

Question #1:

China-Russia growing economic, strategic, and geopolitical collaboration is an effort to potentially challenge the US led world order. Discuss.

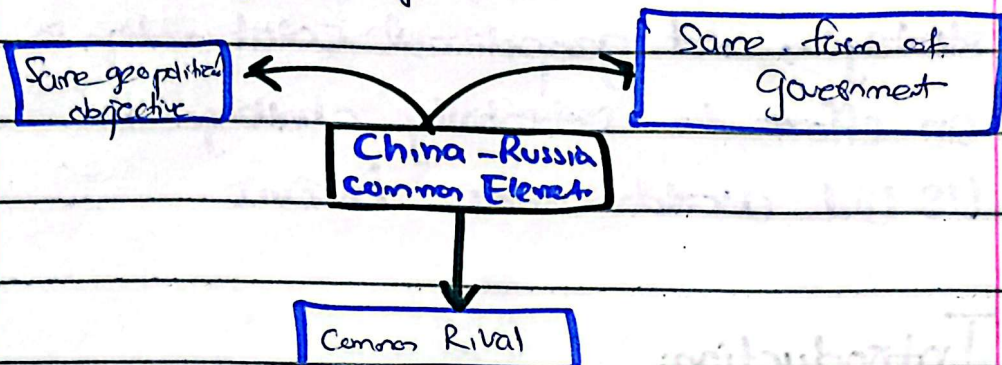
Introduction:

The growing relationship between Russia and China is not bound by an formal agreement. However, it is based on certain common element regarding government structures, geopolitical objective and common rivalry. China has become the largest importer of oil from Russia after the Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine 2022. Both countries are forming alliance in strategic, economic and geopolitical domains to challenge the hegemony of US led world order.

Common Elements Between Russian and China Alliance:

While Russia and China have a history of border dispute, most of which has been resolved. The current focus is

on cooperation and strategic partnership due to the following common elements



I. Common Form of Government:

The government structure of both China and Russia are based on authoritarian rule - Xi Jinping is in China, and Vladimir Putin in Russia. The common forms help in having common objectives.

II. Geopolitical Objective: Same in form different in location:

The geo-political objective of both Russia and China are same in form but different in location. As, China wants to increase its influence in Asia-Pacific region to counter US alliance in Taiwan, Australia, Japan and South Korea. Similarly, Russia wants its influence in Europe to counter the

Western alliance in the eastern Europe -

III. Common Rival and Objective:

The objective of Russia and China is to curtail the dominance of their common rival i.e. US. Since, US has become a major reason of frustration among China and Russia due to its dominance in all the major forums i.e. United Nations, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Bank. Moreover, the concept of Veto power in UN Security Council is a major symbol of US domination. So, both countries want to curtail its domination and change the world order.

Economic Alliance of China and Russia to Challenge US led world Order:

China and Russia have become a close ally when Russia had a full-scale invasion on Ukraine in 2022. After that, the US sanction on Russia

tered to impact its economy due to trade cut off with European Region. However, at that time China helped Russia in its economic transition. Russia earned \$66bn in 2022, which were more than in 2021.

Exchange of Technology and Energy Resource Between China and Russia:

Economically, China and Russia proved to be the best ally. As, China has had power of manufacturing process and Russia has ^{is rich} power of natural resource i.e. energy resources. Both countries exchanged the tech resources. China provided chip technology to the Russia because it was banned from by the US to impact from Europe.

→ China's services to Russia: Technology (chip)

Manufacture goods.

→ Russia services to China: ^{Energy} Resources

Presently, China became an important economic partner of Russia.

Strategic Alliance of China and Russia to Challenge US led World

Order:

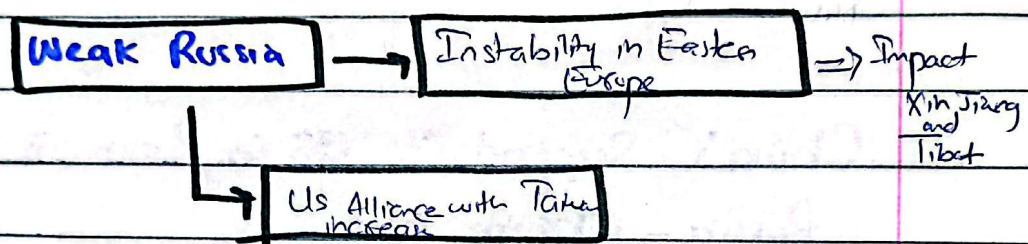
Strategically, China helped ~~Ukraine~~ ^{Russia} in Ukraine war to maintain relations with Russia.

China's Support to US in Russia in Russia - Ukraine War:

When ^{As} Russia had a full-scale invasion on Ukraine, China played a significant role as it proved to be ^{advocating} ~~advocated~~ for peace and on the other side, it helped Russia to counter Ukraine. China blamed America for this war and ^{used} term "crisis" for the war. It tried to cover the media. China never gave an open statement regarding negative comment on Russia against war. Moreover, in ~~Russia~~ Ukraine's Embassy in China, Xi Jinping met only once with Volodymyr Zelensky i.e. president of Ukraine in more than a year.

Reasons for China's support to Russia in war:

China supported Russia in the Ukraine led war due to its regional concerns other than economic and ideological one.



If Russia becomes weak, there would be instability in the Eastern Europe which will impact China in regions of Xinjiang and Tibet. On the other side, it will increase US alliance with Taiwan impacting China on that side.

Geo-Political Collaboration Between China and Russia to Challenge US led world order:

China and Russia partnership or alliance also grew in the geo-political environment. As China wants to dominate the west and increase its influence

In the Asia-Pacific region So, it needed a strong naval, air and military base.

Arms Transfer Between China and Russia:

To enhance China's military capabilities, Russia transferred arms to China. It sold about \$38.5 bn worth military arms to China. Moreover, the latest technology based S-400 air defense system and SU-35 fighter also transferred to China. Resultantly, China's military ability increased, to counter its rivals.

Joint Military Exercises Between China and Russia:

China and Russia not only shared joint arms and equipment but also focused on joint military exercises especially in the Sea of Japan and Taiwan Strait. The purpose was to send a clear message to US and its regional allies regarding the military power of

China - Moreover, they also had strong Naval drills and patrols to disrupt the status quo and destabilize the strategic environments

Critical Analysis:

Russia's support to China is a symbol of complicated regional security dynamics - with Russia providing arms supplies, Military and transfers energy source. This would further escalate the US - China relation by acting as an indirect member. It would change the world order dominated by US from unipolar to a multipolar world order where China and Russia would also be major powers.

Conclusion:

China - Russia alliance in strategic, economic and geopolitical areas indicate a clear message to US regarding its dominance in the world. Both countries helped each other in these issues be they UK - Russia war or US - China conflict on Taiwan. Both

the countries transferred arms, energy, technology with each other. The alliance indicates a change of world order which was previously US led would now become a multipolar world order.

Question #2:

Islamabad Kabul tensions linger on due to TTP using Afghan land as a launching pad for terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Critically evaluate the situation. Give possible recommendations.

Introduction:

Pakistan and Afghanistan, being neighbouring countries share close ties with each other. Pakistan always advocated for peace in Afghanistan whether in Soviet invasion or US led war-on-terror. However, Pakistan ever accepted the Afghan Taliban government in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of America in 2021. However, the situation between Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly concerning TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) and durand line, has been tense for a long time.

Pakistan repeatedly asked Afghanistan led Taliban government (TTA) to take actions against TTP. However, TTP always ignored the issue. Resultantly, the tensions ~~grew~~ ^{escalated} so much, leading Pakistan to strike on TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

The Current Situation of Pakistan-Afghan Relations Considering TTP

I. An Overview of TTP:

TTP, i.e. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan is a terrorist group that has been operating from Afghanistan soil, and launching attacks on Pakistan as claimed by the Government and military of Pakistan.

II. Pakistan's Request to TTA and Its Response:

Pakistan repeatedly ~~asked~~ asked Afghanistan Taliban led government (TTA) to take actions against the TTP. However, TTA refused to do so because they cited the historical ties with TTP, during the insurgency against US-led coalition. The TTA claimed that TTP's activities are an

internal matter of Pakistan and denied any form of claim regarding ↑TTP using Afghan soil as a launching Pad.

Result of TTA's Refusal:

As the TTA refused to control the TTP, it escalated the tensions leading Pakistan conduct airstrikes on TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan on Dec 4, 2024 in the Basmal area of Paktika province of Afghanistan. These airstrikes killed almost 46 Afghan people and damaged infrastructure.

III. Response of Afghan government regarding Pakistan's airstrikes:

Afghan government reacted strongly to the air strikes, accusing Pakistan as violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty. Afghan government retaliated and martyred the Pakistani soldiers on durand line.

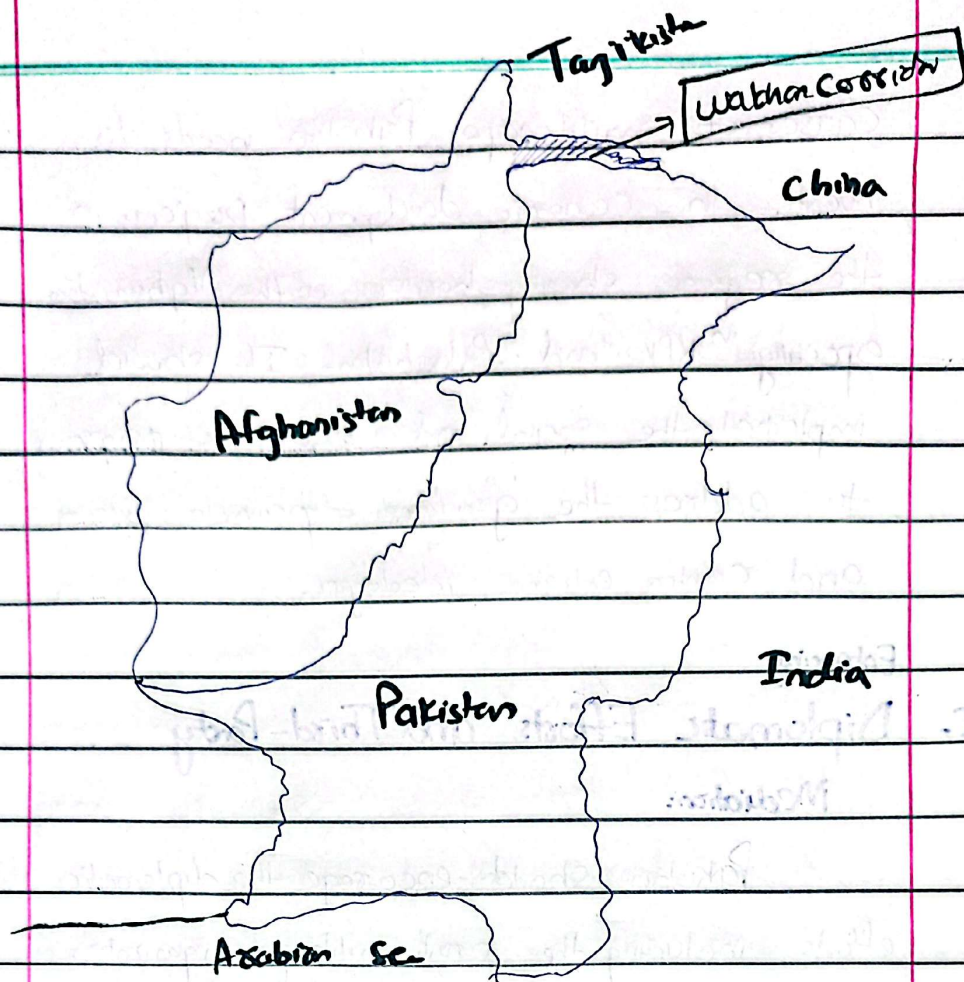
IV. The Stance of Pakistan Against Afghan Retaliation:

Pakistan's government condemned the

air strikes and gave a severe response to Afghan government regarding the ^{Control} ~~case~~ on Wakhan corridor. Pakistan's stance is that if the TTA wouldn't stop the strikes or such terrorist activities, Pakistan would take ^{Control of} ~~case~~ Wakhon Corridor which was a buffer zone created between communist and capitalist during British era. Wakhon Corridor would be the under Pakistan's control.

VI. The Strengthening of Ties Between Pakistan and Tajikistan: Key Concern of Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Tajikistan had strengthened cooperation with each other with the visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister to Tajikistan. As Tajikistan government severely dislikes the Afghan government, the Afghan government's ^{Concerns regarding} ~~feared~~ the control of Wakhon Corridor increased. They suspect that Pakistan will hold its control with the help of Tajikistan which will further escalate relations between Pakistan and TTA - Automatically, impacting TTP in Pakistan.



The Way Forward for Pakistan to Counter TTP Launched from Afghan-soil:

Pakistan needs a thorough review of its policies towards Afghanistan, using a mix of kinetic and non-kinetic measures. The key solutions are:

I. Addressing the Root Causes of Militancy:

Pakistan should focus on the root

Causes of militancy - Pakistan needs to invest in economic development projects in the regions sharing borders with Afghanistan especially in KPK and Balochistan. It should implement the social and economic programs to address the grievances, promote peace and counter extreme ideologies.

Enhancing

II. Diplomatic Efforts and Third-Party

Mediation:

Pakistan should encourage the diplomatic efforts including the civil, military, organizations and religious leaders from both countries. There is a need to seek third party mediators such as regional powers or international organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) to facilitate dialogue and mediate the dispute and influence Afghanistan to stop promoting TTP.

IV. Addressing Shared Challenges:

To counter terrorism in both countries, Pakistan needs to collaborate with Afghanistan

government to ^{rather} stop any kind of terrorist activities in both the countries. Moreover, the regional challenges regarding drug trafficking and smuggling also need to be countered with joint efforts to reduce instability in the region.

II. Legality of Durand Line:

Pakistan should have a hard line stance regarding border issue on Durand Line with TTA. As the Durand Line is internationally recognized border. The Vienna Convention on Succession of States in Respect of Treaties support Pakistan's position that state succession cannot alter the agreed borders.

III. Internal Stability of Pakistan:

The internal stability and social harmony is essential for Pakistan. As for implementing any kind of policy and for facing any external challenge there is a need of strong and stable government at home otherwise, it would be

difficult to achieve results-

Important Considerations for Pakistan:

Pakistan needs to consider the sovereignty of Afghanistan and should work in collaboration with the Afghan government. Moreover, for a long term solution to TTP issue, Islamabad and Kabul need to build strong confidence and trust among each other. By focusing more on non-kinetic measure i.e. dialogue, cooperation, the two countries can work towards a more stable region.

Conclusion:

The tensions between Pakistan and Kabul have escalated due to TTP and as Kabul failed to stop TTA from using its soil as a launching pad against Pakistan, Pakistan being frustrated of TTP activities launched air strikes. However, in the current situation there is a need of non-kinetic solutions rather than kinetic and ^{only} with engagement of TTA, issues can be resolved.

Question #3:

To turn around the economy and end the repeated boom and bust cycle there is an urgent need of comprehensive structural reforms in Pakistan. Evaluate.

Introduction:

Pakistan's economy has long been plagued by a cycle of boom and bust, marked by periods of growth and then crisis. It caused hindrance to the country's ability to achieve sustainable economic development ^{and} ~~was~~ ^{resulted in} ~~addressing~~ the issues of poverty, inequality and unrest. To break this cycle, there is a consensus that comprehensive structural reforms are needed. These reforms will address the deep-seated weakness in Pakistan's economy.

Important Structural Issues in Pakistan That Hinder the Development of Country's

Economy:

The deep-rooted structural issues are the following:

I. Low-Tax-To-GDP Ratio of Country

Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio remains significantly lower ^{8.1% in FY23-FY24} as compared to other countries. The reason is that the tax base is narrow. Moreover, there are high levels of tax evasions of around **RS. 5.8 trillion annually (7% of GDP)**.

The inefficient tax administration and rising level of corruption contribute to tax exemption. All these result in low tax-to-GDP ratio which affect the economy badly.

II. Crisis of Energy Sector:

Pakistan's energy sector faces a significant challenges as there is a circular debt of around **RS. 2636 billion** which is caused because the consumers fail to pay the bills to power producers.

Moreover, the reliance on expensive hydrocarbons which are majorly imported like **diesel**, **LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas)** and **coal** for the use of ~~transportation~~ transportation, industry and domestic purpose. The high cost of energy and flawed policies agreement with IPPs (Independent Power producers) increase the debt of country. Moreover, the country faces a cycle of load-shedding which impacts different industries.

III. Low level of Productivity and Exports — Import led Economy:

Pakistan is an agricultural country with different crops like wheat, cotton etc. The textile industry of the country is very important for Pakistan because it accounts for over **54%** of country's total export while there is no attention towards Technology and Artificial Intelligence. Moreover, the country's firms operate with outdated business practices, and poor energy infrastructure leads to high cost which makes difficult to compete in ~~international~~ international market.

market - The country's basket fills with imports which is in dollars (\$) where 1 dollar = 300 PKR which impacts the economy.

III Deficiencies in Human Capital:

Pakistan faces significant human capital challenges which are the major constraints on economy of country. ^{growth} As,

Drop-out rate: 31% of children after grade 5 according to Annual Status of Educators Report (ASER)

Student-teacher ratio: 39:1 while standard is ~~18:~~ 18:1

Moreover, the country faces the health issue of Malnutrition, mortality - Other than this,

there is low female participation and significant mismatch of skills in job market.

Key Structural Reforms To Turn Around The Economy and End the Repeated Boom and Bust Cycle:

To turn around the economy from crisis to growth, following are some of the structural reforms to be implemented:

I. Broadening Tax Base and Improving Tax Administration:

Pakistan needs to bring the un-taxed or undertaxed into the tax net. For this, the country needs to simplify tax laws, ^{and} reduce tax exemptions, modernize tax administration through automatic tax filing processes and utilizing digital data to analyze those who exempt the tax. Moreover, the informal ~~state~~ ^{sectors} need to be taxed i.e. equitable tax for agricultural income and real estate.

II. Reforming Energy Sector of Pakistan:

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The energy sector of country need to be reformed by strengthening the role of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) and reduce corruption and political interference. Moreover, the country's vision to achieve 30% of renewable energy by 2030 need to worked on, to shift from expensive hydrocarbons. Moreover, the old infrastructure needs to be modernized. Finally, the country needs to phase out subsidies and invest in Public-private partnership (PPP) to enhance efficiency.

III. Multi-Pronged Approach to Boost Productivity:

Pakistan needs to boost productivity and exports by taking some institutional reforms. As Pakistan ranks 136 in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index 2020 and simplifying regulations can improve. Moreover, there is a need of infrastructural development i.e. investing in roads, railways and ports such as

Grower post and serving the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as transportation sector contributes to 10% of GDP in 2020.

Moreover, energy generation can improve industrial growth. Finally, the trade procedures and investment need to be simplified.

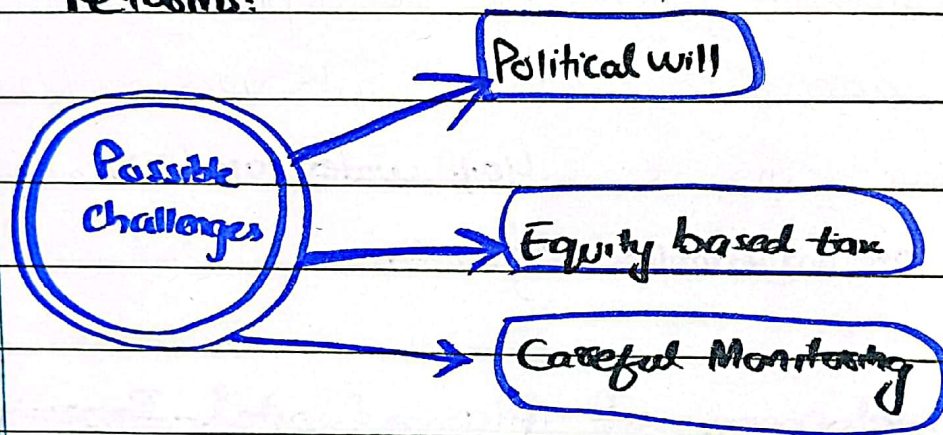
The agriculture sector's irrigation system need to efficient as it contains 40% water loss (2020) observed by Food and Agriculture Organization.

III. Development of Human Capital - Improving Education, Health and Labor Market.

Pakistan can develop its human capital by incorporating national policies by population planning. The country needs to increase the ~~age~~ education quality by focusing on STEM fields like China. The healthcare sector needs investment and initiatives should also be made a national agenda. As women made upto 22-91% of workforce, observed by World Bank in 2023 they need to be made a part of economy like Bangladesh.

By following these solutions and implementing them effectively, ~~a~~ Pakistan can improve its economy.

Possible Challenges while Implementing Reforms:



Conclusion:

Structural reforms are not a quick solution, but they are essential for breaking the boom-and-bust cycle and putting Pakistan on the path of sustainable economic growth and development. By ~~and~~ addressing the underlying issues, and implementing reforms, Pakistan can transform economic crisis to economic growth with a more resilient, inclusive and growing economy.