

Question : 4

Ans.

Introduction:

Pakistan has witnessed a troubling resurgence of militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan in recent years. The revival comes after a decade of relative peace achieved through sustained military operations from 2008 to 2016. Operations such as Rah-e-Rast, Zarb-e-Azb, and Radd-ul-Fasad dismantled major terrorist networks and restored the writ of the state. However, since 2021, militancy has re-emerged, particularly after the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, exposing the structural, political, and governance weaknesses that continue to plague Pakistan's internal security landscape.

Decline and Resurgence : An Overview

The 2008-16 period marked a decisive military victory against militant outfits like Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). These operations cleared erstwhile FATA

and parts of KP from terrorist control and drastically reduced the number of terrorist incidents. Yet, the post 2018 period saw a slow but consistent revival of militancy. According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), Pakistan recorded over 700 terrorist attacks in 2024, resulting more than 950 fatalities, a significant increase compared to previous years. This resurgence is concentrated in KP and Balochistan, where both nationalist and religiously motivated groups have regained operational strength.

Reasons:

1. Spillover from Afghanistan

A key reason behind the revival is the post-withdrawal situation in Afghanistan. The United States' withdrawal in August 2021 left behind advanced weaponry that fell into the hands of the Taliban and subsequently, the TTP. The TTP has since used Afghan

soil as launching pad for cross-border attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians, exploiting the ideological and operational space provided by the Taliban regime in Kabul. Despite repeated diplomatic engagements, the Afghan Taliban have failed to prevent their ideological allies from targeting Pakistan.

3. Ambiguous Counterterrorism Policy

Following years of successful counterterrorism operations, an ambiguous policy response emerged in the post-2018 period. The government's mixed approach, oscillating between negotiation and enforcement, created confusion about the state's counterterrorism resolve. This ambiguity was perceived by militant groups as a strategic opening, encouraging their reorganization and resurgence. The TTP made unreasonable demands during negotiations, such as reversing the 25th Constitutional Amendment

that merged FATA with KP, reinstating the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), and implementing the shariat Bill in Malakand Division. These demands reflected a desire to re-establish control rather than reintegrate into the state system.

3. Institutional and Operational Weaknesses

While military has demonstrated its operational capacity to defeat militancy, there exist serious structural loopholes in Pakistan's internal security architecture. The absence of effective policing in conflict-prone regions created a vacuum that militants exploited. The military, though skilled in combat operations, is not trained for community-based policing or civilian law enforcement. Conversely, the police force is undertrained, underfunded, and unequipped to manage insurgent threats. The lack of coordination between civil and military institutions weakened intelligence—

sharing mechanisms, enabling militants to regroup in remote districts of KP and Balochistan

4. Alienation of the Local Population

Prolonged conflicts, displacement, and heavy-handed security measures have led to alienation among local communities, particularly in merged districts and parts of Balochistan. Movements like Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) emerged out of resentment against human rights violations and lack of rehabilitation. This sense of marginalization provided fertile ground for militant recruitment and propaganda. The absence of post-conflict socioeconomic development deepened the public's disillusionment with the state.

5. Regional and Ideological Factors

The regional security environment also contributes to instability. Baloch separatist elements, reportedly supported by external actors, continue to target

infrastructure projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Moreover, the ideological appeal of militancy persists due to poor regulation of religious seminaries and ineffective counter-narratives to extremist ideologies.

Recommendations

The state has two broad options to deal with violent non-state actors: hard power and soft power. Pakistan must adopt a balanced, intelligence-driven approach rather than launching new large-scale military operations, which are neither affordable nor sustainable.

1. Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs): Focused, data-driven strikes against active militants should continue to dismantle operational networks.
2. Selective Dialogue: Negotiations should be limited

to those willing to renounce violence, while militants involved in heinous crimes must face justice.

3. Socioeconomic Rehabilitation :
Investment in education, employment, and infrastructure in conflict zones is essential to counter extremist recruitment.

4. Police Reforms: The police must be trained, equipped, and integrated into counterterrorism planning to assume responsibility for internal security once areas are cleared.

5. Cross-Border Diplomacy :
Pakistan must continue engaging the Afghan Taliban through forums like SCO and OIC to ensure that Afghan soil is not used for terrorism.

Conclusion:

The revival of militancy in KP and Balochistan is not merely a security failure but a reflection of policy inconsistency, institutional weakness, and societal alienation. Pakistan's past operations proved that militancy can be defeated militarily, but sustaining peace requires strong governance, inclusive development, and a coherent national counterterrorism policy. Only a comprehensive and intelligence-based strategy, combining hard and soft power can permanently eliminate the militant threat and ensure durable stability in Pakistan's most vulnerable regions.

Question : 6

Ans :

Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine war, now in its fourth year, remains of the most complex and prolonged conflicts in modern Europe. Initiated by Russia's invasion in February 2022, the war pits Moscow's demand for a new security order against NATO's insistence on defending Ukraine's sovereignty. The diametrically opposite objectives of both sides make the prospects for a negotiated end highly uncertain.

Background

The conflict stems from post-Cold War security tension - NATO's eastward expansion into former Soviet state was viewed by Russia as strategic encirclement. Ukraine's tilt toward the West and its intent to join NATO crossed Moscow's red line, triggering the invasion. What Russia expected to be a quick

campaign turned into a war of attrition, as Ukraine, backed by massive Western military and financial aid, mounted unexpected resistance.

Conflicting Strategic Objectives

At the heart of the impasse lie irreconcilable demands.

- (a) Russia seeks recognition of its annexations in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Crimea, and insists on Ukraine's permanent neutrality.
- (b) Ukraine and NATO, on the other hand, demand full territorial restoration and reject any compromise legitimizing Russian gains.

These positions represent poles apart interests, leaving virtually no room for diplomatic convergence.

The Military Stalemate

By late 2025, the frontlines have largely stabilized. Russian

controls about 18 percent of Ukrainian territory, while Ukraine continues limited counteroffensives with Western-supplied long-range weapons. Both sides have suffered enormous casualties, estimated at over 500,000, without decisive results. The war has thus entered an attritional phase, draining resources while neither side is ready to concede.

Obstacles to Peace

Several barriers obstruct a settlement:

1. Mutual distrust after the collapse of the Minsk Accords.
2. Domestic Politics, where concessions could delegitimize leaders in both Moscow and Kyiv.
3. Western unity, which limits flexibility and discourages territorial compromises.
4. Expanded war aims, as the conflict has shifted from defending Ukraine to strategically containing Russia.

These dynamics make diplomacy extremely difficult.

Humanitarian and Economic Impact

The war has produced Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II and devastated both economies. Ukraine's GDP shrank by over 30 percent in 2022, while Russia remains under long-term Western sanctions. The war has disrupted global food and energy markets, contributing to inflation and supply shocks worldwide. Yet despite the cost, both sides remain committed to military escalation rather than negotiation.

Prospects for an End

Given these realities, the chances of an immediate end remain minimal. Neither side possesses the capacity nor the political will to secure outright victory. The most likely outcome in the medium term is "frozen conflict", similar to Korean Peninsula, where hostilities subside without a peace treaty.

Limited cease-fires or humanitarian pauses mediated by countries like China or Turkiye may occur, but a comprehensive peace remains distant.

Conclusion

The Russia-Ukraine war persists because it reflects a deeper contest over world order, not merely borders. With Russia demanding recognition of its dominance and NATO determined to preserve Western credibility, the two sides remain locked in a zero-sum struggle. In the foreseeable future, the world is more likely to witness a managed stalemate than a genuine peace, until both camps realize that military victory is impossible and mutual compromise is inevitable.

Question : 8

Ans.

Introduction

Pakistan's foreign policy has long been shaped by the need to balance relations with major powers while protecting its national interests. The recent renewed engagement with the United States, alongside a strong strategic partnership with China, presents both opportunities and challenges. While the US offers economic assistance, security cooperation, and diplomatic leverage, China provides long-term economic investment, infrastructure development through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and defense collaboration. Navigating these relationships effectively requires pragmatism, strategic autonomy, and careful diplomacy.

Challenges

The primary challenge in balancing these relationships is the divergence of strategic interests. Pakistan's engagement with the US could be perceived by China as leaning toward American policies, especially on regional security and India, while deepening ties with China may raise concerns in Washington. Domestic and regional pressures further complicate matters, as the public expects Pakistan to maintain sovereignty and avoid entanglement in great-power rivalries. Additionally, economic and security dependencies on both powers can create vulnerabilities if relations with either side are strained.

Strategies

To address these challenges, Pakistan must prioritize strategic autonomy, ensuring that neither relationship compromises independent decision-making. Compartmentalization

of engagement is also essential: economic cooperation and infrastructure projects with China can continue, while US relations focus on security, counterterrorism, and diplomatic coordination. Multilateral diplomacy offers another avenue to strengthen Pakistan's international credibility and reduce reliance on bilateral patronage, including active participation in forums like the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Transparent communication with both powers is critical to prevent misunderstandings and reassure them of Pakistan's neutral stance. Finally, Pakistan can leverage its regional role to act as a bridge between the US and China, emphasizing shared interests such as regional stability, counterterrorism, and economic connectivity, while simultaneously diversifying its economy and strengthening domestic industries to reduce dependence.

Conclusion

Balancing relations with the US and China is a complex but achievable task. By maintaining strategic autonomy, compartmentalizing engagements, practicing transparent diplomacy, and leveraging its regional position, Pakistan can secure benefits from both partnerships without compromising sovereignty or independence. A pragmatic, long-term approach will allow Pakistan to maintain strong ties with ~~str~~ both powers, protect its national interests, and enhance its influence in regional and global affairs.