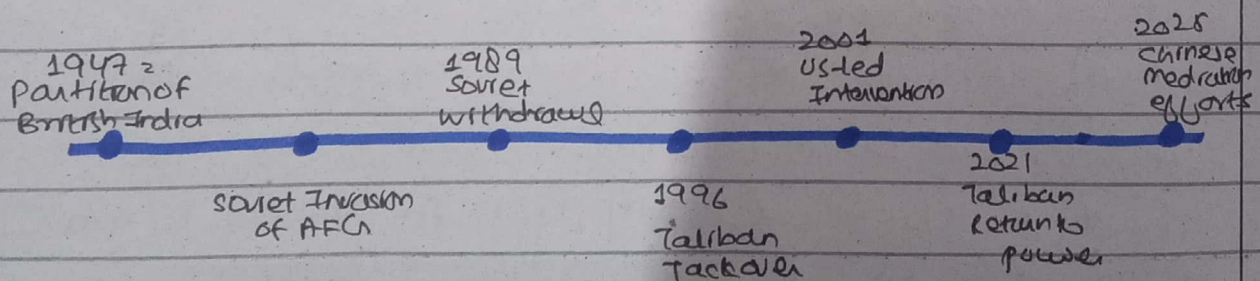


PART II

QUESTION #2:

INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan Afghan Relations have historically been complex, shaped by shared borders, ethnic ties, security concerns and regional geopolitics. Besides cultural and historical linkages the bilateral relations have been marked by mistrust, cross-border militancy and competing strategic interests. Divergent foreign policy priorities and external influences, including involvement of regional powers have further complicated bilateral ties. Despite recent mediation efforts by China and other actors, tensions persist, highlighting the need to understand the underlying issues and explore viable measures to improve cooperation, stability and regional development.



Pak-Afghan Relations: Timeline

Pak-Afghan Relations: Major Issues And Factors

1) CROSS-BORDER MILITANCY AND SECURITY

CONCERNS:

A core issue straining relations is Pakistan's concern that Afghan territory harbors militants, particularly Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). These groups carry out suicide bombing attacks inside Pakistan undermining civilian security concerns and national stability.

Afghanistan is providing safe heavens to these groups due to shared national ideologies creating trust deficit between two countries. "Peaceful relations are only possible if all support for the TTP is completely ended" (Pakistan's Defense Minister).

2) DIVERGING STRATEGIC INTERESTS AND REGIONAL ORIENTATION:

Afghan Taliban government is seeking to diversify its foreign relations, trade partners, reducing its dependence on Pakistan. Pakistan is perceiving it as a challenge to its historical strategic influence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's orientation towards India, and other regional actors is the reason of trust deficit and suspicion. As noted by analyst Saeed Shah of Financial Times that Afghanistan's foreign policy diversification creates friction with Pakistan's expectations.

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3) STRUCTURAL CONTRADICTIONS AND CONFLICTING EXPECTATIONS:

Pakistan emphasizes strict border control, counter terrorism and zero tolerance for militancy. Whereas Afghanistan stresses sovereignty and non-interference. These structural contradictions are making reconciliation difficult. Even under mediation, disagreements over border management, militant sanctuaries and unilateral actions prevent durable solutions. As reported by China military online that Pakistan and Afghanistan face "deep structural differences" on security concerns.

4) IMPACT OF REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES:

External actors influence Pak-Afghan relations. China has mediated talks, aiming to integrate Afghanistan into regional economic projects. India's engagement with Afghanistan and USA also factor into strategic calculations. Pakistan worries about foreign influence destabilizing its security environment, while Afghanistan perceives outside pressure as interference, reducing willingness to comply fully with Pakistan's demands.

As reported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan that "concerned over external influences affecting its border security".

RECENT SECURITY INCIDENTS AND EROSION OF GOODWILL:

Repeated attacks from Afghan territory since 2021, coupled with Pakistan military responses (cross border strikes, drone operations) have worsened relations. Each incident reinforces mistrust, undermines prior agreements and reduces the space for diplomacy. Media and civil society pressures in Pakistan demand strong action, while Afghan authorities perceive such interventions as violations of sovereignty. Aljazeera called the analysis of the impacts of ongoing attacks and military operations on bilateral trust.

METHODS OF IMPROVING / REVIVING PAK-AFGHAN RELATION:

1. ESTABLISHING TRANSPARENT MECHANISM FOR COUNTER TERRORISM COOPERATION:

A permanent, institutionalized mechanism

for counter terrorism cooperation including joint border management, intelligence sharing, verification of militants safe havens and mutual response protocols "would provide a clear, enforceable foundation for trust. According to agreement between Pakistan Interior Ministry and Afghan Ministry of Interior in 2025 both countries vowed to enhance cooperation to curb cross border infiltration especially by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)";

2 GRADUAL NORMALIZATION OF DIPLOMATIC TIES:

Restoring full diplomatic relations i.e exchanging ambassadors, opening regular diplomatic channels will help for shifting from episodic crisis driven contact to stable, predictable engagement. This reduces risk of miscalculation, facilitates ongoing dialogue and provide platform for resolving disputes, address security concerns. As reported by all Jazeera that in 2025 following the trilateral talks between ministries of foreign affairs of Pakistan, Afghanistan and China both Pak-Afghan agreed "in principle

to exchange ambassadors as soon as possible.

3) PROMOTING ECONOMIC AND CONNECTIVITY COOPERATION:

Economic interdependence through trade, transit routes, infrastructure can create shared interests that incentivise peace. Both sides could benefit financially from cooperation and stability, the cost of conflict increases, making diplomacy more attractive. As reported to local newspapers in Pakistan that Pakistan and Afghanistan restarted high level trade investment talks (after a gap) focusing on transit trade facilitation and reopening border crossing indicating a mutual interest in restoring economic links.

4) RE-ENGAGING IN REGIONAL AND MULTI-LATERAL MEDIATION AND OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS:

Given deep mistrust, a third party or multi-lateral actor can help monitor compliance, mediate disputes, verify commitments and provide a buffer against unilateral

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escalation. External mediators bring neutrality, credibility and possible leverage and allowing both sides to commit to agreements while reducing the fears of betrayal. As seen in 2025 trilateral dialogue that was initiated by China's Foreign Ministry along with Pakistan and Afghan foreign ministers underscoring the role of regional power in facilitating and guaranteeing cooperation.

5) BY ADDRESSING DEEP ROOTED GRIEVANCES THROUGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION:-

Many underlying tensions stem from socio-economic disruptions i.e. from refugees, trade stoppages, economic hardships, displacement and humanitarian crises. Joint efforts to manage refugees, provide humanitarian aid, regulating migration and promoting economic rehabilitation can reduce people level grievance, limiting radicalization and create goodwill at grassroots. As evident by the recently allowing of United Nations humanitarian

relief into Afghanistan via Pakistan border crossings demonstrates willingness (on the part of Pakistan) to facilitate humanitarian cooperation amid tensions.

CONCLUSION:

Pak-Afghan relations remained strained due to deep rooted security, political and strategic mistrust. Despite decades of engagement and recent mediation efforts by China, both countries continue to face challenges such as cross-border militancy, conflicting regional priorities and repeated breakdowns in communication. These unresolved issues not only halt bilateral ties but also threaten regional stability. But with structured diplomacy, stronger border management and support from trusted regional actors, Pakistan and Afghanistan can gradually move towards a more stable, cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship.



QUESTION # 7:

INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan's foreign policy has entered a sensitive phase as it seeks to recalibrate its position between two major global powers the United States and China. While Pakistan enjoys a long term strategic partnership with China under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and broader geopolitical alignment, Recent diplomatic engagements with the United States have signalled Islamabad's desire to diversify its foreign relations. Balancing these ties is crucial because both Washington and Beijing play pivotal roles in Pakistan's security, economy and regional diplomacy. In a rapidly changing global environment marked by great power competition, Pakistan must craft a multi-vector policy that safeguards its national interests without alienating either partner.

How Pakistan Could Balance its Relations with China and US:

1) BY MAINTAINING STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN

FOREIGN FOREIGN POLICY:

Strategic autonomy means Pakistan should not align exclusively with either the US or China but make decisions issue by issue based on national interest. In an era of great power rivalry, rigid alignment with one state could damage Pakistan's long term geopolitical flexibility. Maintaining autonomy allows Pakistan to extract economic benefits from US while safeguarding its long term security and development partners with China. This will strengthen Pakistan's diplomatic leverage.

As recommended by Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) that multi-vector foreign policy should be adopted to avoid strategic vulnerability.

2 USING / UTILIZING DIFFERENTIAL COOPERATION APPROACH :

Pakistan can balance both relationships by utilizing each partner's strength. China excels in infrastructure, energy, defense cooperation and long term financing making it a natural

Partner for China Pakistan economic corridor, and connectivity projects. The US, however remains Pakistan's largest export market and key source of investment, technology and education partnerships. Brookings Institution in 2023 advised Pakistan to use "differentiated engagements" with great powers for economic resilience.

3) KEEPING TRANSPARENT AND CONSISTENT DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION:

To prevent suspicion or misinterpretation, Pakistan should adopt transparent diplomacy with both Beijing and Washington. This includes communicating clearly that Pakistan's cooperation with one does not target the other. Transparency reduces geopolitical pressure, builds trust and prevents the perception that Pakistan is "tilting" towards one side. International Crisis Group urges Pakistan to manage alliances through communication to avoid strategic blowback.

4) DIVERSIFYING FOREIGN RELATIONS

BEYOND US AND CHINA:

Reliance on only two great powers increases vulnerability. Pakistan can reduce geopolitical dependence by strengthening relations with Gulf states, ASEAN, Central Asia, the European Union and Turkey. Expanding its diplomatic and trade network will give Pakistan multiple economic and political options, decreasing the pressure to choose between Washington and Beijing. It will also position Pakistan as a bridge between multiple regions.

As Gulf Cooperation welcomes Pakistan to expand their economic integration through a statement in 2024.

5) STRENGTHENING DOMESTIC STABILITY TO IMPROVE BARGAINING POWER:

Domestic economic weakness limits Pakistan's bargaining power with both China and the US. A stronger economy, better governance and security stability will allow Pakistan to negotiate from a position of strength rather than vulnerability, when domestic

If fundamentals improve, Pakistan can engage both powers on more equal terms and attract investment from diverse partners. As Asian Development bank recommended in 2025 that political stability greatly improves investor confidence.

6) AVOIDING INVOLVEMENT IN US-CHINA RIVALRY:

Pakistan should avoid taking positions on US-China disputes such as the South China Sea, Taiwan or Indo-Pacific military coalitions. Neutrality in these conflict zones keeps Pakistan safe from geopolitical backlash, maintains goodwill with both partners and prevents being pressured into military or political commitment that do not serve its national interest.

Pakistan's National Security Policy (2022-26) calls for "nonalignment and peaceful coexistence as central pillars".

CONCLUSION:

Pakistan's recent engagement with

the United States and its long term standing strategic partnership with China demand a careful and balanced foreign policy approach. Pakistan can balance its ties with both the US and China by pursuing a pragmatic, interest based foreign policy - strengthening economic stability at home, engaging both powers on specific areas of cooperation and avoiding zero sum choices will help Pakistan maintain its strategic autonomy and benefit from both partnerships.



QUESTION # 8:

INTRODUCTION:

The signing of the historic defense pact between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia marks a major strategic shift in the ^{security} architecture of the Muslim world. Although both states have maintained close military and economic ties, this agreement formalises their cooperation into a structural mutual defense framework at a time of rising regional volatility and evolving global power alignment. For Saudi Arabia, this pact reflects its desire to diversify security partnerships beyond traditional Western guarantees. But for Pakistan, it reinforces its strategic relevance and deepens a relationship central to its economic and diplomatic interests.

CAUSES OF PAKISTAN - SAUDI DEFENCE PACT:

1) SHIFT IN SAUDI ARABIA'S STRATEGIC CALCULAS:

This pact comes at a time when Gulf Arab

States are re-evaluating their long term security dependences. Recent events in the middle East (e.g. Instability, regional wars, shifting US posture have led Riyadh to hedge its security diversifying partnerships beyond traditional US alliances. By forging a defense deal with a nuclear armed country like Pakistan, Riyadh might be seeking a more-reliable, autonomous security guarantee. Analysts note that the pact comes as Gulf states grow increasingly wary about the reliability of the US as their longstanding security guarantor.

2) CHANGING REGIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Recent upheavals in the Middle East - e.g. conflicts, wars, Israel-Hamas tensions, shifting power dynamics, attacks on Gulf states have compelled Gulf states to re-evaluate traditional security architectures. In that context, Riyadh pact with Pakistan appears as a part of broader regional recalibration to consolidate alliances among Muslim majority countries to ensure deterrence and protecting regional interests.

3) CONVERGENCE AND IN

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4) SAUDIS V EXTER

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3) CONVERGENCE OF COUNTER TERRORISM AND INTERNAL SECURITY INTERESTS.

Both Islamabad and Riyadh faces threats from transnational militant organizations such as ISIS-K, Al Qaeda affiliates and other external extremist outfits. The pact strengthens intelligence sharing, counter radicalisation programmes and security coordination. As extremists groups increasingly exploit digital platforms and cross border sanctuaries, both states see value in building a unified security architecture to counter threats.

4 SAUDIS VISION OF 2030 REQUIRES EXTERNAL SECURITY ASSURANCE,

Saudi's vision 2030 involves trillions of dollars in economic transformation. These require a secure environment shielded from regional turbulence. Pakistan's large, experienced military is seen as a stabilizing partner to protect long term investments and mega projects. Riyadh

- wants external alliances to ensure uninterrupted economic modernization.

GEOSTRATEGIC BALANCE AGAINST IRAN'S EXPANDING REGIONAL INFLUENCE:

Though both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia maintained normal diplomatic ties with Iran, Riyadh is also sensitive to Iran's growing influence in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Gaza through various militia networks. This defense pact with Pakistan enhances Saudi deterrence and balances Iran's regional footprint. Pakistan, meanwhile, seeks to avoid taking sides but also benefits from strengthened Gulf ties while maintaining neutrality.

IMPLICATIONS OF PAK-SAUDI DEFENSE PACT:

- **EMERGENCE OF NEW SECURITY AXIS,**

The pact recalibrates power dynamics in West Asia and South Asia. By bolstering Pakistan's nuclear-capable military with Saudi Arabia economic and strategic weight, i.e. two influential Muslim majority states are emerging as a new security axis. This could influence security postures of regional actors (e.g. Gulf States, Iran) prompt prompt realignments and reassessment of alliance strategies.

• STRATEGIC DETERRENCE AND ENHANCED SECURITY FOR SAUDI ARABIA AND PAKISTAN:

For Riyadh the pact provides additional deterrence against regional threats or militant actors. For Pakistan the formal alliance raises its strategic stature in the Muslim world and beyond. The pact potentially gives Islamabad leverage in Gulf diplomacy, energy and investment negotiations and elevates its role as a security provider in the Muslim world.

1. ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN,

The pact is likely to boost investor confidence in Pakistan leading to renewed Saudi investments, increase remittance and enhanced trade in goods and services. In addition, institutionalisation of defence cooperation may lead to defence collaboration and technology transfers.

Conclusion:

The historical defence pact between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia marks a significant step in deepening the bilateral security and strategic cooperation. It provides Pakistan with potential military and economic support while reinforcing KSA strategic and regional alliance.



QUESTION#

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QUESTION # 4:

Introduction:

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan have historically faced security challenges due to their strategic location, diverse ethnic composition and resource richness. Recently there have been a dangerous revival of militancy in these regions threatening Pakistan's national security, economic development and social stability. This resurgence is fueled by a combination of historical grievances, socio-economic deprivation, weak governance, ideological radicalization and cross border influences.

Reasons for The Revival of Militancy.

1) Historical Grievances and Marginalization.

The people of Balochistan and parts of KP have long felt politically and economically marginalized. In Balochistan

despite being resource rich local population have seen minimal benefit from natural resources like coal and minerals. Similarly in KP tribal areas have historically lacked representation in decision making - this sense of neglect and injustice has fuelled resentment and make locals susceptible to insurgent narratives.

• Cross border Influence and terrorist networks.

The porous border with Afghanistan has allowed militant groups to move freely, regroup and launch attacks in KP. Similarly cross border insurgent network in Balochistan leverage safe havens in Iran and Afghanistan. External funding and training from foreign terrorist organizations have strengthened these groups.

• Ideological Radicalization

Extremist ideologies of them propagated through unregulated madrassas and online platforms

Radicalize youth in KP and Balochistan.
Vulnerable people particularly unemployed youth are targeted by militants recruiters who promise purpose, identity and financial incentives.

- **Weak Governance and Corruption.**

Ineffective governance, administrative inefficiency and local corruption provide fertile ground for militancy. Law enforcement agencies face resource constraints and political disputes are expanding militants influence.

Recommendations:

Strengthen Governance and Rule of Law:

Militancy in both the provinces can be eliminated by improving law enforcement capacity, ensuring judicial efficiency and by enforcing anti corruption measures to reduce

✓ militant exploitation

• Socio Economic Development Programs

Government should focus on building infrastructure, healthcare & schools and maximize employment opportunities in KP and Balochistan to address root cause of militancy.

• Counter ~~ing~~ Radicalization and Awareness Campaigns

Government and law enforcement agencies should regulate extremist content in madrasas and online platform. Promote modern religious initiatives and narratives and civic education programs to reduce youth radicalization

• Enhancing border security and Regional Cooperation

It can be achieved by strengthening the surveillance along the Afghan and

Territorial sharing disrupt

Conclusion

The danger of terrorism and

neglect ideology

and external approach

operational political

efforts and

national development

Iranian borders. Enhancing intelligence sharing with neighboring countries to disrupt insurgents networks.

Conclusion:

The dangerous revival of militancy in KP and Balochistan stems from historical neglect, socio economic deprivation, ideological radicalization, weak governance and external influences. A holistic approach is required combining security operations, socio economic uplift, political inclusion, counter radicalization efforts. Implementing these measures will stabilize the regions, strengthen national security and ensure sustainable development.

