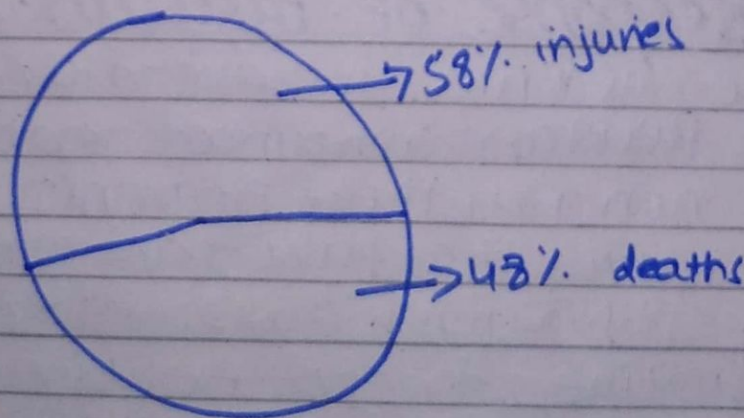
(2) Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan:

As a newly established Afghani society would be seen in the

FAIA and KPK region, soon the terrorist attacks were once again in their zeal and zest. The Counter Terrorism Department noticed that the highest number of attacks were seen in 2023 than 2014.

(3) Nature of Terrorist Attacks:

Nearly half of the attacks that were witnessed in Pakistan were targeting the security forces. According to the data given by PICSS, the security forces were the primary targets of these attacks with civilians constituting to be the second-largest victim category. As it can be seen as follows:



This data showed that 58% injuries were inflicted whereas 43% deaths of the security personnel were seen.

(4) Incidents in 2022 and 2023:

According to the data collected by PICSS, there was a 90% increase in the attacks from last year. During the later half of 2023, there was a series of attacks which primarily targeted the security forces and then general public. The attack in Mair on a Friday congregation was seen that resulted in a lot of casualties. Then an attack was witnessed where 23 soldiers embraced martyrdom. In another event, a firing incident on a police vehicle resulted in 8 casualties.

• Response of Pakistan:

The interim or caretaker government of Pakistan announced that all the non-registered Afghani's were to leave the Pakistani premises by 1st November '2023. After the deadline, forceful expulsion was to occur. The unfathomable increase in Afghani population of around 3 million registered and 1.2 million unregistered settlers was to be reduced.

This had two aspects:

(a) To curb the evil of terrorism:

The resurgence in terrorist attacks were straight away attributed to the increased number of Afghans who were declared to be a part of TTP. ~~and~~ The Taliban were blamed for the increased attacks and thus this step of weeding them out was taken.

(b) Population Explosion and its side effects:

Another aspect that was kept in mind was the increased population that had caused severe demographic effects on Pakistan. From the over-utilization of resources and inflation to increased population density, all were made the basis of the decision to pull out Afghan refugees.

• PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS

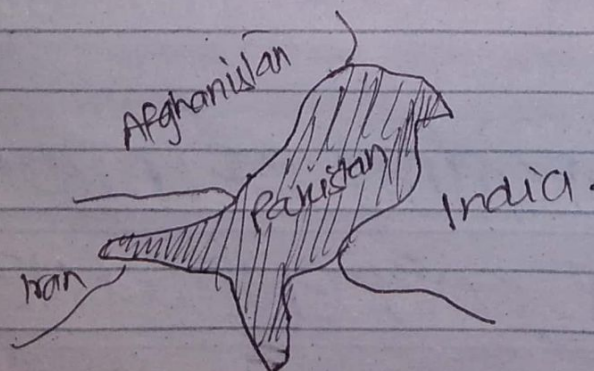
UNDER CURRENT SCENARIO:

In the light of current issues i.e. the removal of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and sending them

back to Afghanistan, the relations between the two states has taken a new turn.

Not only do both states not trust one another anymore but the crisis of Durand line is also once again being highlighted. It is speculated that the issues previously repressed would now once again cause a bone of contention between the two states.

Moreover, it is of regional importance as our hostile neighbour in the west, India is forming cordial relations with Afghanistan. Now, Pakistan has also severed its ties in the east. ~~Now~~ This means that Pakistan is sandwiched between two hostile neighbours as it can be seen as follows:



This can have long term consequences for the safety and

mere presence of Pakistan. Thus, it can be seen that all previous efforts to establish neighbourly relations have gone down the drain.

Conclusion:

It can be analyzed that such severe steps were, nonetheless, a requirement to curb the evil of terrorism in Pakistan. However, it can also be said that longterm consequences would have been better studied. It is true that a lot of social evils had spread because of the actions of the Eastern settlers, however, most of them have seen no other land as their own but Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan is at a vulnerable state where it can afford any more enemies. And yet, Pakistan has lost another friend in the region. That, too, a neighbour.

Q.4.

KSA - IRAN RAPPROACHMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON ME AND PAKISTAN

• Introduction:

KSA- Iran relations have always been strained. To achieve harmony between these two nations is seemingly a far-fetched dream. Not just that but middle East itself is a region of geopolitical complexities which means that it is not just the matter of friendship between the two powerful nations; but ^{the} its ticking down effect of this friendship and union. If these two countries keep their differences aside and work on a common ground i.e. the Islamic faith, it would have wonderful effects and implications on middle East as well as Pakistan.

• KSA - Iran Rivalry:

Apart from misunderstandings between the two countries, the US-led forces

are also responsible for creating a gap between the two. There seems to be a constant involvement of the US as a potent force. Furthermore, the role of the leaders is quite significant, as the monarchs of the two countries have been heavily influential on the policies of their respective countries.

→ The Sunni-Shia Divide:

The Sunni-Shia divide of the two countries has overshadowed a lot of political and economic reforms. Iran's religious inclination is towards the Shia sect of Islam and the KSA ideology of religion is heavily influenced by Sunni beliefs. These two ideologies have always resulted in a clash at local, regional, national or international level. Therefore, have been a bone of contention between the two.

→ US - a Key Player in Widening Saudi-Iran Gap:

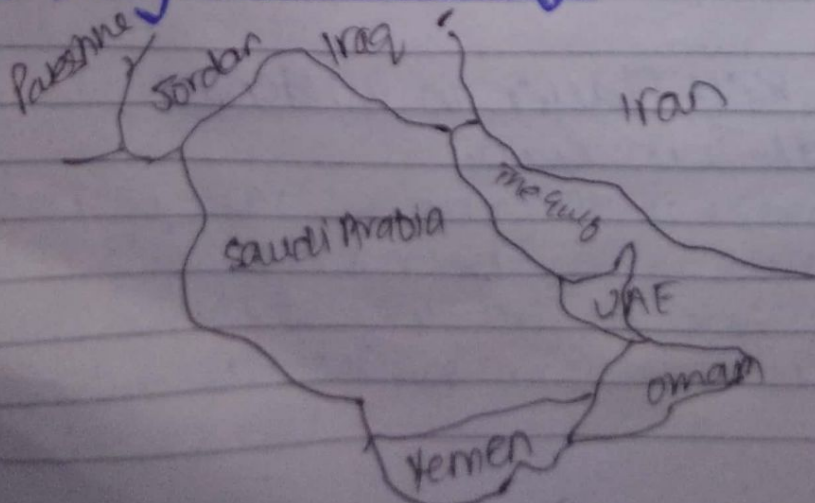
It was beneficial for the US to not have regional stability in the middle East. Moreover, the distancing of two most powerful muslim states was necessary

to create an overall imbalance in muslim states and hinder their progress. The role of US ~~to~~ against muslim nations is an age old tale and its aspects can also be seen in the middle East.

• KSA-Iran Reapproachment:

Not only the regional states but all national and international agencies understand the importance of the union of KSA-Iran. ~~Not at~~ This would ultimately result in the most powerful clan formation when all the countries that are already in alliance with the respective nations would come together.

(a) Regional Stability:



Saudia and Iran are two largest countries seen in the middle East. Middle East itself houses countries that are drenched in geo-political issues.

• Yemen:

In the south of both lies Yemen. It has been involved in an ongoing war with the US-led coalition. It had not been long that US pulled out of Yemen, when the Israel-Palestine issue began. Yemen is playing an active role in the matter. It had barely escaped a war and was already facing food crisis etc. Now, it is once again unstable.

• Israel-Palestine conflict:

In the west of both, Israel-Palestine conflict has been going on since 1948. Even presently a mass scale genocide is being witnessed. Palestinians are losing their lives everyday and the land is becoming inhabitable by ^{the} day. Iran has openly declared war against Israel and is supporting the Hezbollah to combat the attack on innocent civilians. Iran has been giving statements in the favour of Palestine while condemning the role of US and Israel in the war.

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However, the KSA has published no such statement and has not come out in the support of Palestine. This action can be attributed to the intense economic drive on part of KSA and their non-readiness to cut ties with the west.

Therefore, if both come together, they have the ability and the socio-political and economic power to drive the ill forces out of the affected states and cause stability.

(b) Prosperity and Peace:

This stability would result in peace and prosperity in the region. It would result in economic and political gains for the affected states. ~~It would also end the~~

(c) End of Extremism and Separatism:

The cordial relations between the two countries would mean that they have joined together their hands for the better. This would

mean that there would be end of separatism and extremism. These images of hostility have become a trademark of muslims. When the middle East would be on the same page, all the divisions would end and thus the label of extremists and separatists can be torn off.

(d) KSA - Iran mediation by China:

For the first time ~~ever~~ in a long time, China has been able to do the impossible. Recently, China led mediation between KSA and Iran to improving ties between ~~the~~ Iran and KSA.

Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, brokered this mediation and lauded the efforts on the part of both.

Wang also pledged to continue the support of the two countries in the ME in exploring a developmental path that would suit their national conditions.

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Effect of KSA - Iran Rapprochement on Pakistan:

The Saudi-Iran reconciliation would prove to be an opportunity for Pakistan. As Iran's neighbour, Saudi's partner and China's key ally, Pakistan will see major benefits from this rapprochement. As they both will resume diplomatic relations, it would not only be of regional benefit but also of benefit to Pakistan.

The normalization of ties between Iran and Saudi will be seen as:

(a) Neutrality:

Pakistan would no longer have a divided stance on their partnership with either states. Even though Pakistan claimed neutrality, Pakistan had always been inclined towards Saudi due to economic and religious dependancy. However, Pakistan has also made efforts to bring these two states to the table.

(b) Balanced Diplomatic Ties:

Now, due to rapprochement and the restoration of diplomatic ties, significant balance can be seen. Pakistan no longer has to take sides in the matters of the two states anymore.

(c) Peace and Security:

This union would welcome peace and security. In the past, the relations have been impacted by cross-border crime and terrorism, and a balanced approach toward both countries is crucial for addressing such issues.

(d) Opportunity for trade and economic growth:

The normalization of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia presents massive opportunities for trade and energy ties. Pakistan can benefit from increased economic cooperation with both states. Iran has always been an imminent trading partner of Pakistan and USA is also a significant economic ally. Not only would this union result in increased developmental projects but also would

mean more income for Pakistan in the form of remittances.

(c) Sectarian Tension:

The normalization of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran could have a positive impact on Pakistan in the form of decreased sectarian divide. Such partnership would mean that the sectarian division can be diffused and reduce the influence of extremist groups. This would also end extremism and marginalization. This coalition would bring about positive change in Pakistan by reducing sectarian tensions and promoting religious tolerance.

• Conclusion:

Pakistan has a constructive role in the mediation of the two states. It has always supported the restoration of diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Not only are these two states powerful and impactful to bring positive changes regionally but also can bring about massive change and benefits to Pakistan. Therefore, it is crucial that they both have cordial ties among themselves.