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Khadija Saeed Test # 02 PAK. Affairs

QUESTION # 01

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- 2 Pak-Afghan conflicts in Past (a brief background)
- 3 How the new phase is different from the past
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- 4 The Reemergence of Indian-led "Non-State Actors."
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INTRODUCTION:

"Geography has made us neighbours,
history has made us friends,
Economies has made us partners, and
necessity has made us allies", these

words of John F. Kennedy once described the ideals of regional cooperation, however the current state of Pakistan Afghanistan relations suggests that geography has instead become a source of friction and history a cycle of betrayal. The new phase of Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict represents a fundamental shift from historical paradigms due to a shift in state dynamics and a reversal of traditional power balances leading to increased activity by non-state actors, sponsored by India; that is what Pakistan claims.

2. PAK AFGHAN CONFLICT IN PAST (A BRIEF OVERVIEW)

Historically, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been defined by a deep-seated trust deficit, fluctuating between periods of cooperation against common enemies and intense bilateral hostility. Since inception relations were first strained over the issue of Durand line, border between Pak and Afghanistan, which was considered Afghanistan territory by Afghan officials. Later on, both countries fought against Soviet Union collectively and Pakistan became the front line state in that war to

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Strategic depth to avoid two front war with India - Soviet withdrawal and Taliban coming to power again paved the ways for cooperation, which were soon marred by war on terror posed by the USA over Afghanistan against Taleban and Al Qaeda. During this phase Pakistan became home for millions of refugees - Since the USA withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, Afghanistan's attitude towards Pakistan has changed and the trust deficit still prevails.

HOW THE NEW OF RELATIONSHIP DIFFERS FROM PAST:

The new phase of Pak-Afghan conflict, particularly since the Taliban take over in August 2021, is fundamentally different from past conflicts due to shift in state dynamics and reversal of traditional power balances.

a) Reversal of "Strategic Depth"

Historically Pakistan sought "strategic depth" in Afghanistan by aiming for a friendly regime in Kabul to avoid Indian encirclement. However, in current scenario, this has developed into a "strategic deadlock." After being

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victorious against western forces, Afghan Taliban are not acting as client force and have adopted an assertive, nationalistic stance prioritizing Afghan sovereignty and often viewing Pakistan as a threat.

b) Direct conflict with Afghan Taliban

In previous eras (excluding the 1996-2001 Taliban rule), conflicts were often indirect or involved different regimes in Kabul (e.g. Soviet backed government or the post 9/11 democratic government). The current conflict involves direct border skirmishes and diplomatic stand offs. Moreover, Afghan ~~tali~~ government shares an ideological affinity with the TTP, a group actively hostile to Pakistan.

c) Taliban Assertiveness in statements.

Taliban's rhetoric has shifted from ideological gratitude to an assertive, sovereign stance that directly challenges Pakistan regional influence. Taliban Chief Zabihullah Mujahid has issued stern warnings to Islamabad, while giving an interview to a local

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news channel, that Pakistan has to stop "dreaming" of controlling the Taliban administration. He dismissed the claims of Pakistani influence as "20 years of propaganda," asserting that Taliban makes its decision independently of Islamabad's wishes.

d) The TTP as a central Flash Point:

The Tehreek Taliban Pakistan poses a significant threat to Pakistan's security. The safe heavens of TTP in Afghanistan since 2021 have led to a significant surge in cross border terrorism. Added to that Afghan government constantly refusing, TTP being operating from Afghanistan and labels the TTP as an Internal Pakistani problem.

e) Refugee Repatriation as a Coercion

Refugee repatriation is another factor that has changed the very nature of conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. By forcing over 2.8 million Afghans, Pakistan aims to exacerbates the Taliban's internal governance challenges in order to compel them to take kinetic action against TTP militants.

e) Taliban's stance of Durand line^{and} dismantle efforts of border fencing.

Successive Afghan governments have refused to formally recognize the Durand line as an international border. However, the current Taliban regime's effort to actively prevent and dismantle Pakistan's border fencing that has intensified the dispute. This is making border management a primary point of contention.

g) India's Hybrid strategy:

The hostile relation with India and its good relation with Afghanistan is another point of conflict. The hybrid strategy of India, thus intensifies the security concerns of Pakistan.

On one hand India is strengthening its trade and economic relations with Afghanistan and on other hand it is sponsoring the non state actors in Afghanistan to dismantle Pakistan's security as well as CPEC project.

4. **THE REEMERGENCE OF INDIAN-LED "NON STATE ACTORS"**

The reemergence of Indian-led "non state actors" is significant, though highly contested, attribution in the current conflict driven by preexisting strategic rivalries and the security vacuum in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal.

a) Strategic Encirclement Concerns:

Pakistan has long accused India of using Afghan soil to support anti-Pakistan militant groups, such as Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and The Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to create instability in Pakistan provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The current instability in Afghanistan and its government warming ties with India are seen by Islamabad as exacerbating this threat potentially allowing India to re-establish influence and eventually isolate or encircle Pakistan in two fronts war.

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b) Indo-Afghan Intelligence Nexus: Allegations..

Pakistani sources often point to a historical nexus between Research and Analysis wing (RAW) and Afghanistan National Directorate of Security (NDS) as a means to fuel insurgencies in Pakistan. The current phase sees a potential return of this dynamic, where groups like TTP, BIA and IS-K are allegedly "reorganised under the umbrella of India" to carry out attacks on Pakistani soil.

5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS:-

Pak-Afghan relations were never been too friendly and always driven by trust deficit on both sides.

Recent developments show ^{that} Afghanistan's assertiveness is backed by an influential power. However, on the other hand Pakistan is predominantly concerned with its security. The recent conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan will bring serious repercussion to both the countries, rather Cost Afghanistan the most as it lacks in sophisticated military means, if not provided by India or any other regional power.

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Therefore, in order to avoid such future both countries should come to diplomatic table and resolve their issues and collaborate in eliminating the threat of terrorism. For regional security India should refrain from sponsoring terrorism and diplomatically resolve the conflict with Pakistan.

CONCLUSION:-

To cut the long story short the relationship between Pakistan and Afghan was never been so friendly in past, but sometimes sails on the boat of cooperation. After Emergence of Taliban government in 2021, ~~the~~ a major shift in relations were seen due to Afghan Taliban assertive posture, their ideological alignment with TTP and heightened potential for India to leverage this unstable environment to its strategic advantage through various non-state proxies

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In Human development Report 1994, Dr Mahboob ul Haq quoted that, "Security must be measured in the lives of the people, not by the weaponry of the state." This quote highlights the importance of human centric security threats, that are impacting people all around the world. The security landscape of Pakistan is also dominated by complex non-traditional security threats that differs fundamentally from conventional military challenges. Being ~~multilateral~~ transnational, complex and human centric nature, ~~non~~ traditional security ~~threats~~ faces significant challenges in dealing with its threats.

MAIN NON TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS FACES BY PAKISTAN.

a) Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

Pakistan is consistently ranked among the world's top 10 most vulnerable countries to climate change. This manifests as frequent weather events including mega floods (like those in 2022, variation in rainfall (like recent late winters and late rainfall) and severe heatwaves reaching 50°C (like in Sibbi) and rapid glacier melting.

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b) Water insecurity leading to water borne diseases and famine

Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resource (PCRWR) claimed that water in Pakistan might come to an end by 2025 if proper measures are not taken by government. And today Pakistan has transitioned from "Water stressed" to "Water scarce" state as it faces critical depletion of fresh water. This is caused by poor management, hydropolitics and trans border tensions. According to Reports, annually 3000 children dies due to water borne diseases and animals due to persistent famines in some regions of Pakistan.

c) Food Scarcity leading to Hunger

Despite being a top global producer of staples like wheat and rice, approximately 11 million people face acute food insecurity in Pakistan. The reasons behind this scarcity is years of high inflation and recurring climate catastrophes, such as devastating 2022 and 2025 floods that destroyed 20% of key crops and permanently degraded arable land. The crises is more acute in rural Sindh and Balochistan

where food insecurity reaches to 49% and added to Global Hunger Index score of 26, with roughly 40% of children under five suffering from malnutrition, as per reports of Economic forum.

d) Population Explosion and Socio economic issues :

Pakistan, being the home of 247 million people, is under a critical non-traditional threat that functions as a risk multiplier for state's internal security. The population explosion places an unsustainable strain on dwindling water and food resources. Furthermore, poverty and unemployment is adding fuel to the fire. Moreover, the unmanaged youth bulge acts as a "demographic liability" when coupled with stagnant economy. Consequently, this population increase is no longer just a demographic concern but a core security challenge that erode social cohesion and undermines the state's ability to maintain public order and human development.

e) Terrorism and Extremism.

Terrorism and Extremism has long been eroding the internal fabric of Pakistan through socio-economic destabilization and often considered

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as non traditional security threat. This threat is characterize by violence initiated by proxy groups such as TTP and BLA - which caused over 1500 fatalities in 2024 - 2025 alone.

~~Due to~~ Terrorism in Pakistan costs Pakistan not only in human lives but also resulted in economic stagnation, Political Instability and negative image perception development around the world.

f) Cyberattacks: a concern for national security.

Cyberattacks have emerged as a dominant non-traditional security threat to Pakistan, evolving from simple data theft into strategic digital warfare that targets critical state infrastructure. This threat is particularly potent because it exploits the nation's rapid digital transition while bypassing traditional military defences. In first³ quarters of 2025 alone, Pakistan faced over 5.3 million on device cyberattacks. Similarly government institutions were also targeted in 2024, whose estimates was recorded by Pakistani analysts as approximately 22.9%.

g) Poverty is the mother of all evils.

Poverty is the mother of all evils and a foundational non-traditional security threat to Pakistan, acting as the primary driver for social unrest and state fragility. With roughly 40% of population in Pakistan living below the poverty line, economic deprivation functions as a "silent killer" that fuels other security crises, ranging from soft targets in hands of extremists to street crimes and human-trafficking. This systemic poverty creates cycle of human insecurity, where lack of basic needs erodes the physical and intellectual capital of the nation. Dr. Mahboub-ul-Haq has rightly said that the true threat to Pakistan lies in "socioeconomic ills" of hunger and inequality.

3 DIVERSITY IN NATURE AND CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING NON TRADITIONAL THREATS:

Non traditional security threats are uniquely challenging because of their diversified nature.

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a) Transnational and borderless nature requires regional cooperation.

Non traditional security threats are transnational and borderless in nature. They respect no borders and bypass the sovereignty of a state silently. For instance, issues like climate change, pandemics and cyberwarfare ignore national borders and target human well being. As these threats are borderless, therefore national solutions are often inadequate, necessitating regional cooperation that is frequently blocked by local geopolitical rivals. e.g. Withdrawal from Paris Agreements by Trump.

b) Complex and interconnected nature requires an institutional coordinated approach.

NTS threats are multidimensional in nature. They are often connected with one another such as; climate change is driven by deforestation which is caused by man to allocate highly populated huge population into safe places. Similarly food and water scarcity is directly caused

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by climate change. Owing to multi-dimensional nature of non-traditional security threats, "a whole-of-government" approach by Pakistan is needed. However, the state institutions in Pakistan often work in silos.

c) Non Military nature requires appropriate resource Allocation:-

Nontraditional Security threats are non military in nature - They are not initiated by some hostile nation but often caused by some natural calamity, proxies and through use of technology without using direct weaponry. Therefore, just like for traditional defence, resources should be allocated for coping with NTS threats - Historically, bulk of Pakistan GDP has favored defense budgets over human development sectors like health and climate adaptability.

d) Human Centric Security threats needs Human development policies.

NTS threats are human centric in nature - These threats directly target

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human health, life, economy and social status. Therefore, human centric policies should be enacted rather than strategic policies; Because at ground level it is the human, who makes up a state - However, responses to NTS Challenges in Pakistan have often been rudimentary and personality driven rather than structured through formalized National Security Committee.

CONCLUSION:

In short, Pakistan has been facing multitude of non-traditional security threats ranging from climate change, food security, water scarcity to terrorism and cyber attacks. These threats differs fundamentally from conventional military threats as they respect no borders and interconnected and mainly human centric in nature. Change in nature, thus, poses significant challenges - ranging from regional cooperation to appropriate resource allocation - in dealing with these threats.
