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Current Affairs Test-3

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Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan, despite being bound by geography, culture, and religion, continue to experience strained relations marked by mistrust, border tensions, and divergent security concerns. Even after China's mediation under trilateral frameworks and regional dialogues in Kabul (2025), ties have not normalized. This persistent tension stems from a complex mix of security, political, and economic factors, primarily revolving around cross-border militancy and the Taliban's regime's reluctance to act against anti-Pakistan groups. This following write-up examines the major causes of friction between Islamabad and Kabul and suggests pragmatic measures to improve bilateral relations in the evolving regional context.

Major Factors Behind Tense Pak - Afghan Relations

1- Cross-Border Terrorism and the TTP Factor

The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remains the most contentious issue. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, TTP militants have found safe havens in Afghanistan launching over 600 attacks in the past years. Repeated Pakistan's requests for disarmament and repatriation of TTP leaders have been ignored. Air strikes by Pakistan in Paktika and Khost, in Dec 2024, following a TTP attack that killed 16 security personnel worsened relations further.

2- The Durand Line Dispute

The Taliban government refuses to formally recognize the Durand Line, leading to frequent border clashes and disruption of trade and movement. Both sides accuse each other of violations, deepening

mistrust and undermining cooperation.

3- Refugee and Trade-Related Strains

Pakistan's repatriation of over 1.2 million Afghan refugees and restrictions on Afghan transit trade have generated resentment in Kabul. While Islamabad views these actions as security measures, the Taliban perceive them as political coercion.

4- Divergent Strategic Outlooks

Pakistan views Afghanistan through a security prism while the Taliban prioritize sovereignty and ideological independence. Islamabad's expectation of a cooperative Taliban government contrasts with Kabul's assertive nationalism and alignment with certain regional players.

5- Limited Effectiveness of Chinese Mediation

Despite China's trilateral diplomacy (Pakistan - China - Afghanistan meetings in 2025), no joint declaration could be issued due to Kabul's refusal to name TTP and ETIM. This indicates Beijing's limited leverage over the Taliban on Pakistan's core security concerns.

Ways to Improve Relations

1- Establishing a Security Mechanism

Pakistan's proposal for a "verifiable monitoring mechanism" at the Doha Truce (Oct 2025) should be institutionalized.

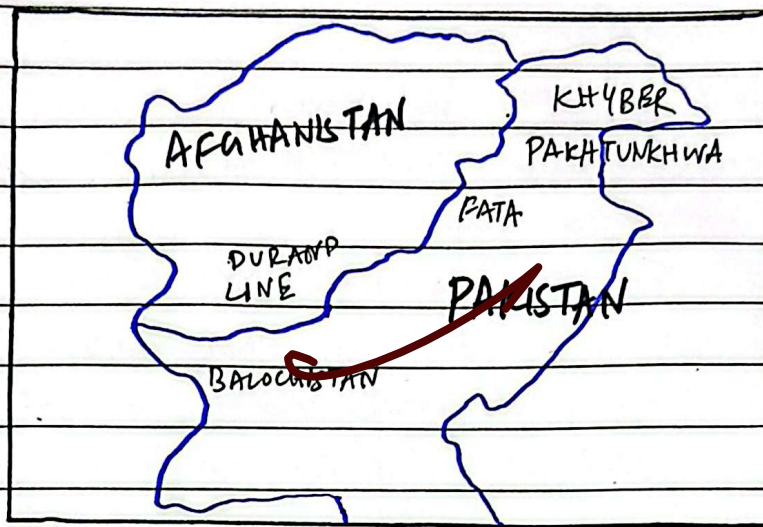
Both sides, with help from mediators like China, Qatar, and Türkiye, can create a joint border verification team to address cross-border militant activity in real time.

2- Sustained Diplomatic Engagement

Regular high-level dialogue - such as Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's multiple visits to Kabul in 2025 - must continue. Confidence-building measures on trade, education, and humanitarian assistance can gradually rebuild trust.

3- Economic and Transit Cooperation

Implementing pending agreements like the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) and joint connectivity projects such as the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway can create shared economic incentives for peace.



4- Regional Collaboration and Counterterrorism

Pakistan should strengthen multilateral efforts through SCO and UN frameworks to collectively pressure the Taliban to curb terrorism, rather than acting unilaterally through air strikes that exacerbate hostility.

5- Managing Public Perceptions

Media restraint and people-to-people exchanges can reduce hostility at the societal level. Educational and cultural initiatives can humanize bilateral engagement beyond security concerns.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the persistence of tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan, despite Chinese mediation, underscores that regional diplomacy cannot substitute for mutual political will and security cooperation. Unless Kabul decisively acts against the ITF and both sides adopt a balanced mix of deterrence and dialogue, hostility will persist. The way forward lies in institutionalizing border security mechanisms, reviving economic cooperation, and promoting regional multilateral engagement to achieve lasting peace and stability in South Asia.



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Introduction

The Middle East has long been a flashpoint for nuclear tensions, with Iran's nuclear program and Israel's opaque capabilities at the center of regional and global security calculations. The recent coordinated

strikes by Israel and the United States on Iran's nuclear ~~program~~ and ~~key~~ facilities in June 2025

represent a watershed moment, not only for Iran's ambitions but also for regional deterrence, global nonproliferation regimes, and international diplomacy. These attacks have triggered a complex chain of reactions involving major powers, regional actors, and international institutions, with implications for proliferation, strategic alliances, and energy security. This analysis focuses on Iran's likely response, regional proliferation, and deterrence dynamics, the role of global powers, and the impact of international treaties and the nonproliferation regime.

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions and Reactions

> Iran and U.S. strikes targeted nuclear facilities and key security personnel, causing significant operational setbacks but not fully eliminating Iran's nuclear capability.

> Iran's leadership perceives nuclear weapons as vital for regime's survival in a hostile strategic environment. Experts predict:

a) Acceleration of Covert

enrichment activities.

b) Potential withdrawal or suspension of cooperation with the IAEA, as indicated by recent parliamentary decisions.

c) Strategic calculus may shift towards pursuit of a nuclear deterrent, inspired by North Korea's model of regime protection.

3) Diplomacy is likely to face challenges, Iran may return to talks in bad faith while rebuilding its capabilities covertly.

2- Regional Proliferation and Deterrence

1) Israel remains the dominant military actor, with advanced conventional and nuclear capabilities. Its preemptive strikes demonstrates willingness to act unilaterally to maintain qualitative advantage.

2) Other regional states, notably Saudi Arabia, may reassess their security strategies:

a) Potential pursuit of indigenous nuclear programs as a counter balance to Iran.

b) Increased reliance on U.S.

extended deterrence guarantees.

> The balance of power in the Middle East is thus likely to be:

- a) Enhanced Israeli deterrence.
- b) A nuclear domino effect, where perceived insecurity may drive smaller states toward proliferation.

3. Role of Global Powers and Alliances

a- United States:

Demonstrated willingness to strike ~~with~~ preemptively and support allies, but resources stretched across multiple theatres.

b- Russia and China:

Limited practical support for Iran; partnership with Tehran is transactional and energy-focused rather than strategic.

c- North Korea:

Observes Iran's resilience as evidence that nuclear capability ensures survival, complicating U.S. denuclearization goals in East Asia.

The Middle East's nuclear politics are therefore influenced not just by local actors, but by great power strategies, credibility of deterrence, and resource allocation.

4- Implications for International Treaties and Non proliferation

a- The strikes undermine the authority of the NPT and IAEA monitoring mechanisms, as Iran considers suspension or withdrawal.

b- Non proliferation may face long-term erosion if military action replaces verification and diplomacy, encouraging states to pursue nuclear weapons for survival.

c- However, demonstrated willingness to use force could also deter some states from developing weapons, illustrating a dual-edged impact on global norms.

5- Future outlook and Recommendations

a- Short-term: Iran likely to rebuild capabilities covertly; limited diplomacy, high regional tension, and Israel remains assertive.

b- Medium-term: Risk of regional nuclear proliferation, particularly in chief states; U.S. credibility will be tested in deterring further escalation.

c- Long-term: Necessity for reinforced multilateral framework with verification, incentives and security guarantees; military strikes alone cannot ensure stability.

d- Recommendations:

i- Strengthen AEA monitoring with robust inspections.

ii- Encourage regional security dialogues, possibly mediated by neutral powers.

iii- Maintain strategic deterrence while avoiding escalation, balancing force with diplomacy.

Conclusion

The Israel-U.S. strikes on Iran mark a pivotal juncture in Middle Eastern nuclear politics. While they have temporarily degraded Iran's nuclear program, they have exacerbated mistrust, incentivized nuclear ambition, and

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altered regional power dynamics. The future of nuclear politics in the region will hinge on Iran's covert and overt responses, regional proliferation decisions, and the involvement of global powers. A sustainable solution requires a multilateral approach combining credible deterrence, diplomacy, and enforceable non proliferation mechanisms, rather than reliance on unilateral military action alone.

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