(PART - II)

(Question : 04)

Analyze the trajectory of Pak-Afghanistan relations in the post 2021 period of current regime in Afghanistan. How have border security, refugee issues, and regional re-alignments influenced bilateral ties?

① INTRODUCTION

"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be acheived by understanding"

Albert Einstein

"No border, no friendship" - These word ring true for the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan since the latter's regime change in August 2021. Since the return of the Taliban in Kabul, bilateral ties between the two neighbours have seen a complicated mix of cooperation, mistrust and shifting priorities. The trajectory of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations in the post-2021 period, focusing on three key dimensions: border security, refugee/migration issues, and regional realignments. It will also assess the situation as of 2025 and draw conclusions about future prospects.

give the main heading first.......

1 BORDER SECURITY:-

1.1 Background: Pakistan and Afghanistan shares a frontier of approximately 2,500 km along the so-called "Durand Line".

The border has long been porous, with tribal links, informal crossings and militant movement complicating the security environment. Since the Taliban's return in 2021, Pakistan has repeatedly raised concerns that Afghan territory is being used by groups such as the ~~T~~ Tehrik-e-Taliban pakistan (TTP) to plan attacks inside pakistan. Afghanistan denies state sponsorship.

1.2 Recent Incidents and closures:

In march 2025, the major crossing at Torkham was reopened after a nearly month-long closure triggered by clashes between pakistani and Afghan forces over construction of border outpost. During that closure, trade worth "over US$ 1.6 billion in 2024" between the two countries was disrupted. In oct 2025, the Torkham and Chaman checkpoints were again shut due to "escalating security situation" following exchanges of ~~[illegible]~~ fire.

1.3 Impacts on Pakistan-Afghanistan ties:

- Trust deficit: pakistan's repeated accusations that Afghan soil is used for attacks fuel mistrust. conversely, Afghan officials view pakistan's border ~~op~~ outposts and fencing as encroachment on sovereignty.
- Trade and transit cost:- Every closure of the major borders imposes heavy economic cost. one estimate put losses at US$ 60 million in 21 days of the Torkham closure in 2025.
- Security burden on pakistan:- pakistan continues to argue that unless Afghanistan acts decisively against militant safe-havens, Islamabad's western frontier will remain unstable.
- Afghanistan dependency:- Afghanistan remains heavily dependent on cross-border trade and imports from pakistan. Interruptions harm Afghan economic stability and push for alternative channels.

1.4 What This Means In 2025:-

By 2025, while there have been efforts to normalize crossings and improve border infrastructure (e.g., upgraded terminals at Torkham and Chaman). However, the border remains a pressure point: the security–trade nexus remains unresolved and each flare-up undermines the broader bilateral relationship.

.2 Refugee And Migration Issues:

2.1 Mgnitude of issue:-

As of 2024, pakistan was hosting over 2.8 million Afghan refugees and other Afghan nationals. Earlier, In June 2023 the number was estimated at 3.7 million with only about 1.3 million registered via official mechanisms. In 2024, between 16 and 22 thousand Afghans reportedly returned per fortnight through major border crossings due to pakistan's repatriation plan.

2.2 Tensions and policy shifts:

Pakistan announced an "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation plan (IFRP)" in late 2023, targeting undocumented Afghan nationals for return. pakistani authorities indicates that many Afghans left because of fear of arrest, lack of legal status, or expiry of documentation. For example: "92 per cent of the surveyed returnee families said they are moving back to Afghanistan due to fear of arrest." Refugee hosting has placed social, economic and security burdens on pakistan's border provinces (e.g., Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan).

2.3 Effects on bilateral relations:-

- Burden sharing: pakistan expects some burden-sharing or at least action from Afghanistan regarding undocumented migration or militant infiltration. when Afghanistan is perceived as failing to act, pakistan becomes frustrated.
- Humanitarian and image costs: Large number of refugees, many unregistered, create humanitarian issues and international scrutiny for Pakistan.

add and highlight references/examples against these arguments.

• Leverage and diplomacy:- pakistan willingness (or unwillingness) to host or repatriate Afghans become a diplomatic lever in its dealings with Kabul.

• Refugee returns as barometer:- Mass movements back to Afghanistan or forced repatriations, signal cooling or stress in bilateral ties.

2.4 CURRENT STATUS:-

By 2025, the refugee / migration questions remain unresolved. Pakistan continues to press for regularised status of Afghans, while Afghanistan remains economically weak and unable yet to offer large-scale absorption for returning nationals. This unsettled issue persists as a latent threat to stable bilateral relations.

3: Regional Realignments:-

3.1 New diplomatic signals:

In May 2025, pakistan announced it would upgrade its diplomatic representation in Afghanistan from charge-d'affaires to full ambassador level. Afghanistan welcomed the move. Also in 2025, at a trilateral meeting in Beijing, Pakistan, Afghanistan and china agreed to elevate ties and discussed extending the china-Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) into Afghanistan.

3.2 Geostrategic Shifts:-

pakistan is keen to stabilise its western border so as to focus resources ~~else~~ elsewhere (for example vis-a-vis india). Afghanistan under Taliban sees economic lifeline via pakistan and china rather than exclusively via the west. china's enhanced role (via BRI/CPEC) gives both pakistan and Afghanistan an alternative axis of engagement. Some analysts see china as a "real winner" of the pakistan-Afghanistan rapprochement. India's roles in Afghanistan remains ambiguous. pakistan perceives some encirclement risk from India-

Afghanistan alignment. A recent French media article linked border clashes to this India-Pakistan rivalry in the Afghan context.

3.3 Bilateral implications:

- Opportunity for pakistan: A cooperative Afghanistan opens up trade, transit and connectively possibilities for pakistan's western provinces.
- Dependency and risk for pakistan: If Afghanistan remains unstable or blocks pakistan's transit ambitions, islamabad may feel the payoff is not enough.
- Leverage for Afghanistan: kabul can exploit pakistan's need for stability by bargaining on transit, trade and recognition.
- Regional domino effects: The pakistan-Afghanistan realignment affects iran, china, central Asia and India meaning pakistan's bilateral ties are now embedded in broader regional shifts.

3.4 2025 Snapshot:-

In 2025, the pakistan-Afghanistan relationship apears to be cautiously improving on the diplomatic front, yet remains vulnerable to security and refugee shocks. The regional realignment (with china) offers both promise and complexity.

4. Summary of Trajectory.

Phase	Description
2021	"Taliban take over in Afghanistan; pakistan initially welcome but soon raises concern about cross-border militancy."
2022	Heightened border incidents; refugee influx increased; pakistan begins more stringent migration policy.
2023	Diplomatic friction peaks; border crossings intermittently closed; pakistan pushes repatriation plan; Afghanistan isolated economically.

2024 - 2025 → Trade resilience shows sign of revival, border infrastructure upgrades; diplomatic relation upgraded; regional realignment with china; but security and refugee issues remain unresolved".

add more arguments.

a 20 marks answer should have around 15 arguments and be on 7-9 pages.

5. Conclusion:-

In conclusion the pakistan-Afghanistan relationship since 2021 has been fluctuating - oscillating between cooperation (trade, connectivity) and friction (border security, refugee burden). Border security remains the key sticking point; until pakistan is satisfied Afghanistan can prevent militant use of its territory, trust will remain limited. Refugee and migration issues are a persistent challenges; hosting millions, pakistan's patience is stretched; for Afghanistan the returnees represent both challenges and opportunity. Regional realignments are opening new windows as of 2025 the pakistan-Afghanistan-china axis shows promise. But new alignments also bring new risks (dependency, big-power games). The situation in 2025 is one of tentative improvements but not yet stable normalisation. Every border clash, every refugee upset, has the potential to derail progress. For the future, if pakistan and Afghanistan wish to move from uneasy neighbours to strategic partners, they should focus on: A clear joint mechanism for border management and shared security intelligence. A sustainable refugee and migrant-management plan with burden-sharing and repatriation. ~~Deeping~~ Deepening trade and connectivity so that economic interdependence become a stabiliser. If those steps are pursued sincerely, the "no border, no friendship" adage may evolve into a genuine cooperative frontier.

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Question : 03

Q The current economic - - - - - - - challenges?

Introduction:

> "No economy can grow if its foundation are weak? A reminder for Pakistan.

Pakistan is facing serious economic problems. Inflation is high, the rupee is weak, people are losing jobs, and industries are shutting down. Some experts say these problems are because of politics, unstable governments, poor decisions, and lack of planning. Others believe the real problem lies deeper, in the structure of our economy - weak institutions, poor tax system, low exports, and bad investment in people. I believe Pakistan's economic crisis is mainly due to deep-rooted structural flaws. Political stability makes things worse, but the real issues started long before the current politics. In this I will explain why the problem is structural, with example and suggest policies to fix it.

1. Structural Flaws: The Real Problem:

(a) Poor Tax system:

Pakistan collects very little tax, only 9-10% of GDP. In oct 2025, the government is struggling to pay debt and manage basic services because it does not collect enough revenue. Large parts of the economy (like agriculture and real estate) don not pay fair taxes. In short, if the government has no money, it can not invest in education, roads, or jobs.

(b) Energy Crisis:

The energy sector has a circular debt of over PKR 2.6 trillion. Electricity is expensive and unreliable. Industries are shutting down because they can not afford to operate. In 2025, the textile industry (Pakistan's biggest export sector) saw a 30% drop in exports due to high energy costs.

(c) Weak Exports and Trade Deficit:

Pakistan imports more than it exports. In 2025, the trade deficit is growing again, putting pressure on the rupee. Exports are limited to low-value items like raw cotton and basic textiles. Pakistan does not export advanced or high-tech products.

references???

(d) Low investment in Human capital:

Pakistan spends less than 2.5% of GDP on education and 1% on health. In 2025, over 22 million children are out of school, and youth unemployment is rising. without skilled people, no economy can grow.

(e) Dependence on Loans:

Pakistan has borrowed billions of dollars. In 2025, debt servicing (loan repayments + interest) takes over half of the federal budget. The country needs to borrow again and again, not to grow, but just to survive.

2 Political Economy: Important, But Not the Root:

Politics makes things worser-

- Frequent changes in government delay economic decisions.

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- Political parties often give populist subsidies (like free electricity) for votes, even when the country can not afford it.

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- corruption and weak institutions affect investor trust.

But even if politics became perfect today, the structure of the economy would still be broken.

3 2025 Situation: A Structural Crisis

- In 2025, inflation is around 23%, making life very hard for ordinary citizens.

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- IMF programme help avoid default, but reforms are slow.

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- Exports are shrinking, imports are growing, and the rupee is under pressure again.

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- Power outage are common, factories are closing, and investment is low.

↓

- Youth are frustrated, over 30% of university graduates are unemployed.

↓

These are not just political problems. These are signs of a weak, broken economic structure.

4 Policy Measures to fix Structural Problems:

If we want real, long-term economic stability, we must fix the roots of the economy. Here's how:-

(a) Reform the Tax System:

Tax everyone fairly, rich landlords, real estate, traders. Increase the tax-to-GDP ratio to at least 15% in the next 5 years. Use technology to reduce corruption and improve tax collection.

(b) Fix the Energy Sector:

Reduce circular debt by cutting line losses and ending free electricity for elite group. Invest in cheap and clean energy, like solar and wind. give industries special energy rates to boost exports.

(c) Invest in Human ~~capital~~ capital.

Double spending on education and skills training. Link education with job markets, especially in IT, health, and engineering. Improve health services to ensure a productive workforce.

(d) Boost Exports:

Support industries that can export high-value products. cut red tape for businesses and improve ease of doing business. Focus on regional trade (central Asia, Gulf, china) to reduce dependence on western markets.

(e) Reforms state-owned Enterprises (SOEs):-

Many SOEs like PIA, Pakistan steel, and WAPDA are losing money. Either restructure them or privatise them carefully.

-5 Conclusion:

To conclude, Pakistan's economic problems are not just because of political fights or bad decisions. The real issue is that our economy is built on "weak and outdated foundations". we are not collecting enough taxes, not educating our people, not producing enough, and not planning for future. political stability is important, but even the best leaders cannot succeed with a broken system. Pakistan must now choose, either fix its structure or stay stuck in this cycle of crisis.

> "If we repair the roof without fixing the foundation, the house will fall again. Pakistan must now rebuild, not just repair, its economy."

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