

Question no. 3

Introduction

Recent geopolitics has put Pakistan to the limelight in global arena. Pakistan has turned a leaf and both the economic giants of the world, US and China, have their respective ambitions with respect to Pakistan. The recent engagement with the US following Pak-India conflict of May was followed by multiple key meetings between US and Pakistani officials. Agreements were made and US tilt towards India was seen to be weakening. Pakistan must couple this development with Islamabad's strategic ally China. Key areas could be working on increasing Islamabad's economic sector, figuring out a solution to India's hostility and establishing a new norm in conducting diplomacy between US and China. It needs to avoid a binary position and build equal rapport with both global giants.

2. Recent Engagement with the United States

The bonhomie between Islamabad and Washington has seemed to increase. Nominating US President for Nobel Peace Prize, meetings between US President and Field Marshal are testament to the growing romance.

3. Perpetual Strategic partnership with China

However, China has proved to be a perpetual ally. Its investment in Pakistan via CPEC channel and mutual hostility towards Indian belligerence brings Islamabad and Beijing together at a deeper level.

4. How Pakistan could balance its relations with US and China?

The following flowchart provides a lay out for Pakistan's future diplomatic maneuverings.

Alienating India

Working on Afghanistan's
Stability

Solving Iran conundrum

Working with US
on anti terrorist
outfits

Expanding transit to
Central Asia

Kashmir; Trump's
voice

Western Economic Institutions
and Washington's clout

1. Alienating India ; India's diplomatic Isolation

Post May Conflict with Islamabad, New-Delhi, has seen a constant rebuke from Washington. Trump's insistence that he mediated the ceasefire has hurt India's authoritarian prestige. With existing animosity for Beijing, India is also losing Washington's strong embrace. **An enemy's enemy is a friend in foreign relations**

2. Working on Afghanistan's stability.

Sorting out Afghan hostility is necessary for Islamabad. The US can enable this with its economic capital. China can chip in its diplomatic clout. Pakistan can mediate and ensure a stable Kabul for Islamabad's ~~sta~~ security.

3. Working on Iran conundrum

Israel's proximity to U.S has led to a coming of Iran. Being on the Western Border, Iran is geographical neighbor.

Islamabad needs to mediate between Tehran and Washington. By doing so, it will benefit itself.

4. Working with US on anti terrorist elements

President Trump appreciated Islamabad in his first Congressional Address. Moreover, Pakistan endowed General Koriila the Nishan-e-Imtiaz. Pak can work in unison with US to eradicate the growing threat of Al-Qaeda and ISKP.

5. Expanding Transit to ~~AFG~~ Central Asia

Pakistan can employ Beijing in expanding CPEC to Central Asia after peace in Afghanistan.

6. Solving the Kashmir Issue for good.

Kashmir lies surrounded by India, China and Pakistan. Following the

mediation by President Trump during May conflict between New Delhi and Islamabad, he has voiced, on multiple occasions, to mediate the Kashmir dispute. Islamabad needs to proactively engage Washington in this regard.

7. Utilizing Western Washington's Clout in Western Economic Institutions

Islamabad could engage the US to facilitate a more favourable negotiation with the Intl Monetary Fund.

8. Continuing Diversifying Military Imports

According to SIPRI, 81% of Pak's military hardware is Chinese in origin. Pak needs to employ American arsenal as well. A genuine balance could then be possible.

9. Facilitating Talks between Trump and Xi

The recent summit between the

two leaders took place in South Korea.
Like in the 1970s when Islamabad facilitated Kissinger's visit to China, Pakistan needs to provide a similar proactive diplomacy between U.S. and China.

Conclusion

Islamabad lies at a crossroads choosing Beijing or Washington. It needs to prefer neither and ~~not~~ reap benefits from both to solve its polycrisis from economy to security. Such an approach needs to be both transactional and transformative; Transactional for Washington and transformative for Beijing.



Question no. 2

Introduction

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Dickens started his acclaimed A Tale of Two Cities with this phenomenal line. The line is still ~~actr~~ applicable but the cities are Moscow and Kyiv instead of Dickens' London and Paris. The Ukrainian war has entered its fourth year and the current demands of Russia and NATO continue to be diametrically opposite to each other. The chances of the end of Ukrainian war are very bleak. Moscow's strategic objectives continue to be growing, as do Putin's ambitions. Kyiv's international support continues to wane as does Zelenski's local popularity. A significantly weaker Ukraine and a relatively much stronger Russia point to a continuous conflagration in the region.

2. Demands of Russia

Russia has an ideological, historical and economic claim to Ukraine. Moreover, its security is linked to the plans of Ukraine. Prisoners of Geography illustrates Putin's nightmare of a Western European invasion via this land. Moreover, Moscow's preaching of denazification and ethnic association of Eastern Ukraine continues to grow stronger.

Nato's Conflicting Demands

In line with Brezinski's notion of an evergrowing NATO, NATO wants to add Ukraine to its members. In such a scenario, NATO could possibly invoke Article -5 and come to Ukraine's defence against Moscow's aggression citing Collective Security. Understandably, this is unacceptable to Putin and the war continues unabatingly.

Why the Chances of an End to Ukrainian War are bleak

The reasons are illustrated as follows.

Growing Ambitions of Putin

Unachieved Strategic Objectives

Silence of revolt in Russia

Economic Viability of
Moscow's Army high

Ukraine's Isolation post Trump Entry

Zelenski's unpopularity at
home

West's prioritization on China's rise

Isolationist Stance of
U.S.

1. Growing personal ambitions of Putin

For the Russian President, the war is personal. He needs to establish himself in the great line of Russian leaders like ~~not~~ Stalin and the legendary Romanov dynasty during the 19th century. Consequently, he needs to win the war.

2. Unachieved Strategic Objectives of Russian Army

Russia continues to claim more land of the Eastern Donetsk region. The war will continue unless Moscow gains a stronghold here.

3. Silence of Doves in Russia

The blowing up of Wagner leader, a mercenary who planned to ~~subvert~~ Putin, in an airplane has sent a loud message to Putin's adversaries. They cannot go against the state narrative of Moscow in general and Putin in particular.

4. Economic Viability of Russian Military high

Despite losing 3000 tanks, Moscow's advance has not stopped. Its transition to cheaper and effective drones has solved the high cost problem. Moreover, Moscow's selling of cheaper crude oil to China, India has made it easier to fund the war

5. Increased bonuses and Spring conscription for soldiers

The morale of Russian soldiers is increased with increasing bonuses (\$27000/year in 2025 compared to \$15000/year in 2023) coupled with induction of 100,000 soldiers during 2025 spring conscription has maintained a steady supply of soldiers

6. Ukraine's decline post Trump entry

Trump accused Zelensky of the greatest Showman. His verbal scuffle with Trump at the White House

depicted the lowering of Ukraine agenda for the U.S.

7. Zelenskis's unpopularity at home

Putin's insistence on Ukraine's election before peacetalks indicate Zelenskis's unpopularity. Moreover, Zelenski has faced domestic opposition on poor handling of Moscow.

8. The West's Prioritization of Rise of China has sidelined Ukraine

Western leaders do not consider the Ukraine conflict a primary worry. Their economic competition with Beijing is high on their global agenda.

9. Trump's Isolationist stance ; win for Putin

Trump is adamant on ending foreign wars. Ending the Ukraine conflict would be considered a diplomatic victory for him. Simultaneously,

this proves to give Putin more bargaining ground.

10. Moscow likely to continue war albeit at a lower intensity

The ideal arrangement for Moscow remains to continue its war but lower the overall expense as Russia seems to be winning the war of attrition against Ukraine.

11. Ceasefire chances seem lower

With Putin's efforts at inflicting a regime change in Ukraine and refusing to meet Putin, chances of ceasefire are very low.

Conclusion

The chances of the end of Ukrainian war ~~are~~ are very low. The global environment in general and Putin's increasingly ambitious plans make any ceasefire arrangement a very

distant reality. The mutual ~~gap~~ ~~to~~
animosity will continue to grow and
Russia is likely to continue the
war although at a lower intensity.

