

Question no: 02Pak-Afghan RelationsIntroduction:

Pak-Afghan relations have historically oscillated between cooperation and hostility. In the post 2021-phase, after the Taliban's take over in Afghanistan Pak-Afghan relations marked a dynamic shift compared to earlier phases. Unlike the post 9/11 period, where Afghanistan was neither weak nor externally controlled, the current phase involves a de facto Afghan state unable to control its anti-Pakistan non-state actors especially TTP. India exploiting this security vacuum indirectly. Resultantly, it has transformed the conflict from a border dispute and refugee issue into a complex security challenge.

1. Nature of Past Pak-Afghan conflicts(i) Ideological and territorial roots

Afghanistan was the only country to oppose Pakistan's entry into UN due to durand line dispute. Past conflict was largely state-centric involving

around pashtun nationalism.

ii) Proxywar during cold war

During the Soviet Invasion, Pakistan acted as a frontline state, hosting foreign Afghan refugees and mujahideen. Conflict was externally driven, with the US-USSR rivalry dominating regional dynamics.

iii) Post 9/11 phase

Afghanistan became a NATO-controlled security state. Pakistan faced accusations of double game but cross-border militancy was limited by US pressure.

2. How the New phase (post-2021) is fundamentally different

a) Taliban as a sovereign authority

Unlike the past, Taliban now hold a key central authority controlling all administrative affairs. Despite this, Taliban are unable to restrain TTP from launching terrorist attacks against Pakistan. This led to strategic ambiguity, consequently Pak afghan relation remains hostile.

b) Shift from refugee and border issues to direct security threats

The conflict has moved from border management to frequent terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, especially in KP and Balochistan. Nature of attacks is different from the previous one as attacks show advanced coordination and intelligence.

add and highlight reference/examples against these arguments.....

c) Collapse of Strategic convergence between Pakistan and Afghan Taliban

In the historical context, it was presumed that Taliban rule would ensure Pak-friendly Afghanistan to ensure peace in the region. However, in reality, Taliban prioritize ideological affinity with TTP over diplomatic commitments.

d) Hybrid warfare instead of conventional tensions

Current conflicts reflect hybrid warfare involving;

↳ terrorism

↳ psychological operations

↳ economic destabilizations

This is distinct from real state to

3. Re-emergence of Indian led non-state actors: How far it can be attributed?

i) Strategic vacuum after US withdrawal

US exit reduced intelligence oversight, creating a strategic vacuum which was filled by India. India, unable to maintain open presence after Taliban takeover, shifted towards indirect engagement in the region through proxies.

ii) Revival of TTP with external support

In Post 2021, TTP attacks increased sharply using Afghan sanctuaries. Pakistan's intelligence agencies have repeatedly pointed towards Indian intelligence facilitation via Afghan soil.

iii) Convergence of Indian and TTP interests

Both Indian and TTP interests are aligned with each other. India's objectives are;

- ↳ Strategic pressure on Pakistan's Western borders
- ↳ Undermining CPEC projects
- ↳ Diverting Pakistan's focus from eastern front

iv) Balochistan linkages

Enough evidence of coordination between Baluch insurgents and Afghan-based militants. Indian support networks exposed in cases like Kalbushan Yadav, reinforcing Pakistan's claim of hybrid warfare.

4. Implications of the New phase of Pak-Afghan conflict for Pakistan

i) Deepening internal security crisis

The resurgence of TTP and allied non-state actors has significantly escalated terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Unlike the Past, attacks now demonstrate cross-border facilitation. This has stretched Pakistan's counter-terrorism capacity, increasing both financial and human costs.

ii) Economic and development setbacks

Persistent insecurity has direct and indirect economic consequences:

- Reduced investor confidence, especially in KP, Balochistan and CPEC-linked regions

- Increased defence and security expenditure, crowding out education, health and social development.

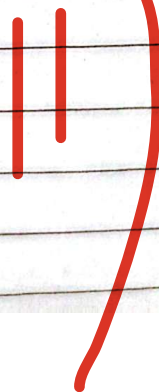
Thus, security instability reinforces Pakistan's economic fragility, creating a vicious cycle.

iii) Risk of regional destabilization

Unchecked militancy in Afghanistan threatens not only Pakistan but also Central Asia, China and Iran, raising the risk of regional spillage conflicts. Pakistan may be forced to adopt ^{risk} limited cross-border actions, increasing the ^{risk} of diplomatic escalation with Kabul.

Conclusion:

In sum, the implications of the new Pak-Afghan conflict phase extend beyond security border, affecting Pakistan's economy, diplomacy and regional stability. The involvement of Indian-backed non-state actors magnifies these challenges, transforming the western border into a national security fault line.



Question no: 02

Kashmir Issue

Introduction:

The Kashmir issue is one of the most enduring disputes in South Asia, rooted in the Partition of 1947. Despite multiple diplomatic efforts, the conflict remains unresolved due to divergent interests of India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people. The dilemma lies in the fact that no single solution simultaneously satisfies all stakeholders, nor fully reflects the diverse aspirations of Kashmiris themselves. Hence, Kashmir remains ~~untapped~~ trapped between legal claims, political realities and popular consent.

1. Understanding the dilemma: Why consensus is elusive

The Kashmir dispute is caught in a dilemma due to conflicting national narratives, internal diversity within Kashmir, and changing regional and global dynamics, which collectively prevent agreement on ~~an~~ one solution acceptable to all.

1. Divergent position of major stakeholders

a) India: Territorial integrity and sovereignty

India considers Jammu and Kashmir an integral part of its union, based on instrument of accession. New Delhi rejected third-party mediation and UN resolutions, framing Kashmir as a bilateral and internal matter.

The revocation of Article 370 reflects India's preference for integration over accommodation.

b) Pakistan: Right to self-determination

Pakistan bases its position on UN security council resolutions, advocating a free and impartial plebiscite. Pakistan views Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of partition. However, Pakistan's stance is often challenged internationally due to geopolitical shifts.

c) Kashmiri people: Fragmented aspirations

The Kashmiri population itself does not constitute a unified opinion:

- ✓ Some favors accession to Pakistan
- ✓ Others prefer independence

✓ A section accepts status quo or autonomy within India

This internal diversity weakens the possibility of a single solution universally accepted by Kashmiris.

2. Internal complexity of Kashmir Society

i) Regional and ethnic diversity

Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh differ in religion, ethnicity, political ideologies and economic priorities. A solution acceptable to one region may be unacceptable to another, deepening the dilemma.

ii) Generational shift in resistance

Earlier political movements emphasized diplomacy and autonomy. Younger generations increasingly express alienation, distrust, and radicalization complicating political compromise.

3. Failure of proposed solutions

a) Plebiscite option: Ideal but impractical

Plebiscite Option is supported by Pakistan and many Kashmiris. However, it is rejected by Indians due to sovereignty concerns. Further, the demographic changes further complicate implementation.

b) Autonomy or self-rule models

Another proposed solution is self-rule models. Proposals like maximum autonomy or joint management have surfaced. These lack clarity, constitutional backing and political will, especially after Article 370's abrogation.

c) Status quo: Unustainable stability

Maintaining the status quo while favored by India and some international actors for stability. It fails to address human rights concerns and political alienation, making long-term peace unlikely.

4. Role of regional and global dynamics

i) Indo-pak strategic rivalry

Nuclearization has frozen the conflict rather than resolved it. Kashmir remains a flashpoint with escalation risks limiting bold compromises.

ii) Changing global priorities

Major powers like US increasingly prioritize economic ties with India over normative concerns. Kashmir has shifted from a legal dispute to a geopolitical inconvenience in global diplomacy.

iii) Human rights vs national security paradigm

India frames Kashmir through a counter-terrorism lens. Kashmiris frame it as a human rights and political rights issue. Pakistan highlights rights violations but struggles to mobilize sustained international pressure.

Conclusion:

The Kashmir issue is trapped on the horns of a dilemma because each stakeholder seeks a solution aligned with its own interests rather than a shared vision of justice and peace. India prioritizes sovereignty, and Kashmiris remain internally divided in their aspirations. Without inclusive dialogue, respect for Kashmiri agency, consensus will remain elusive.