

Current Affairs

Question no. 6: Critically evaluate the recent increase in the NATO defense spending and its possible fallouts.

Introduction:

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has recently committed to a historic increase in defense spending. At the June 2025 Hague summit member states agreed to raise their defense budget to 5% of GDP by 2035, up from the longstanding target of 2%. Russia Ukraine prospect, emerging challenges, political pressure, expansion and strategic defence are main drivers behind increasing spending. Positive outcomes are improvement in infrastructure, enhance deterrence, employment and technology. ^{while} ~~As~~ it has positive results, it has also negative

consequences such as increasing escalation, economic strain environmental vulnerability and inefficiency.

Key themes and agendas

The 5% of GDP includes 3.5% for traditional military expenditure and 1.5% allocated for resilience related spending, encompassing infrastructure, cyber security and support Ukraine. The 5% increase seemed implausible but NATO members can not afford America's disengagement. This summit has implanted not ^{just} militarization but also in the coercive diplomacy.

"It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both"
(Niccolo Machiavelli)

Reasons behind the increase in the NATO defense spending

1) Russia Ukraine War threat

The 2022 Russia invasion of Ukraine drastically reshaped threat perceptions in Europe pushing NATO allies to accelerate military investments. Countries feel the need to modernize forces and strengthen deterrence on eastern side (Romania, Poland).

2) Emerging Global Security Challenges

NATO recognizes that future conflict may ^{not} be conventional war but hybrid threats, cyber attacks and vulnerabilities are critical. These pushes the NATO countries to invest in new technology and intelligence capabilities. Defense spending

now includes cyber, space and AI driven military systems

3) Political pressure and internal dynamics

US leadership has pushed NATO allies on defence spending. Some European countries particularly Eastern Europe have strong domestic consensus on increasing military budget due to their proximity to Russia.

4) Expansion of NATO

NATO expansion increases defence spending. When new members add, it means more territory and borders to defend. It requires upgrading infrastructure and modernizing forces to meet alliance standards. Thus, it increase overall cost for all member states.

5) Strategic Competition beyond Europe

NATO is warming its muscles to contain China in the Indo-Pacific region. The presence of the alliance's four Asia-Pacific partners such as Japan, Australia, South Korea and New Zealand in the summit shows NATO's attention to arrest China's global pressure particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Positive outcomes of increasing defence spending

1: Improve resilience and innovation

Defence spending promotes cybersecurity and defense industrial base development which strengthen long term strategic autonomy. Investment in infrastructure improve military mobility and civilian military integration.

2) Enhanced Deterrence

A major boost in military capabilities could deter Russia aggression more credibly. It discourages potential adversaries from attacking or threatening the NATO countries.

3) Enhance employment and economic stimulus

Defence projects create jobs in manufacturing engineering and technology. Military contracts often stimulate local industries and supply chain. It promotes technology transfer and innovation leading to economic growth.

4) Reduce US burden

The 5.1% of GDP defence and security is designed to reduce burden on US enables more Washington attention and high end assets for Indo-Pacific. It creates trust and predictability making NATO stronger and more

credible actor internationally.

5) Complicating Kremlin's Strategic planning

Under the 2% target, NATO combined defence budget was almost 20 times larger than Russia. At 5%, new defence spending could exceed \$3 trillion annually by 2035, potentially 4050 times stronger than Russia's defence budget. This level of spending and investment in 5th/6th generation warfare, ^{and} expanding missile defence system could directly complicate Kremlin's strategic planning.

6) Creating strong defence for Eastern European countries

More funds for Eastern European NATO members like Poland, Baltic states and Romania will build a strong defence near Russian borders. These countries will be able to field larger armies, modernize

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defence reducing the vulnerability of the "Suwalki Gap" and other critical points.

Negative fallouts for increasing defence spending

1) Increasing Escalation Risk

The elevated spending is framed by allies as deterrence but rivals read it as preparations for war. This is the classical example of the structure security dilemma; defensive steps look offensive to others producing spirals.

2) Economic Strain on Members

Spending upto 5% of GDP is a huge burden on countries especially on those countries which are struggling in economic growth. Higher defense budget may crowd out social spending.

3) Inefficiencies and waste

The increase in fund can lead to inefficiency without smart planning. There is risk of just spending money not building real combat forces.

NATO's Mark Rutte said:

"Cash alone does not provide ~~sup~~ security."

4) Increase environmental vulnerability

The increase in defence budget increase military production and operation which contribute to large emissions. This large emissions of gases especially CO_2 increases the risk of climate change.

5) Fragmentation among allies

Countries which are struggling with economy lead to unequal burden or political backlash. For example, Spain

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has expressed doubts about meeting the 5% target.

Critical Evaluation:

while the 5% target is ambitious and symbolic of strong politics, not all NATO members may achieve it. Economic constraints could derail the plan. Merely increasing spending does not guarantee capability. The alliance must ensure that increased budget translate into modern system. The 1.5% spending is smart but success depends on disciplined planning.

Conclusion:

The 76th summit of NATO was an ambitious attempt to strategize goals especially in the context of resurgence of Russia and re-emergence of China on the global landscape. However it also carries risks of economic strain, environment vulnerability and inefficiency. If implemented

wisely, this could significantly strengthen NATO alliances.

"In the anarchic world of international politics, it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi."

(John Mearsheimer)

Question no. 5:

Iran - Israel

Introduction.

The Middle East has been one of the most sensitive region where one event of insecurity and chaos shakes the entire regional dynamics. and existing global order. US Israel strategic coordination aims to constrain Iran's regional influence militarily, diplomatically and economically. These moves have significantly restricted Iran's military assets, Sanction, economic growth,

regional network. In response Iran controlled escalation through proxies, get strategic realignment with china and Russia, diplomatic engagement with Gulf countries and negotiations with U.S. It effect Pakistan's security problems, trade, diplomacy, CPEC and regional Connectivity.

History of Iran-Israel Relations

The relationship between Iran and Israel can be divided into four phases. The first phase starts from 1947 to 1953 in which bitter relations followed. The second phase starts from 1953 to 1979 in which Iran has cordial ties with Israel. Adversarial relationship peaked after disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. The series of attacks between both states in the history of the world.

marked a possibility of conventional warfare that takes place b/w both states via "Domino Effect."

Recent war between Iran and Israel

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) submitted report in May 2025 that Iran has grossly violated enrichment capacities and expanded its nuclear arms. The Iranian nuclear program was not acceptable to Israel and west and also perceived as a threat by GCC countries. As a result, Israel attack on Iran on 13 June 2025 to destroy nuclear facilities and to change regime. F-35 ject, missiles on Tehran military and civilians. In retaliation Iran put dozens of missiles on Tel Aviv.

Israel ask US for help to destroy nuclear facilities. Then US attacked on Asfahan and Fordow. The depth of the facilities is 60-80m deep but IAEA can not visit. Iran attack on US airbases in Qatar. Iran claimed that they have shifted uranium nuclear sites and Israel did not successful in his mission.

How US-Israel moves have greatly limited Iran's regional role

1) Targeted strikes have Iranian assets

The US and Israel have systematically targeted commanders, nuclear scientists and logistics hubs in Iran Tehran. Israeli air strikes have severely damaged Iranian supply lines to Hezbollah.

2) Sanctions and economic squeezing

US sanctions restrict Iran's oil exports, banking channels and investment. Israel actively enforces sanctions limiting Iran's financial capacity to sustain its proxy networks. This reduces Iran's option for large scale modernization and foreign arms purchases.

3) Disrupting Iran's regional networks

The US-Israel strategy has increasingly disrupted Iran's "Axis of Resistance" by targeting its proxies across the Middle East. Frequent airstrikes in Syria and Iraq have damaged Iran's supply routes to Hezbollah while US pressure has constrained the activities of Iranian-backed

militias

4) Diplomatic marginalization

Expanding Arab-Israel normalization weakens Iran's claims to leadership of anti-Israel front. Iran finds itself increasingly isolated in the regional diplomatic landscape.

Iran's policy options in the current strategic environment

1) Controlled escalation through proxies

Iran may increase calibrated pressure via Hezbollah, Houthis or Iraqi militias. Iran avoids direct war but keeps the region unstable enough to retain bargaining power.

2) Strategic realignment with China and Russia

Iran should deepen

ties under China Belt and Road Initiative and export oil to China. Iran strengthen security cooperation with Russia especially after Ukraine. It will reduce dependency on the west.

3) Diplomatic engagement with Gulf States

Iran ^{may} ~~should~~ expand ties with Qatar, Oman, UAE to break isolation.

Iran may continue the Saudi-Iran detente brokered by China in 2023.

4) Negotiation Path with the US

Iran revive a modified JCPOA or a temporary nuclear freeze. Iran release prisoners, reduce proxy attacks and accept monitoring of IAEA.

Impacts on Pakistan

1) Security implications

Increased Iran-Israel or Iran-US confrontation could spill over in Balochistan border areas causing militant activities or crossborder strikes. If Iran escalate in Arabian sea, Pakistan maritime security becomes vulnerable.

2) Pressure on balancing diplomacy

Pakistan has to manage economic reliance on Gulf states and strategic cooperation with china. It create a sensitivity in border relationship with Iran.

3) Impacts on Regional trade and energy projects

Iran-Pakistan gas pipelines remains

frozen due to US sanctions. Sanctions and diplomatic isolation make foreign investment and cross border energy cooperation delay or freeze the project. This constrains Pakistan's energy security and limit its ability to diversify energy sources. Additionally reduced Iranian engagement in regional trade can affect connectivity plans and border integration in south and central Asia.

4) CPEC and regional Connectivity

US-Israel pressure on Iran makes China cautious in engaging Tehran, limiting Pakistan's regional connectivity options. This affects project like linking Gwadar with Chahbahar of Iran or Iran-Pakistan-

China corridor. ^{consequently,} CPEC remains more focused on ~~it~~ bilateral China Pakistan link rather than broader regional integration.

Conclusion.

The US-Israel strategy have curtailed Iran's military projection, weakened its regional connectivity and constrained its economic resilience. For Pakistan, there high diplomatic pressure and trade constraints but also opportunity to strengthen ties with Gulf states and maintain strategic neutrality.

Question no. 7:

Pakistan-Bangladesh Introduction.

The ousting of Sheikh Haseena Wajid in Bangladesh represents

Pakistan with a historic opportunity to reset and strengthen bilateral relations which have historically been strained due to the legacy of 1971 and frequent political differences. This offers wide range opportunities like trade expansion, political reset, diplomacy, regional integration, cultural engagement, environment cooperation and public health collaboration. However, Pakistan's efforts are limited and fully capitalizing this opportunity will require proactive diplomacy, economic initiatives, people to people engagement, media positive role and regional cooperation.

Opportunities for Pakistan after Hasina Wajid Government

1) Economic Collaboration and trade expansion

Bangladesh economy has been growing steadily particularly in textiles, shipbuilding and digital services. Bilateral trade could be deepened in complementary sectors ^{such as} textile, pharmaceutical infrastructure and energy. Pakistan has already exported 50,000 tons of rice to Bangladesh on a government to government basis. This is an opportunity for Pakistan to further increase trade relations.

2) Political reset and diplomacy

The change in leadership in Bangladesh presents

a window for political reset. In August 2025, Ishaq Dar visit to Dhaka and Pakistan signaled a diplomatic reset with Bangladesh through high level meetings. The visit resulted in trade cooperation, educational exchanges and cultural programs. So, this is a great opportunity for Pakistan to focus on bilateral cooperation.

3) Connectivity and regional integration

Pakistan can support Bangladesh integration in regional framework like SAARC and BIMSTEC and explore connectivity projects. This could enhance people to people contacts, trade and cultural exchange. It could enhance regional cooperation and make a positive narrative for long term bilateral ties.

4) Cultural and educational engagement

Scholarships, student and faculty exchanges, joint research and cultural festival can improve mutual perceptions and build long term goodwill. Collaborative heritage projects can help to overcome historical mistrust. Such initiatives foster long term connection between the two countries.

5) Climate and environment Cooperation

Both countries face climate related challenges such as floods, cyclones and river management issues. Pakistan can collaborate with Bangladesh on joint research, disaster management training and renewable energy projects.

6) Healthcare and Public health collaboration

Pakistan can engage Bangladesh in healthcare initiatives such as joint disease control programs, medical training and pharmaceutical cooperation which can improve regional health security and strengthen bilateral ties.

Is Pakistan doing enough to grab the long awaited opportunity?

Currently, Pakistan's engagement with Bangladesh remains limited and reactive rather than proactive. Trade ties are modest compared to Bangladesh trade with India and China. High level diplomacy is infrequent. So, Pakistan is not fully capitalizing the opportunity.

Recommended steps for Pakistan

1) High level visits

Initiate reciprocal visits by foreign ministers and head of state to strengthen ties between the two countries.

2) Trade and investment promotion

Pakistan should establish a bilateral trade forum for trade, joint ventures and investment incentives. Pakistan should focus on textiles, IT and pharmaceutical.

3) Historical reconciliation initiatives

Pakistan should launch cultural and educational programs aimed at healing historical wounds such as scholarships, joint research and cultural festivals.

4) Regional cooperation

Pakistan should actively support Bangladesh in regional forums and connectivity projects.

5) Media and public diplomacy

Media should promote positive narratives about Pakistan in Bangladesh through media exchanges and social initiatives to counter historical mistrust.

Conclusion:

The leadership change in Bangladesh offers Pakistan a unique opportunity to reset relations and develop a constructive bilateral agenda. Pakistan's current efforts are insufficient. A proactive, multifaceted strategy that combines diplomacy, trade, cultural and regional cooperation could capitalize long-awaited opportunity for Pakistan.