

C Current Affairs

Q8.

Introduction

Every great civilization has seen decline with time, just as the US is experiencing now. The US has long reigned as the world superpower and was largely unchallenged. However, the world now sees the emergence of other actors that challenge the US. Moreover, the US has in recent times been unable to achieve the internal stability and strength it once had. This can be blamed on economic volatility, political instability, unrestrained ~~unrestrained~~ neo-imperialism among other things. Furthermore, this may negatively impact the global leadership of the US as nations adopt anti-imperial stances, and form alliances with other powerful ^{global} actors and look after their own national interest.

Critical analysis of the causes of the US crisis

Neo-imperial mentality still prevalent which misdirects the US

The US follows an ^a neo-imperial approach by ~~forcing its nose~~ where infiltrating into the affairs of other nations. This takes

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away time and valuable resources from the US to these foreign endeavours that aren't necessary. For example, the US still tries to follow a neo-imperial approach in the Pacific Islands and tries to control these entities without while ignoring their national sovereignty.

Obsession to craft the world order: ^{Destiny} Manifest

The US still believes that the world order is theirs to construct. This can be devoted to the concept of **Manifest Destiny** which ~~do~~ adopts the mentality that the US has the right and privilege to force their ideologies on the world as they are superior. This leads them to not only remain on the top position but also pick and choose who stands shoulder-to-shoulder with them. This puppeteering has cost the US vital resources and led to them ignoring their ~~interests~~ ~~within~~ their borders.

Draining their national exchequer dry for boundless military expeditions

The US is currently directly and indirectly involved in several military

conflicts. This can be derived from for example, the US has their hands in Ukraine to which they provide military assistance, which will be ~~so discussed in detail~~. Moreover, the US has also involved itself in the Middle East crises in Syria and Hamas-Israel conflict. The ~~2022~~ ²⁰²² military expenditure in the US in ~~2022~~ shows ~~how much~~ the extent of resources spent on an area that is not linked to its development. To elaborate, the US spent \$877 billion in 2022 despite high inflation (Stockholm ~~Institute~~ International Peace Research Institute). This has led to the US crisis.

Backlash from the world community

The US has often followed a course of action while disregarding the welfare of other nations and the world community at large. This has been realised by world actors who are now keeping a distance from the US and openly criticising it. For example, previously the US could entice and convince other actors to adopt its views. However, now it cannot. This was evident when several countries decided to ~~not~~ abstain from voting on ceasefire in Ukraine without fear of US backlash.

Conflict between the Executive and the legislative bodies

There has been consistent turbulence between the executive and legislative branches. For example, Biden wanted Congress to approve a significant aid and military aid package to Ukraine. However, this was rejected by Congress. But Biden followed his own course of action and asked the US independent power to provide it. This conflict has led to instability in the US and contributed to its crisis. In the words of the 16th US President, Abraham Lincoln, "A house divided against itself, cannot stand!"

Increasing de-globalisation and nationalism

Globalisation is slowly losing its popularity as countries are trying to become self-sufficient and practise more nationalism. This has hurt the US economy which thrives on interdependence in the world economy. However, states are now seeing the downside of globalisation and closing their borders to protect their indigenous economy (Aizat Ahmad Chaudhry, De-globalisation?, 2023). Hence, the US economy has seen a major setback which contributes to crisis.

Rise of China as a counter to the US

China is well on its track to surpass the US by 2030. This has led to desperate attempts by the US to counter China politically and economically. For example, China to the US has become more involved in the South China Sea politics and has advocated for the total independence of Taiwan. China's rise economically has led to nations preferring it over the US. For example, the US suffered a major blow when Solomon Islands signed a security pact with China in 2022.

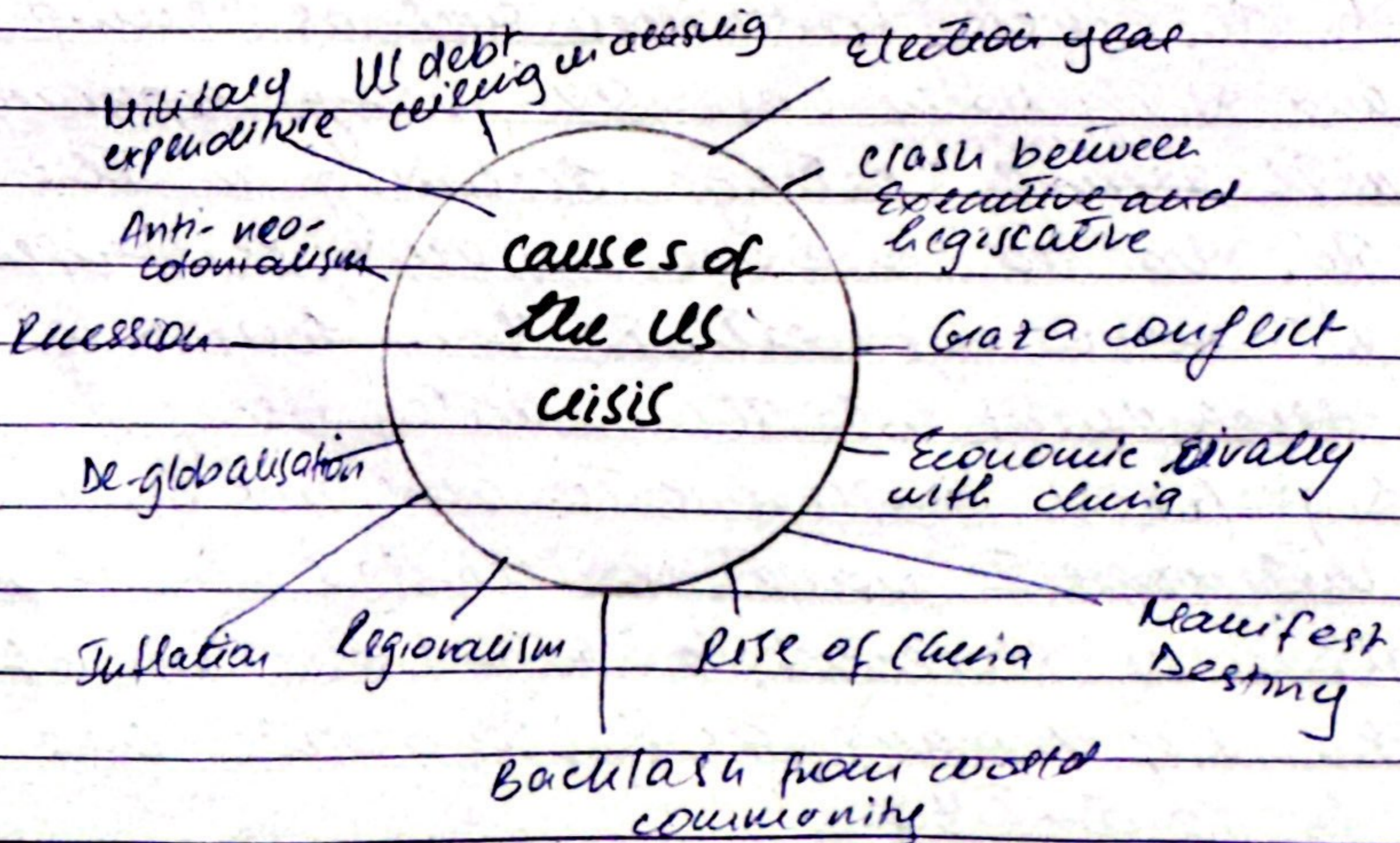
Turbulence during election year

Election year in the US has contributed to the crisis. Contenders such as Trump and Nikki Haley have seen rising popularity with ~~Trump's~~ ^{Biden's} ratings declining in the US. This has led to Biden walking a tightrope as he focuses on development of the country itself. Superficial improvements and not genuine improvements have contributed to the US crisis. Moreover, a stark division of the Republicans and Democrats has led to volatility.

Gaza - Israel conflict and bad image of the US

US has consistently vetoed at ~~and~~ a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza because of the strong Israel lobby. This has created a bad image for the US, particularly in the Middle East where the US depends for oil. The US has been unable to convince Saudi to increase supply to decrease the price of oil which further contributes to the crisis. The Gaza crisis has convinced the world that the US thrives on war and vetoes peace (Makela Godu; Vetoing peace, 2023). Overall the ^{Gaza} crisis has contributed to the US crisis.

causes of the US crisis - summary



Impact on US global leadership in the future

Rise of nationalism and self-sufficiency

With the rising US crisis, more countries will opt away from dependence on the US and more on national sovereignty. This was seen during the ceasefire vote for Ukraine where even India (a close ally of US) ~~abstained~~ abstained to vote and followed an independent policy by importing cheap Russian oil (Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary).

Pivot to China

Countries will move away from the US and towards China which provides more economic advantages. The US, if it keeps struggling, it will not have economic or strategic advantages to offer nations and as national interests depend on mutually benefiting from arrangements, the China will be the best choice leaving the US as no longer the world leader but China as a replacement.

Regional alliances over side US leadership

More nations will be drawn towards regional alliances compared to solely ~~the~~ relying on the US. For example, alliances such as Quad and BRICS are gaining more power. Although Quad includes the US, it should be noted that these nations ~~are~~ work in collaboration and ~~are~~ not along bilateral ties with the US. Thus, the US will see diminishing leadership power and will share the stage with others.

Nations still ^{look} want to the leadership of The US

US still top contender for alliance formation

The US is still the largest economy in the world and has the largest military sector. For example, the US spent \$877 billion in 2022 while China only spent \$292 billion in 2022. Thus, when it comes to leadership, despite crisis, the US may still remain at the top position especially when it comes to military support and leadership.

Post-election stability

US leadership may become more stable after elections as there would be less internal turbulence. This would lead to the US maintaining a strong grip on leadership. However, it depends on the foreign policy of the incoming government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the US is facing a major crisis which can be blamed on a plethora of factors. These range from external crises such as rise of China and de-globalisation and internal challenges such as elections and ^{excessive} military spending. The US may face leadership problems in the future due to regional alliances and rise of China. But, after elections and internal stability, this way leadership capabilities may increase.

Q3.

Introduction

CPEC emerged as a panacea to Pakistan's economic woes after an era of instability and in many cases downturn. CPEC was signed by the government of Pakistan and China in May 2013 which culminated into the a decade of CPEC this past summer. There are many things constituted in CPEC that have become successful. However, there are some that have been failures which will be critically evaluated in the answer. Briefly, some successes include the completion of several power projects and transport links. Whereas, the failures include inability to complete Gwadar project and incompleteness of Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

Successes of CPEC after a decade in the energy sectorOverall investment in the energy sector

CPEC has led to significant investment in the previously crippled energy sector. It was the highest ever investment in investment in the energy sector of Pakistan of \$36 billion (USD) out of

which more than USD 20 billion have already been invested. Moreover, 18000 MW electricity would be produced out of which 8000 MW is already being produced.

Investment in Thermal coal

Thermal coal has seen an investment of 320 MW in 4 projects. Moreover 1320 MW project has been completed. This is a major success as in Pakistan more than 6500 MW electricity generation is from coal. Indigenous sources are being utilized as opposed to heavy reliance of foreign energy sources such as oil from Saudi which improves the Balance of Payments (BOP) of Pakistan.

Use of renewable energy for power generation by solar

Solar energy is in abundant supply in Pakistan as Pakistan is mostly a sunny country. Investment has been made in the Qaid-e-Azam solar plant in Bahawalpur which has the capacity of 2500 MW. Furthermore, this would lead to a clean source of

energy and should reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Use of wind power to meet energy needs

6 wind power projects of 3000 MW are under construction which would reduce the energy costs of Pakistan. They are located in Sindh and Balochistan along the coastal belt which is an efficient use of Pakistan's geographic location.

Utilization of Hydel Power in Pakistan

Hydel Power is another indigenous source of energy available in Pakistan. A few projects have already been constructed which are very major successes for Pakistan. For example, ~~Karot~~ Karot project which amounts for 730 MW has been completed along with Sukki Kinari which is 883 MW which was completed in 2023. This is a success because Pakistan is an energy crisis state that depends on non fossil fuel from foreign countries but now can use its own resources.

Diversity in energy investment

One major success is that CPEC has not only focused on one means to mitigate the energy crisis but has spread it over several sources. This ensures that if one source is being inefficient, the other sources can make up for it.

Good public image in green transition

Pakistan has developed a positive image with its use of green and clean sources of energy. Despite contributing less than 1% to the global CO₂ emissions, it is still working towards green transition to tackle the global challenge of climate crisis.

Investment in transmission lines for reduction of loss of power

The faulty transmission lines in Pakistan have led to loss of energy. One success has been the gearing towards investment in transmission lines such as the

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Matayari-Lahore transmission line. This has led to loss in efficiency in power supply.

Success of CPEC in the transport sector

Investment in motorways for increase in connectivity

Motorways are important for increasing linkages between locations in ~~town~~ Pakistan. Some successes include the Gwadar to Basima motorway which is almost complete. Moreover, other projects are under construction which include Kunjrab-Buhal and Rathodeo to Gwadar. These are success stories because investment in these areas is vital for development of the country.

Development of railway project

The Mainline 1 (ML1) is another success as investment has led to the development of this essential means of transport. Labour and goods can efficiently be transported from one area to another and the economy of Pakistan would

benefit overall.

Gwadar seaport: heart of CPEC

Gwadar is vital for CPEC as it connects China to the warm water seaport. Hence, Gwadar has been heavily invested in. ~~For example~~ Gwadar port has undergone significant development and has led to increased employment (although not enough). Gwadar has led to

Failure of CPEC in the last decade Unrest in Balochistan due to lack of employment

In the last decade China has tried to develop Gwadar using most of its own resources. The local labour of Gwadar is underutilized which has led to severe unrest and discontent among the people. The local resources are used in Balochistan but they are unable to receive the complete benefits from this transaction.

Non-investment in special economic zones

None of the Special Economic

zones have been completed which shows the lack of initiative and loss of potential economic benefits in this area.

Security concerns in Pakistan

In the last decade security concerns have been a problem. Particularly after the Afghan Taliban came into power in 2021. The 2 years war towards the end saw rising security concerns which have hindered investment for fear that it would be futile and a major loss.

Higher production cost in Pakistan compared to others

Production cost in Pakistan has been higher compared to others in the region. For example, Bangladesh has been efficient in lowering their production cost compared to Pakistan. This is a failure for Pakistan as RPEC has not fully utilized the benefit of efficiency.

Economic and political policy changes

Changing government policies have led to the cause of the failures of

CPEC in the last decade. Each new government has had different arrangements with China and has had different priorities when it comes to CPEC. These have culminated into policy changes which have led to CPEC not being fully utilized.

~~Changing from priority to~~

Non-completion of several scheduled projects

Many projects have remained under construction or have not been tapped into which has been a failure for the Pakistan. To date, only 17-18 industries have been established and the original plan was to bring in 2400 industries. The plan was also that by 2024, Gwadar, Rashokai, ^{and others} Attama Iqbal would be ~~com~~ operative however this has not been possible due to bottle necks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CPEC has remained successful in many instances but has also faced bottlenecks and clearances in others. While the decade has seen much progress, particularly with the

energy and transport sector. It has not been realised to what was hoped. Economic progress was ~~not~~ hoped to being social progress and stability but security concerns were still prevalent along with unrest due to unemployment.

Q4.

Introduction

The USA-Iran rapprochement was the result of the efforts of China to broker ties between them. This ensued in May 2023 and is a step in a positive direction especially with regards to the conflict in the Middle East region. If follow the right approach is taken, peace could ensue in the region. Moreover, Pakistan would be able to benefit from this arrangement as it has ties to both. The benefits could be seen economically, socially and even politically. Thus, the far-reaching positive implications of the rapprochement along with the benefits to Pakistan will be discussed in this answer.

Far-reaching positive implications on the conflict of the Middle East
Collective voice for the Gaza crisis

With both Muslim countries interlocking areas across, a collective voice for the plight of the Palestinians of Gaza will emerge. ~~The~~ The Palestinians have seen massive casualties as more than 32000 people have been killed since 7th October. The collective voice of these two regional giants can put pressure on Israel and the US diplomatically to call for a ceasefire.

Reduction in oil supply and skyrocketing oil prices globally

Saudi Arabia is the top oil producer in the OPEC countries while Iran also produces significant amount of oil. ~~Iran~~ The sanctioned Iran could work in collaboration with Saudi Arabia which further influences the OPEC countries, to ~~order~~ reduce the ~~total~~ amount of barrels per day and manipulate oil prices to great extent. This was effective after 1973 in 1973 for those that supported Israel as an embargo was imposed and oil prices skyrocketing, leading to

economic crisis in the west. This method can be used to put a stop to the conflict in Gaza and isolate Israel.

Reduction in clashes in Syrian conflict

Iran and Saudi Arabia are on opposite sides in Syrian crisis. Saudi Arabia supports the rebels that are against the leader of Syria Bashar al-Assad. Saudi provides military and financial support to rebel groups. On the other hand, Iran backs Bashar al-Assad against the rebellion since 2011. The crisis has seen the death of approximately 300,000 civilians since March 2011 to March 2023 (from www.commonwealthparliament.uk). Hence, this conflict can see an end or at least a compromise as Iran and Saudi would not work against each other.

Possible mitigation of Yemen conflict

The Yemen conflict is another crisis in the Middle East that can be devoted to rivalry between Iran and Saudi. Saudi backs the current government of Yemen whereas Iran backs the Houthis rebels. The Houthi rebels have carried out attacks on Saudi with the most

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famous one being the attack on Saudi Aramco facilities in 2019 which caused a significant economic loss to Saudi. These attacks can be mitigated in the future with stronger ties between Iran and Saudi. Moreover, a sustainable solution can be reached between the rebels and the national government of Yemen.

Reduced conflict and tensions between Shia and Sunni groups

Overall, after seeing Saudi (a Sunni state) and Iran (a Shia state) live in harmony and maintain ties, ethnic groups may follow suit. The most crisis between Muslim groups in the middle east stem from sectarianism and hatred. These can be curbed after using Saudi-Iran rapprochement as inspiration to live in harmony.

Collective voice against terrorist groups in the middle east

ISIS and other terrorist groups have contributed to many conflicts in the middle east. For instance, there

is a conflict between Sunni fundamentalist ISIS and the Kurds. These conflicts can be curbed by avoidance of proxy war between Saudi and Iran and working towards a solution to end terrorism and conflict in the Middle East.

Positive impacts on Pakistan of The Iran-Saudi rapprochement

Possible reduction of terrorist activities
voice against terrorism in Pakistan

Pakistan has seen an uptick in terrorist activities with 2023 seeing the highest terrorist incidents since 2016. Moreover, there has been a 54% increase in terrorist ^{violence} ~~activities~~ in 2023 (as of the last quarter of 2023 (Centre for Research and Security Studies). With the rapprochement, ~~but~~ collaboration with both Iran and Saudi can reduce the increase in terrorist incidents.

Harmony between the sects

Frequent clashes between Sunnis and Shia has worried Pakistan's social stability. If Pakistanis see Saudi Arabia joining hands with Iran, tolerance will increase towards

is considered the fore bearer of Sunni sect of Islam and is looked up to so by default, sectarian harmony in Pakistan will be achieved.

Economic ties with Iran can improve

~~Even~~ Pakistan and Iran can benefit from each other economically. Due to sanctions, Pakistan has not formally been able to reap the economic benefits of cheaper oil for its energy needs and formal trade. With rapprochement, the sanctions may be lifted and Pakistan may be able to ~~solve its~~ increase trade with Iran.

Solutions to solve the energy crisis of Pakistan

Iran would provide cheap oil to Pakistan to solve its energy woes. And currently oil is imported from Saudi and the long distance makes it expensive. However, Iran shares a border with Pakistan and oil would be cheaper. Moreover, an oil pipeline has already been constructed till Pakistan's border and so the infrastructure is already

halfway in place. It only needs to be constructed from Pakistan's border onwards which will lead to economic welfare for Pakistan in the near future.

Avoidance of paying large sum of Iran gas pipeline

A 25 year contract to export Iran's gas through pipeline to Pakistan was signed between the two in 2009. However, Pakistan has been able to complete this because of its financial woes and sanctions on Iran. So, Iran is demanding \$18 billion from Pakistan. Through the rapprochement and better relations with Iran, this payment can be avoided.

Collective voice against Kashmir

The Iran-Saudi rapprochement could lead to Muslim solidarity. Pakistan can use this to advance the cause of Kashmir. Kashmir conflict has seen more complexities with Iran India revoking article 370 in its constitution. Both Iran and Saudi can put diplomatic pressure on India to grant Kashmir self-determination and a

plebiscite according to UN resolutions.

Improving ties with Afghanistan and stability in the country.

Iran and Saudi could work together to bring stability in Afghanistan which is diplomatically isolated. This would result in ~~it~~ better prospects between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moreover, terrorism could be reduced through stability and collaboration.

Critical Analysis of Iran and Saudi rapprochement implications

The Saudi-Iran rapprochement will only be ~~for~~ beneficial if both agree on vital conflicts and their nature. The decades long rivalry cannot be solved in a short-period of time and this is just the first step. Trust building and transparency mechanisms should be promoted. UN's role ~~is~~ is crucial here as a mediator to avoid misstep and curb the progress made theretofore. Hence, a mutually beneficial approach should be adopted in which each side sees what benefits they can

derive from the arrangement to ensure feasibility overall. The words of the Quran ~~Holy Prophet~~ should be remembered and adhered to in this case, "Indeed, the Muslims are brothers, so make a settlement between your brothers." (Al Quran, 49:10).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ~~Iran and Saudi~~ Iran rapprochement has far-reaching consequences. The positive impacts include a reduction in proxy wars such as those in Yemen and Syria. Moreover, sectarianism can be curbed and harmony ~~is~~ promoted. For Pakistan, the rapprochement can be utilized for economic gains, social and religious harmony and gaining voice for the Kashmir conflict.

Q6.

Introduction

Pak-Afghan relations have seen a new low in the increased instances of attacks by TTP and ISUP in Pakistan. The relations have been off to a rough start as Pakistan blames Afghanistan for allowing sanctuary to these terrorist groups. In As retaliation, the ~~are~~ illegal immigrants of Afghanistan were sent back and the process is currently developing. The ~~so~~ relations between the two will further deteriorate if this continues. Moreover, more instability can be expected.

Dynamics of Pak-Afghan relations after increased terrorist attacksIncreased aggression by terrorist groups

The incentive to ~~hold~~ hold back terrorists has also gone as Pakistan has retaliated by sending ~~immigrants~~ refugees back to Afghanistan. Thus, a rise in terrorism can be expected. This can be deduced from the fact that in the last quarter of 2023, militant violence increased by 57% in Pakistan (Centre for Research and Security Studies). This will

degrade relations further.

Denial of TTP sanctuaries existing in Afghanistan by the Afghan Interim Government

The Afghan government has incessantly denied that they house terrorist groups such as the TTP and ISKP. ~~They~~ One official claimed that why is it only Pakistan that has complained ~~by~~ about the terrorist activities ensuing from Afghan soil and none of its other neighbours. Meanwhile, Pakistan has cited the deep links TTP has with Afghanistan and using its soil as a base after it was outlawed ^{in India} (The Cross border challenge, 2023). Thus, this blame game has made relations worse.

Reduction of economic collaboration

Formal economic relations suffer due to the evidence of terrorism. Pakistan and Afghanistan's economy has been collaborating for a long time and now with border problems, economic relations deteriorate and both can't benefit economically.

Voice for integrating Afghanistan into international society diminished

Pakistan was a vocal advocate for Afghanistan after the Taliban assumed power in August 2021. But with repeated attacks, Pakistan has remained quiet when it comes to integrating Afghanistan and recognising it in international society.

Social segregation of the Afghans

The repeated attacks have led to a prejudice and social segregation of the Afghan community in Pakistan. They are seen as not their friendly neighbours but as hostile and this has resulted in worsening relations.

Impact of Pakistan ~~the~~ deporting Afghan refugees back
viewed as inhumane by Afghans

The deportation of the Afghan refugees is seen as inhumane as they have lived their whole lives in Pakistan and had not set foot in Afghanistan. ~~This has~~ This has further

caused a rift between the two nations as many Afghans face harsh winters and lack food security (Ashraf Jahangir Qazi, Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, 2023).

Punishment of Afghanistan's lack of initiative

Afghan Pakistan was retaliated by sending Afghan refugees back. It was housing nearly 3.7 million refugees with around 75,000 unregistered. It was claimed that stability Pakistan could not bear the burden of the refugees so it was ordered that those who do not hold POR's should leave voluntarily before the 1st of November 2023 (Afghan refugees and apex committee decision to deport illegal migrants from Pakistan - Noorulain Naseem, 2023). The lack of accountability soured relations and led to retaliation.

Reasons for further escalation in relations due to burden on Afghanistan

Pak-Afghan relations have seen new lows as a struggling Afghan economy now sees more

residents coming into the country. This ~~with~~ is already developing into a food crisis as the Chairman of FOA Afghanistan Tsiao has claimed that ~~the~~ there is not enough to feed the widening families this winter, moreover, unemployment rates would sky-rocket which is another cause of contribution between two states.

Critical analysis

The Afghan-Pakistan relations have been ~~seen~~ deteriorating in recent years and ~~with~~ ^{way} see worse if not corrected. A more humane approach could have been to not send the refugees in ~~the~~ the winter but in the milder weather months, moreover, Afghanistan could have made more effort to reduce ~~terrorist incidents~~ as it has a history of housing terrorists and Pakistan's intelligence agencies have confirmed their presence (Baqiel Hussain, A surge in terrorist attacks, 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Afghan-Pakistan approach has ~~been~~ deteriorated

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The relations between the two. The lack of accountability and effort on part of Afghanistan and the strategy of Pakistan to punish the Afghan government was further revised their ties.