

21/10/25

"Mock Exam"
"Current Affairs"

Part II:

Q2:- Pak-Afghan relations, major factors and steps to improve relation.

~~Introduction~~

Pakistan and Afghanistan share deep historical, cultural and economic linkages, yet their relationship has largely remained uneasy. Despite recent role of China as mediator under the spirit of regional connectivity and counter-terrorism, bilateral trust between two countries remains fragile. Persistent border disputes, security concerns, policy divergences, under cover factor of neighbouring East country and recent skirmishes, the normalization of ties remains dormant. China's arrangement of trilateral dialogues under the BRI and SCO platforms to ease the tensions went in vain.

Historically, the formation of Durand line in 1893 and its non-recognition by successive Afghan rulers has remained a persistent point of divergence between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The border issue has often served as a root cause of mistrust between two neighbours. Following the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, many expected an Era of betterment between Islamabad and Kabul; but those

hopes were short-lived. The post 9/11 US invasion of Afghan soil once again altered the regional dynamics with Pakistan being accused of double game player, supporting US-led coalition at the same time maintaining ties with Taliban elements. Currently, the Taliban regime in Kabul repeatedly accused Pakistan of covertly supporting US during occupation and even after the US withdrawal in 2021, tensions persisted as Taliban leadership openly challenges Islamabad policies and border actions.

→ Major Factors Behind Tensions:

① Border and Sovereignty Issues:

Afghanistan's refusal to recognize the Durand line and opposing in 1947 the membership of Pakistan in UN, continues to cause cross border clashes, especially around the Chaman-Spin Boldak & Torkham. Pakistan's fencing of the long durand line has been resisted by Kabul as symbol of imposed division.

② Terrorism and Security:

Pakistan supported Afghanistan during and after the Soviet forces withdrawal. Pakistan thought of backing the Afghan Taliban regime will

allow them to control the region but ~~many~~ things went on opposite side. After the Afghan Taliban resurgence in 2021, Pakistan wants Afghan Taliban to take actions against the terrorism activities of groups like TTP and don't allow the Afghan civil for cross-border militancy, but Afghan Taliban never seems to be interested in such action.

→ According to (Global Terrorism Index) ~~GTI~~ **GTI 2024**, Pakistan is the second most affected country by terrorism.

→ As per the report of "PICSS", the year "2025" is the deadliest year for Pakistan with 3 months yet to go - **2400** of total fatalities are recorded so far including both civil and military lives. Only in September 69 attacks were carried out by militants causing 135 deaths. Out of these single month attacks, 70% of them are conducted by **TTP** with their safe havens in Afghanistan under the shadow of Afghan Taliban.

So, as per these deadliest stats, Pakistan blame is on point and wants them to take action against these inhumane group but ~~the~~ consistent ignorance by Kabul have led ~~the~~ **ISB** Islamabad to a point to nothing but ~~take~~ to take strict measures even if it take Islamabad to let cross the border and neutralize the **TTP** leaders, which we have seen in previous days.

(3) Ideological and Political Divergences

• Pakistan, after the US withdrawal expected a very friendly Afghan Taliban 2.0 regime but Kabul has shown a nationalist and independent posture. Pakistan always wanted to influence Afghanistan & past is the testimony of such intention but this time Taliban resurgence openly rejects the notion of being under Islamabad's influence, furthering the frustration of Islamabad.

(4) Regional Power Competition

• In post 2021 diplomacy of Taliban 2.0 regime, there comes a new friend in their policy named India. Taliban sought to diversify their foreign partnerships and India emerged as a major player. New Delhi's engagement from humanitarian aids to infrastructure projects, has strengthened its influence among Taliban. India always tried to isolate Pakistan by making full out of such events by providing no undercover proxy aids but this time they opened the diplomatic channel creating strategic discomfort for Pakistan, viewing India's growing foothold on its western flank as security and intelligence threat.

Meanwhile, the Taliban regime welcomes the New Delhi's assistance to reduce the overdependence on Pakistan. This angle of India-Pakistan rivalry playing out inside Afghanistan further complicates efforts at peace and cooperation.

→ India's consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad are seen as intel hubs by Pakistan.

Moreover, their reengagement aligns with its ambition to counter the China's CPEC influence in the region. Thus Afghan factor has turned into a geopolitical chessboard with Pakistan, India and China pursuing competing strategic interests.

China as Mediator:

China's role has largely been one of the facilitation and dialogue not intervention. Through SCO and bilateral talks Beijing has encouraged both sides to cooperate on counter-terrorism and connectivity, linking Afghanistan with CPEC under BRI.

However, China's approach is constrained; its priority is to stabilize BRI and avoid taking sides in their internal and political disputes. Without mutual political will from Islamabad and Kabul, external mediation alone can not ensure trust.

Way Forward:

① Policy Shift from Security to Economic Connectivity.

→ Pakistan must de-securityize the Afghan^{is} approach, instead of viewing Afghanistan solely through a border control and terrorism lens, Islamabad should pursue mutual economic independence linking Kabul with CPEE, promoting transit trade and facilitating cross border markets. Economic ties build stakes in piece that operation from security point can not.

② Policy Realism and Mutual Sovereignty.

→ Both sides need to accept each others political autonomy. Pakistan must move away from the expectation of friendly Taliban regime and keeping them under influence, while Kabul must also recognize Pakistan's legitimate security concerns by acknowledging the efforts and sacrifices of the people across the Pakistan is in countering the terrorism from Afghan soil. Realistic diplomacy not ideological expectations should guide future engagements.

③ Joint Counter-Terrorism Mechanism

Both countries should opt to use the SW. or Chinese facilitation with neutral verifiable mechanism. This can help monitor and verify cross border militant activity. Both countries must end the blame game over TTP and ISK-P by establishing shared security data base and joint patrols in sensitive zones.

④ International forums usage:

Afghanistan regime, if remain stuck on their current anti-friendly policy then Pakistan must opt to go beyond borders and raise the concerns at international forums like UN. Pakistan must act smartly by collecting and documenting all the evidences of Afghan soil being utilized ~~for~~ against the Pakistan and present it on international forum.

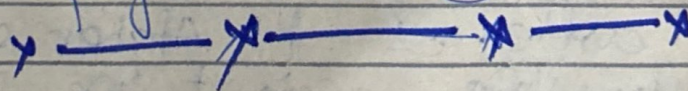
→ This will not ~~only~~ ^{only} help Pakistan to counter the militancy but also ~~to~~ create the image of Pakistan being the most affected country by terrorism. Further changing the public's perception of Pakistan being a host country to terrorism, by being the elimators of terrorism in the region.

⑤ Engaging China and Regional Actors:

China mediation is useful but limited by its non-interference doctrine. Pakistan and Afghanistan should leverage Beijing's neutrality to facilitate connectivity projects while bringing in Qatar, Iran and the SCO as additional stabilizing platforms.

Conclusion:

→ So, we must see and try to maintain Afghanistan relation from every aspect and possibility. A stable, sovereign and cooperative neighbour is not a threat but an opportunity. Durable peace will depend not only on external mediation but on both nations recognizing that their destinies are deeply intertwined.



Q8:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a formal defence pact in Riyadh declaring that any act of aggression against either country would be treated as an aggression against both. This agreement marks a significant shift in their long-standing but previously informal security relationship. The agreement comes at a time of shifting regional alliances, economic pressures and changing security priorities in the Gulf. Let's analyze the causes behind this pact and critically evaluate its implications for both countries and regions.

Causes:

- Pakistan has for years relied heavily on Saudi Arabia for oil supplies, financial assistance and remittances. This economic dependence and fragility of Pakistan has made deeper ties with Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia's strategic security requirement serves both. For Saudi's the deal helps secure Pakistan as a dependable partner and for Pakistan it offers a pathway to stabilize its economy through closer strategic alignment.
- Reevaluation of Saudi Arabia strategically with rethinking of its security architecture. With increased concerns over Iran, Houthis attacks and then Israel's attack on Qatar

and doubts about the long term reliability of the US security umbrella, Riyadh appears to be diversifying its security partnerships. Pakistan, being a long term security partner offers manpower, experience and ~~possible~~ symbolic nuclear capability.

→ Over decades Pak-KSA had cooperated militarily - training of Saudi personnel by Pakistan, deployment of Pakistani troops in the kingdom and collaborations in defence training. This part essentially formalize what was previously informal -

→ In South Asia region, Pakistan relations with neighbours remain tense and a strong defence posture is considered essential by Islamabad. On the other hand, in the Gulf region KSA's energy and geopolitical interests intersect with Asia. The pact allow each side to respond mannerly through this formal alliance.

For Pakistan, it reinforces strategic relevance and for Saudi Arabia, it gives access to military and possible nuclear capability.

Implications:

* For Pakistan, it will help enhance ~~the~~ country's strategic relevance evolving from

being a regional intra-Asian actor to a partner for a major Gulf power like Saudi. This pact may help secure economic benefits from Saudi Arabia like investment, defense contracts, oil credits which is badly required by Pakistan.

But, risk factor is also involved by signing such treaty. Pakistan may risk "over commitment" means stretching its resources beyond its potential which may affect its security back home.

Pakistan may become drawn into the Gulf disputes with bordering neighbours like Iran undermining our own security.

→ For Saudi Arabia, it is an upgrade in the defence posture moving towards more autonomous security frame work beyond reliance on west.

This will allow Saudi Arabia to access to Pakistan military expertise and the backing of Pakistan ~~not~~ (nuclear) even though not formally signed yet) - capacity.

For Saudi Arabia, there is a possibility of regional back lash, as their alignment with Pakistan may aggravate Iran, Israel and India, complicating the diplomatic balance for Riyadh.

- This pact changes the regional security architecture, South Asia gaining a new dimension with Pak-Gulf linkage and Gulf sees new defence alignments independent of the US.
 - Before the signing of this MDA, Saudi and India ~~was~~ ~~grew~~ growing ties with each other but now after this pact, it may complicate that growing relation and raise Indian concerns about Gulf Pakistan alignment.
 - The possible factor of deterrence also raises concerns - even though informal - among Gulf countries and may further into nuclear arm race dynamics.
- Implementation challenges are also another dimension to look into it; although the exact operational terms are not publicly clarified, and the commitment clause is still unclear unless backed by any formal military planning and frame work, which may be just a sort of signal rather than substance.
- This pact adds complexity to Isb's strategic portfolio and may force realibrations and Islamabad must balance its alliances -

Evaluation;

Overall, the pact is strategically significant, possibly the most important upgrade in two countries in decades. It reflects how both states are adapting

to new regional realities. That said, the real test will be in implementation and risk management.

From Pakistan's perspective, the pact offers elevated international status and economic opportunities, but also new burdens and potential strategic overreaching. For Saudi Arabia, the deal offers a credible deterrence enhancement and diversification of ties but at the same time also exposes Riyadh to new strategic complications.

If both countries act positively keeping in mind their strong factor, then both the countries gonna make most out of this pact. For instance, Saudi is economically stable and Pakistan is strong in military capabilities, so both have a thing to give and take to each other. Further, Pakistan can send their engineers to Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia can make the most of it by using the most brilliant minds in enhancing the military as well as the aviation industry. Riyadh can act as a aviation hub for the whole region.

For region the pact could herald a shift away from western dominated defence arrangements towards intra-Muslim

strategic alignments. This will either stabilize the region by providing credible deterrence or if not then destabilize the region by sparking the competitive alliances, nuclear ambiguity or deeper fault lines, so we can say the pact is promising but not-risk free and it depends on how precisely the follow through is and how both capitals manage and cope the ~~present~~ possible risks.