**The Evolving Geopolitics and Challenges to National Security of Pakistan**

**Abstract**

* **Summary**: Pakistan's strategic location has attracted major powers, leading to rivalries and conflicts that have severe security implications. These security challenges, persisting over the past seven decades, mainly arise from its geopolitical positioning. The study highlights three main aspects of these challenges.
* **Key Terms**: Geopolitics, Strategy, Security Challenges, Militancy, Major Powers, Pakistan, Indian, Eastern Borders, Western Borders, Afghanistan, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

**Introduction**

* **Concept of Security**:
  + **Human Security**: Safeguarding people from threats like socio-economic vulnerabilities, political polarization, financial instability, and environmental hazards. Despite advancements, threats are increasing even in developed countries.
    - **Fact**: Epidemics like Covid-19 and climate change could cause significant fatalities.
    - **Quotation**: "Despite developments and high living standards, threats to human security are increasing even in the richest countries of the world."
  + **National Security**: Protecting the state and its citizens from threats to sovereignty, terrorism, espionage, and war. It encompasses the state's control over its future and territorial integrity.
  + **International Security**: Ensuring global peace through organizations like the United Nations, dealing with power politics and ensuring mutual survival and security.

**The Evolving Nature of Regional Geopolitical Situation**

* **Factors Influencing Geopolitics**: Geopolitical location and geo-economics play crucial roles in power politics. Major powers seek to influence or control these factors to maintain their dominant status.
* **Theoretical Framework**: Realism, particularly structural realism, which views the world as anarchic and applies this to Pakistan's situation.

**Major Powers and Pakistani Geopolitics**

**United States and Pakistani Geopolitics**

* **Historical Context**: The US has been involved in the region since WWII, using Pakistan's strategic location during the Cold War and the global war on terrorism (2001-2021).
  + **Detail**: The US utilized Pakistan in its ideological war against the Soviet Union, culminating in the Afghan conflict.
  + **Fact**: The US invasion of Afghanistan post-9/11 had significant repercussions for Pakistan, including over 80,000 Pakistani casualties.
  + **Quotation**: "US made another usage of Pakistani geopolitics for two decades during its well-planned global war against terrorism from 2001-2021."

**China and Russia**

* **Strategic Importance**: Both China and Russia view Pakistan's geopolitical position as vital for their strategic and economic objectives.
  + **Detail**: These powers used forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to counter US and NATO influence in South and Central Asia.
  + **Fact**: Both China and Russia pressured for the pull-out of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan.

**US-China and US-Russia Rivalries**

* **New Cold Wars**: US-China tensions over Taiwan, the South China Sea, and East China Sea, and the US-Russia conflict exemplified by the Ukraine war.
  + **Detail**: US-China rivalry includes strategic dimensions like tension over Taiwan, South China Sea disputes, and China-Japan front in East China Sea.
  + **Fact**: Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022 intensified US-China tensions.
  + **Quotation**: "NATO considered China as a security threat for itself and for the security of the globe."

**Security Challenges from Evolving Geopolitics**

**Eastern Borders (India)**

* **Hostilities**: Constant security threats and hostilities from India, including false flag operations to malign Pakistan.
  + **Detail**: India has repeatedly accused Pakistan of terrorism through false flag operations like the Indian Parliament attack (2001), Mumbai attack (2008), and Pathankot Air Base attack (2016).
  + **Fact**: India's strategies aimed to defame Pakistan internationally as a supporter of terrorism.
  + **Quotation**: "India has repeatedly created dilemmas for Pakistan through direct and indirect strategies."

**Western Borders (Afghanistan)**

* **Militancy and Terrorism**: Persistent threats from militancy and terrorism along the Pak-Afghan border.
  + **Detail**: Cooperation between Indian and Afghan intelligence agencies promoted terrorism in Pakistan from 2001-2021.
  + **Fact**: Pakistan lost over 80,000 lives and suffered economic losses of over $149 billion due to terrorism and security issues.
  + **Quotation**: "The security situation has worsened in Pakistan after the Taliban takeover in August 2021."

**Domestic Security Challenges**

* **Fault-lines**: Ethnic divide, sectarianism, sub-nationalism, and political polarization.
  + **Detail**: These fault-lines, exacerbated by external influences, pose serious threats to national unity and integration.
  + **Fact**: Political parties have exploited ethnic divisions for political gains, and external forces have financially supported sectarian groups.
  + **Quotation**: "Ethnic fault-lines enlarged in Pakistani society due to political manipulation and socio-economic deprivations."

**The Suggested Way Forward**

* **Strategies**: Achieving political stability, economic uplift through domestic resources, and a dynamic foreign policy.
  + **Detail**: Emphasis on normalizing relations with neighbors, diversifying economic opportunities through projects like CPEC, and investing in education and technological advancement.
  + **Fact**: Education is crucial for producing enlightened leaders and policymakers to guide the country towards development.
  + **Quotation**: "The essence of the Theory is low education breeds poor leadership...whereas education produces enlightened and informed leaders."

**Conclusion**

* **Current Challenges**: Result from Pakistan's geopolitical location and ideological basis.
  + **Detail**: Pakistan needs to leverage its strategic position, resilient population, and professional military to overcome security challenges.
  + **Fact**: The strategic planners must devise policies that benefit the state from its geopolitical location and ideological foundations.
  + **Quotation**: "Pakistan could not really cash the blessings of its geopolitically pivotal position in its entire history."

**The Fall of Kabul: Revisiting Taliban-Pakistan Relations**

**Abstract**

* **Summary**: The paper examines the historical ties and evolving relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan, particularly after the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021. It explores the extent of diplomatic and commercial engagement, potential recognition of the Taliban regime, irritants in the relationship, and how a peaceful Afghanistan aligns with Pakistan's strategic interests.
* **Key Terms**: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Taliban, TTP, Counterterrorism, US withdrawal.

**Introduction**

* **Historical Ties**: Despite deep religious, socioeconomic, and cultural ties, Afghanistan-Pakistan relations have been unstable due to various factors, including the demarcation of the Durand Line and Indian presence in Afghanistan post-2001.
  + **Fact**: An estimated five million Afghan migrants fled to Pakistan in the 1990s.
  + **Quotation**: "Though Pakistan has sheltered the flow of migrants but also trained a large number of them to fight against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, having financial and military support from the United States and its allies"​(3. The Fall of Kabul Re…)​.

**Taliban-Pakistan Entanglement**

* **Diplomatic Engagement**: Many current Taliban leaders grew up in Pakistan and studied in Pakistani madrasas. However, Taliban 2.0 feels more independent due to restructuring their ties with other countries like Russia, China, Iran, and Gulf countries.
  + **Fact**: Russia started official diplomatic relations with the Taliban in March 2022.
  + **Quotation**: "Taliban benefits from its diplomatic relations with Moscow in two ways: seeking closer ties for international legitimacy and support in major decisions" .
* **Pakistan's Efforts**: Pakistan has been active in lobbying for the Taliban, organizing meetings and pledging humanitarian aid.
  + **Fact**: Pakistan pledged an aid of $28 million, including 50,000 metric tons of food and medical equipment.
  + **Quotation**: "Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan organised the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation’s Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Islamabad in December 2021" .

**Security Challenges and Irritants**

* **Durand Line**: The Taliban do not recognize the Durand Line as the official border, causing skirmishes between security forces.
  + **Fact**: Pakistan suffered about 512 militant attacks in 2022, causing over 1,500 fatalities and injuries.
  + **Quotation**: "The Durand Line is an issue of the whole nation, not the government" .
* **TTP Presence**: The resurgence of TTP attacks from Afghan soil remains a significant security concern for Pakistan.
  + **Fact**: Nearly 1,000 people, including Pakistani security forces, were killed in militant attacks in 2023.
  + **Quotation**: "The Afghan government has asked Islamabad to address such concerns through official diplomatic channels and refrain from taking coercive measures" .

**Economic Interests**

* **Regional Connectivity**: Stability in Afghanistan is crucial for projects like CPEC and TAPI.
  + **Fact**: The Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI) is a $7.7 billion project.
  + **Quotation**: "Afghanistan being a conduit between Pakistan and Central Asia provides the latter with a geo-economic edge to access the Central Asian region" .
* **Trade and Aid**: Pakistan's economic interests are tied to a stable Afghanistan, which would ensure successful completion of regional projects.
  + **Fact**: Pakistan’s exports to Afghanistan increased by 32% in the first eight months of the fiscal year 2022-2023.
  + **Quotation**: "The completion of this project would consequently improve Afghanistan’s diplomatic relations with Pakistan and China" .

**Recognition of the Taliban**

* **Current Stance**: Pakistan has handed over the Afghan embassy in Islamabad to the Taliban envoy but has not granted formal recognition.
  + **Fact**: Pakistan is cautious about unilateral recognition due to its dependence on the US and the West.
  + **Quotation**: "Pakistan is using a hybrid approach of onboarding both the US-led group and regional countries" .

**Conclusion**

* **Future Relations**: Positive developments in Taliban-Pakistan relations depend on constructive diplomatic engagements and addressing mutual security concerns.
  + **Fact**: The year 2023 has been the deadliest for Pakistan, with the highest number of fatalities in six years due to militant attacks.
  + **Quotation**: "It is crucial to acknowledge that security and sovereignty issues need to be addressed and any accident is required to be resolved through negotiations" .