

21-Oct-2

CURRENT AFFAIRS**Q2: PAKISTAN - AFGHANISTAN RELATION:****INTRODUCTION:**

Pakistan and Afghanistan share deep historical, cultural and religious bonds. However, their relationship has remained strained despite numerous mediation efforts including those by China under the Bilateral ^{dialogue} mechanism. The persistent tensions stem from historic mistrust, border issues, and conflicting security interest, all of which hinder regional peace and economic cooperation.

MAJOR FACTOR BEHIND PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS:

1) **HISTORICAL LEGACY MISTRUST:** Since 1947, Afghanistan has refused to accept Durand Line as an international border.

- Kabul was the only state to oppose Pakistan's UN membership, creating early trust deficit.

2) **CROSS BORDER MILITANCY:** Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of sheltering TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) militants who carry out attacks inside Pakistan.

- Conversely Afghanistan blames Pakistan for

supporting Haqqani Network and other insurgent groups.

3) **BORDER MANAGEMENT ISSUES:** The 2600 km, long porous border allow illegal crossing, smuggling and infiltration.

- Pakistan's fencing of the Durand Line has been resisted by Kabul, viewing it as a division of ethnic Pashtuns.

4) **DIVERGENT SECURITY INTEREST:** Pakistan's security establishment has historically sought strategic depth in Afghanistan.

- Afghanistan especially 2001 regime, viewed this as an interference in their sovereignty.

5) **INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS:** The US withdrawal (2021) created a power vacuum.

- China seeks stability for its CPEC expansion, while India uses soft power and infrastructure investment to counter Pakistan's influence.

6) **REFUGEE BURDEN:** Pakistan has been hosting over 3 million Afghan refugees straining its economy and security environment.

- Recent refugee deportations have further worsened bilateral trust.

CHINA'S MEDIATION EFFORTS:

→ China initiated Trilateral Foreign Ministers Dialogue (Pakistan-Afghanistan-China). The focus areas of it were economic connectivity, counter terrorism cooperation and Belt and Road integration. Yet success has been limited due to deep rooted political distrust between Kabul and Islamabad.

THE WAY FORWARD (RECOMMENDATIONS)

- 1) Mutual Security Mechanism: Establish a joint border security commission to curb cross border terrorism.
- 2) Economic Connectivity: Promote transit trade, CASA1000 and TAPI pipeline under Chinese facilitation.
- 3) Political Dialogue: Revive Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity. (APAPPS)
- 4) People to People Contact: Expand educational scholarships, visa facilitation and cultural exchanges.
- 5) Regional Cooperation: Utilize SCO and ECO platforms for border regional consensus.

- 6) Non-Interference Policy: Both nations should respect each others sovereignty and avoid using proxy.

CONCLUSION: Pak-Afghan relationship remains a test case for regional peace. While China's mediation has offered a platform, real progress depends on the political will of both nations to move from strategic suspicion to strategic cooperation. Stability in Afghanistan is indispensable for Pakistan's security and for broader peace of South Asia.

Q8: PAKISTAN- SAUDI ARABIA DEFENSE PACT:

THESIS: The September 2025 ^{Strategic} Mutual Defense Agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia stems from converging strategic needs - economic relief for Pakistan and security diversification for KSA. carries profound implications for regional balance, Pakistan's foreign policy alignment and South Asian and middle Eastern security architecture.

INTRODUCTION: On 17th September 2025 Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a landmark defense pact declaring that "Any aggression against

One will be considered as an aggression against both." While this pact was signed Pakistan preferred strategic ambiguity whereas Saudi Arabia has claimed that the pact involves protection of Riyadh under nuclear umbrella. The official statement stresses the pact is purely defensive and not directed at any third country, still the timings and context suggest deeper regional realignments.

CAUSES OF DEFENSE PACT:

* INTERNAL CAUSES / PAKISTAN'S MOTIVATION:

- 1) Economic Crisis and Need for Strategic Patrons:
Pakistan has long relied on Gulf support especially Saudi aid and deferred oil lines. With economic vulnerability and IMF programmes looming a formal defense deal serves Islamabad as both strategic insurance and economic leverage.
- 2) Enhancing Diplomatic standing and defense Industry Prospects:
By entering a mutual defense pact, Pakistan positions itself as meaningful security provider in Islamic world potentially unlocking

arms contracts, training exports and deeper Saudi investments.

- 3) Leveraging Military Capability for Strategic Gains:
Pakistan's military is battle-hardened and nuclear arm. The pact offers a platform to leverage these strengths for border alliance beyond South Asia, pooling strength with Saudi's resource

EXTERNAL CAUSES / SAUDI'S MOTIVATION:

- 1) Diversifying Security Partnerships:
Saudi Arabia has become wary of over reliance under US security umbrella. A formal pact with Pakistan signals a shift towards new strategic alignment in the face of threats from Iran, Houthis missile attack and Gulf instability.
- 2) Addressing Regional Threat Perceptions:
Growing threats from Iran and Israel activities in the Gulf region have spurred Riyadh to seek deeper deterrence options. Pakistan's military credentials and nuclear status offer symbolic reassurance

3) Securing Muslim Solidarity and Regional Influence:

The pact reinforces Saudi Arabia's role in the Islamic Security Architecture as a hub-marking an alignment with Muslim majority, nuclear-armed state and projecting leadership in broader Muslim world.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEAL:

FOR PAKISTAN:

1) Strategic Depth and External Engagement:

Pakistan gains elevated strategic relevance beyond South Asia. Its armed forces may be deployed or associated with Saudi territorial security, enhancing prestige and geopolitical reach.

2) Economic Relief and Arms Modernization:

With Saudi financing and potential partnership Pakistan could accelerate military modernization and stabilize the economy - though success depends on follow through and institutional capacity.

3) Escalation Risk and Over Commitments:

Formal commitments increase Pakistan's exposure as contingencies in Gulf may draw it in conflicts beyond its capacity, and military and economic burden may deepen if obligations are triggered.

FOR SAUDI ARABIA AND GULF:

1) New Deterrence Posture: The pact signals Riyadh's intent to diversify defense alignments, potentially reducing reliance on US and strengthening regional deterrence architecture.

2) Nuclear Shadow And Proliferation Concerns:

While the agreement avoids explicit nuclear sharing, Pakistani Defense Minister's remarks suggest "full spectrum" cooperation raising questions about de facto umbrella. This escalates non-proliferation risks.

3) Regional Realignment and Counter Alliances: India, Israel and Iran may react strategically - India may deepen ties with Gulf states, Israel may view Pakistan as an indirect threat, Iran may escalate proxy warfare - hence reshaping alliances.

FOR REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY:

1) South Asia and Middle East convergence

The deal links South Asian military power with Gulf security concerns -- traditionally distinct threat. This increase complexity for India and US strategy.

2) Questioning US Dominance and Arm Control:

Gulf state hesitation towards US security guarantees and shift towards non-Western partners.

3) Unclear Operation Mechanism: Many details remain opaque. Ambiguity may lead to mis calculation, strategic confusion or rival alliances.

CRITICAL EVALUATION: The pact is transformative in symbolism - formalising decades old ties and signalling strategic recalibration for both countries. Pakistan gains prestige economic lifelines, KSA strengthens its security architecture. However serious caveats remain; the operational details are unclear, nuclear expectancies, regional response uncertain. For Pakistan economic promise may not align with capacity and for KSA risk of burdening itself with Pak's strategic challenges is high.

Q7:

INTRODUCTION: In era of shifting global alliances Pakistan's foreign policy faces critical challenge of maintaining equilibrium between its long standing strategic partnership with China and its renewed engagement with the US. As global competition intensifies between Washington and Beijing, Pakistan must pursue a balanced, pragmatic, and interest based diplomacy to safeguard its national interests.

BACKGROUND OF RELATIONSHIP

WITH THE US: Pakistan and US ~~and~~ have shared a complex relationship - from being Cold War allies and "frontline partners" in War on Terror to enduring periods of mistrust over issues such as Afghanistan and counter terrorism. Recent reengagement especially in trade, energy and counter terrorism cooperation indicates renewed mutual interest.

WITH CHINA: The relationship with China has been described as "Higher than the Himalayas and Deeper than the Oceans". Through CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) Beijing.

has become Pakistan's largest investor and strategic defense partner, playing a crucial role in Pakistan's economic and infrastructural development.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND CHANGING DYNAMICS

- Pakistan has revived diplomatic ties with the US through cooperation on counter terrorism, regional stability and IMF related financial support.
- Simultaneously, China remains Pakistan's strategic and economic anchor, particularly through CPEC phase II, focusing on industrialization and technology transfers.
- The US China rivalry in the Indo Pacific and South Asian region places Pakistan in delicate position.

CHALLENGES IN BALANCING RELATIONS:

- 1) Strategic Rivalry: US containment policy towards China (QUAD, Indo Pacific Strategy) limits Pak's room for maneuver.
- 2) Economic Dependence: Pakistan's debt to China and reliance on IMF creates dual pressure.
- 3) Regional Security Complex: US's strategic tilt towards India.

China's interest in Pakistan for regional connectivity

- Pakistan's own security challenges in Afghanistan and Indian Ocean.

4) Perception Gap: The US often views Pakistan through security lens while China treats it as a ~~long~~ long term partner in development.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN.

- Economic Diversification: Leverage both Chinese and American investment to strengthen local industries and technology sectors.
- Act as a bridge and neutral facilitator b/w major powers in SA.
- Use platforms like SCO and ASEAN dialogue mechanism to promote balance.

WAY FORWARD:

- Strengthen CPEC phase II
- Deepen US Pakistan cooperation
- Promote track-II diplomacy
- Pursue multi vector foreign policy.

Q4: INTRODUCTION:

There is evidence of dangerous revival of militancy in KP and Baluchistan that poses serious threats to Pakistan's security, economy, social fabric.

CRITICAL EVALUATION:

1) Afghan Spillover and Sanctuary Dynamics:

The return to Taliban to Kabul and porous Pak-Afghan frontier have allowed TTP and allied groups to reconstitute safe heavens, training nodes and cross border movement enabling more frequent attacks in KP.

2) Organization resilience and tactical evolution of militant

Groups such as TTP, IS-K have rebuilt leadership, exploited weapons and networks left after Afghan conflict, and diversified tactics.

3) Political Instability and Governance Vacuum

Domestic political fragmentation, contested legitimacy of institutions and weak provincial governments reduce state's capacity to maintain law and order, provide services and sustain coherent

counter insurgency strategies.

4) Socio Economic Grievances and Exclusion:

Long standing economic marginalization, poor local participation in resources, lack of meaningful local government and perceived injustice have sustained separatist sentiments in Baluchistan. Insurgent factories use these grievances to recruit and justify violence and deliberately target CPEC and foreign workers.

5) External Actors And Regional Rivalries:

Baloch and other insurgent actors exploit cross border sanctuaries and sometimes external patronage and permissive external environment.

6) Counter Insurgency Strategy Limitation and Human Security Cost:

Heavy kinetic responses without parallel political engagement or adequate protection of civilians can deepen alienation, creates cycles of retaliation and harm state.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) Intelligence based security operations = precise action against militant leadership - avoiding civilian harm.

- 2) Effective border control: strengthen fencing, surveillance and coordination with Afghan authorities.
- 3) Political Dialogue: engage local leaders and tribal elders to address grievances and promote reconciliation.
- 4) Inclusive development: Ensure fair resource distribution, local jobs, visible public service delivery in KP and Baluchistan.
- 5) Police and Justice reforms: enhance local policing prosecution and rule of law to build public trust.
- 6) Counter extremism narrative: Promote education reforms, religious moderation and community awareness.
- 7) Regional cooperation: Work with Afghanistan, China and neighbors to deny sanctuaries and control cross border movement.
- 8) Institutional coordination: Unify civil military approach under coherent national security policy.