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Pak Affaire (Test 2)

Question No: 01

How the new phase of Pak-Afghan Conflict is different from the conflict of past
How far the re-emergence of Indian led "Non-state" actors can be attributed to it? Explain.

(1) Pak-Afghan Conflict New Phase Added by Re-emergence of India As Non-State Actor:

In the words of former US envoy to Afghanistan (Zalmay Khalilzad)

"Afghanistan Pakistan relationship is the mother of all relations."

It is linked to present relations between the two countries, where the ongoing conflict is getting very serious and it has dramatic implications for regional stability. Furthermore, India's growing influence in Afghanistan has severe implica-

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tions for Pak-Afghan peace process. The new phase of Pak-Afghan conflict differs from past in many ways. Due to regional shift with past US withdrawal and re-emergence of Taliban followed by recent border conflicts between two countries, further instigated by deportation of Afghan refugees, lack of political commitment and political instability in Pakistan. It is further worsened by India's increasing influence in Afghanistan as non-state actor. As India's influence in political, economic and social landscape of Afghanistan has increased during the recent years, it has severe implications for Pakistan.

relate your headings and arguments to the qs statement.....

2) Reasons for Pak-Afghan persistent Strained bilateral relations:

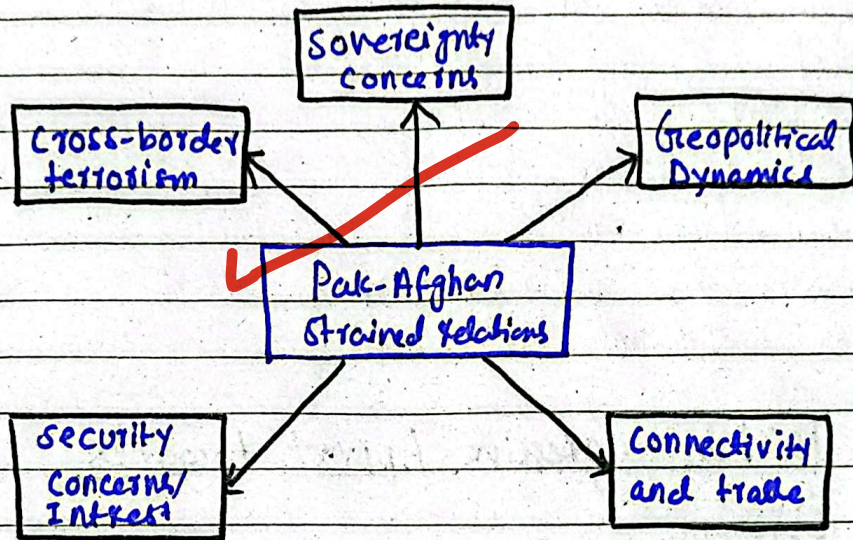
Prosperity of Pakistan largely relies upon its relationship with Afghanistan. These relations are strained due to

- 1) Persistent cross border terrorism
- 2) Security conundrums
- 3) Pashtunistan issue
- 4) Border conflict / Skirmishes

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According to Institute of Policy Studies:
Pak-Afghan historically strained relations are due to 5 main factors



3) How new phase of Pak-Afghan Conflict Differs from past?

With changing geo-political dynamics the nature of conflict between two countries also changed. It is due to:

a) Regional Shift with Post US-withdrawal And Re-emergence of Taliban.

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Geopolitical landscape of central and South Asia has significantly changed because of US military defeat and departure of American forces after 2 decades of long war. US withdrawal from Afghanistan left a power vacuum.

→ Taliban the Sunni Islamist, pro-Pashtun and nationalist organization ruled Afghanistan from 1996-2001. And they regain power by controlling Afghanistan after US withdrawal in 2021.

b) Taliban aggressive approach towards Pakistan:

Due to Taliban aggressive approach towards Pakistan, the extremist ideologies grow, strengthen and spread radicalism beyond Afghanistan border.

TTP reorganization and regrouping with Central Asian and Foreign Al-Qaeda militants is a looming threat for Pakistan. In a book "Taliban revival: Violence and Extremism on Pakistan-Afghan Frontiers" by Hanan Abbas says, violence of Taliban and cross-border terrorism is the biggest threat.

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- c) Border skirmishes leading to cross border attacks between Pakistan and Afghanistan:

Although border skirmishes between both countries started from 2007 but recent border clashes began on 11 and 12 October 2025 when Taliban and militants launched unprovoked attacks against Pakistan's border posts. In retaliation Islamabad conducted "precision strikes" inside Afghanistan targeting terrorists.

According to Center for Research and Security Studies, year 2025 is the most violent year in a decade, that witnessed 34% surge in overall violence.

Year	Sustained Escalation of violence
2021	38%
2022	15%
2023	56%
2024	67%
2025	34%

- d) Lack of political commitment and political instability in Pakistan:

Due to lack of political commitment and stability Pakistan is unable to hold long.

- term political commitment ~~of~~ to Afghanistan. There is need of composite dialogue between two countries.
- c) Sustained closure of Trade Routes as not in past:

Earlier the trade routes closure between two countries was short term but now it is protracted and indefinite until core demands are met. For example closing of Chaman and Torkhum border for such long time (80 days) not happen in past.

- d) A Shift From "Strategic Depth" to "Strategic Defiance"

In past Pakistan's orientation toward Afghanistan is from the lense of friendship as they both share common religion. But the current Taliban's are sovereign minded actors that prioritizes its ideological fraternity with TTP over Pakistani security concerns. Now Pakistan see Afghanistan as a security liability.

- 4) Re-emergence of India As a Non-State Actor, And its role in Exacerbating Pak-Afghan Conflict:

India's political, economic and social

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engagements with Afghanistan, has strained the Pak-Afghan relation. The Pro-Indian regime of ~~Taliban~~ is persistent threat for Pak. India cunningly engage with Afghanistan in following ways

a) Political ^{Rapprochement} Engagements of India With Afghanistan:

India's engagement with taliban has increased, as seen from the meeting of their foreign ministers in Dubai in June 2025. In that meeting they discussed water trade and visa issues.

Moreover, provision of significant humanitarian aid to Afghanistan as earthquake relief was a ~~clever~~ clever move.

Also India's scholarship schemes for Afghan students is innovative move

b) Economic Integration By allowing Preferential Trades:

India provides USD 3 billion for supporting Afghan infrastructure. And India take proactive role in aiding Afghanistan infrastructure growth especially with regard to hydropower industry.

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India has technical team in Kabul since June 2022, despite the fact it not recognize Taliban govt.

Evidence of India's substantial support to Afghanistan hydropower ambition:

For example, projects like Afghan-India Friendship "Salma Dam".

"Shahoot Dam" in Kabul province

4) Strategic Interest of India in Afghanistan:

India place high value to central Asia from geostrategic perspective. But it lack direct land access to central Asia. That's why India want good relations with Taliban govt.

Indian Analyst "Meena Singh" claim that: India has major strategic and economic interest in CARs (central Asian Republics) and need of Afghanistan is inevitable.

5) Implications for Pakistan:

⇒ Pakistan's security concerns rises

⇒ Cross border trade got affected due to tense relations

⇒ TTP and militant activities are responsible for internal chaos in

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Pakistan and death of many citizens and officers.

According to center for research and security studies, alone in 2025 TTP backed militant activities killed more than 5500 citizens and official in Pakistan.

Indian presence in Afghanistan poses serious threat to Pakistan's sovereignty. Because of geopolitical and geostrategic consideration, Pakistan is extremely concerned about India's growing influence in Afghanistan.

According to Analyst ISRAEL COOK "India's increasing role in Afghanistan through reconstruction projects and diplomatic efforts is also of concern to Pakistan. India's influence could lead to strategic encirclement of Pakistan.

6)

Conclusion:

The post-August 2021 Taliban regime has new arenas of conflict with Pakistan. That is threatening to Pakistan territorial integrity. The dynamics of conflict are changing.

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because of Taliban hard stance on not backing TTP terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The lack of political will in Pakistan is also cause of strained relations. Moreover, role of India as Non-state actor has strategic concerns for Pakistan's sovereignty. The increasing foothold of India in Afghanistan political economic and strategic landscape is a threat to Pakistan. For overcoming this, there is need of good relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and stability in both countries is inevitable.

An Analyst, "Richard Holbrooke" rightly pointed out

"The problem with Pak-Afghanistan is that they are joined in the hip; you cannot separate them." Instability in one leads it to other