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Pak-Affairs

Date: 10-07-24

Topic: Relations - Afg

Question: Discuss the historical evolution of Pak-Afghan relations from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) to the Taliban takeover 2021. How has this relationship shaped Pakistan's foreign policy and internal security dynamics? Evaluate the long-term implications for regional stability and Pakistan's strategic interests.

Answer

1. Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a deeply embedded history with convergence in language, culture, and religion. However, since Pakistan's inception, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have remained strained. Pakistan's boundary with Afghanistan known as the Durand Line was

Not accepted by the Afghan government leading to border disputes. Furthermore, Afghanistan was the only country to oppose Pakistan's admission in the UN.

Furthermore, in the recent years the rise of terrorism and smuggling have deeply impacted the prospect

of stronger relations among the countries. Pakistan's plan to support

the Afghan Taliban during the later years of War on Terror has not provided the expected results. Post-US

withdrawal in 2021, Afghan Taliban and Pakistan have been unable to be

on the same page leading to rising tensions and heated dialogues. The

relationship historically strained because of border disputes, idea of Pantharism,

and growing India-Afghanistan relations has now worsened further due to mistrust,

terrorism, smuggling, and refugees crisis. Therefore, the strategic

interests of Pakistan have remained unfulfilled while regional stability

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has been nonexistent.

2. The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and its impact

The government of Hafizullah Amin failed in 1979. Soviets who had been observing Afghanistan's regional dynamics, finally decided to invade Afghanistan in 1979 owing to Afghanistan's geopolitical importance.

During this time, the mujahideen already existed as they had emerged in 1974 during Sardar Dawood's movement. These mujahideen were anti-Soviets and had been countering Soviet installed governments over the years. With the invasion of Afghanistan the war between Soviets and local mujahideen broke out leading to the execution of guerrilla warfare by the Afghan mujahideen.

During this period, Pakistan was under the rule of General Ziaulhaq who was a self-proclaimed Islamic

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rules. The stance of Pakistan during the early phases of Soviet invasion remained neutral. However, by early 1980's Pakistan realised the fear of Soviet's Marxist agenda.

The fear that existed was that after claiming Afghanistan, Soviet might look towards Pakistan to obtain the warm water port of the Arabian Sea. In addition, the Islamic Nationalism was also at a rise as the Pakistani population and majority of the Muslim world viewed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a threat to Islam. Consequently, Pakistan shifted its foreign policy by getting involved in the Soviet war in Afghanistan by supporting the mujahideen ^{with} in the purpose to safeguard Islam. Pakistan was instantly supported by the U.S. with military aid of \$3.2bn to finance the proxy war.

The mujahideen primarily belonged to four main ethnicities. 42% were

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Afghans, Arabs, and Pakistan. These were primarily trained in Pakistan before being launched against the Soviets. Eventually, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 under the Geneva Accords.

2.1 Impact on Pakistan's Internal Security and Foreign Policy

As the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, the U.S. support for Pakistan declined. This was followed by sanctions by the U.S. further straining the relations and Pakistan's foreign policy started to be more inclined towards China. Relations with Afghanistan also remained strained as the Afghan government, the Northern Alliance, raised the border dispute again. Furthermore, the inflow of millions of refugees in Pakistan due to the war posed a crisis

2.2 Rise of Taliban Situation.

Furthermore, after the war had ended the ethnicisation

of the mujahideen: Afghani and Pashtani became Pashtani major security threat. In 1992, the Pashtani faction became to be known as TTP under Mullah Omar and the Afghani faction became known as the Afghan Taliban. In 1996 the Afghan Taliban overthrew the government in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Taliban began providing terrorists of all sort a safe-haven and TTP began terrorist activity against the Pashtani State. Therefore, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the long-term resulted in birth of Afghan Taliban, TTP, and Al-Qaeda leading to regional instability, weaker Pashtani internal security dynamics, and eventual case of World Terror in 2001.

3. Post 9/11 and US Invasion of Afghanistan (2001)

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Due to the emergence of TTP and unstable conditions in Afghanistan, Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan shifted. Pakistan was struck by refugee crisis, terrorism, increasing smuggling, and narcotics influx.

Despite, Pakistan's wishes to achieve strategic depth in Afghanistan, the regional instability and global pressures post 9/11 led to Pakistan's aggressive stance towards Afghanistan by 2001.

Pakistan led by General Pervez Musharraf joined the US alliance.

On the War on Terror initiated by the Bush administration in 2001.

The war on terror continued till 2017 and eventual exit of US by 2021. The war became a major source of strained relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan as the Afghan: saw Pakistan as traitors for providing US and NATO forces with the

logistical bases in their country's territory.

The hatred eventually led to the rising power of TTP which succeeded to rise in Pakistan by disturbing the internal security dynamics by conducting major terrorist attacks in Pakistan's region leading to thousands of civilian and military deaths.

4. Taliban's Resurgence and 2021 Takeover

Pakistan played a major role in conducting / mediating the Afghan peace talks in Doha between U.S. State representatives and the Afghan Taliban. By 2021 the U.S. government left Afghanistan and within months the Afghan Taliban took over control.

4.1 Strategic implications of the Taliban's return to power

Pakistan by playing a role in Afghan peace talks and by

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Maintaining relations with the Afghan Taliban during 2010-2020 through unofficial means expected a strong ally in Afghanistan when the U.S. leave. However, this belief was failed by the Afghan's Taliban inability to counter TTP activities, harbouring TTP creating havoc in Pakistan, opposing the debt freezing of record line and growing relations with India. This has significantly raised Pakistan's internal security concerns and worsened economic conditions.

5. Pakistan's Foreign Policy and Measures to increase Internal Security

Pakistan by 2022 realised that three issues with Afghan government were key to the diverging relations which included:

1. Terrorism
2. Refugees
3. Durand Line.

These three divergences have been

Historically the primary reasons why Afghan-Pakistan relations have remained weak. Pakistan in the recent times has made it clear to not negotiate with Afghan Taliban except on the agenda that the Afghan Taliban is to withdraw support of protection to TTP. To put pressure Pakistan in 2023 returned 70,000 out of the 1.3 million registered refugees back to Afghanistan. Through the Durand line fencing Pakistan has it made it clear of no discussion on the border dispute. Furthermore, by conducting surgical strikes, Pakistan has indicated military action against terrorism. This indicates Pakistan's current foreign policy stance on Afghanistan.

6. Future Prospects for Pak-Afghan Relations

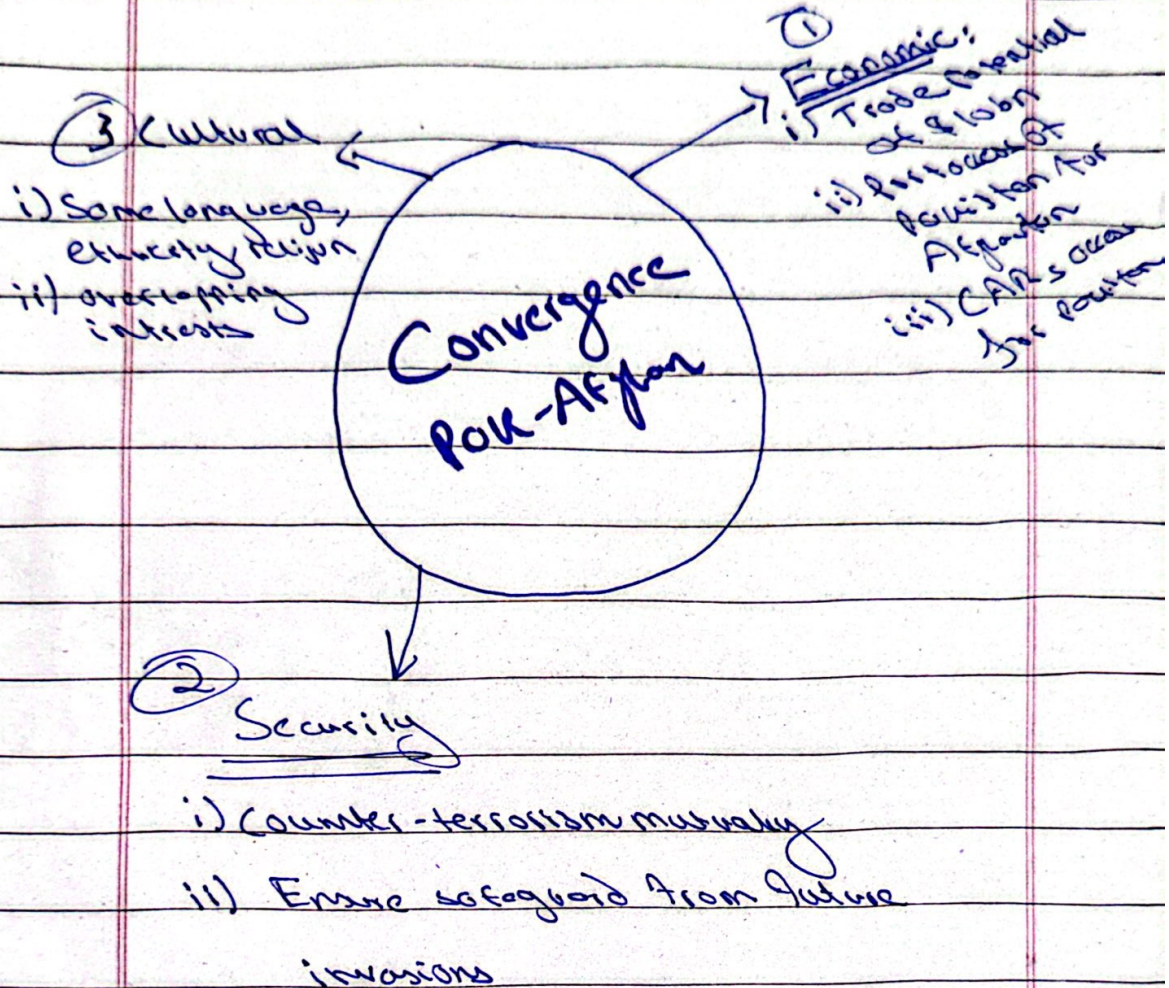
Pakistan and Afghanistan have significant factors for convergence as their mutual

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cooperation will assure mutual benefits.



7. Conclusion

Pakistan and Afghanistan stand at a critical juncture today. The Afghan conundrum has been persistently existent without any major solution. Since the Soviet war in 1979 the Afghan region has faced rising terrorism, unstable economy

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and destruction with a spill-over effect on Pakistan. The strained relations have impacted the internal security of Pakistan negatively, leading to aggressive shift in its foreign policy on Afghanistan. Given the current divergences, strained relations and absence of mutual cooperation the long-term regional stability prospect looks ~~to~~ idealistic.