

Pak-Afghanistan Relations

Question :-

How does the August 26 Balochistan bombing underscores the growing influence of non-state actors in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, and what steps can both countries take to counter the threat of cross-border terrorism and improve regional stability?

1. Introduction : The growing impact of Non-State Terrorism in Pakistan-Afghanistan Relation.

The delicate relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is increasingly threatened by the influence of non-state actors, who leverage regional instability. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has emphasized the significance of counter-terrorism efforts, stating :

“Terrorism in any form is a threat to international peace”

and security, and demands collective action to prevent its spread. ”

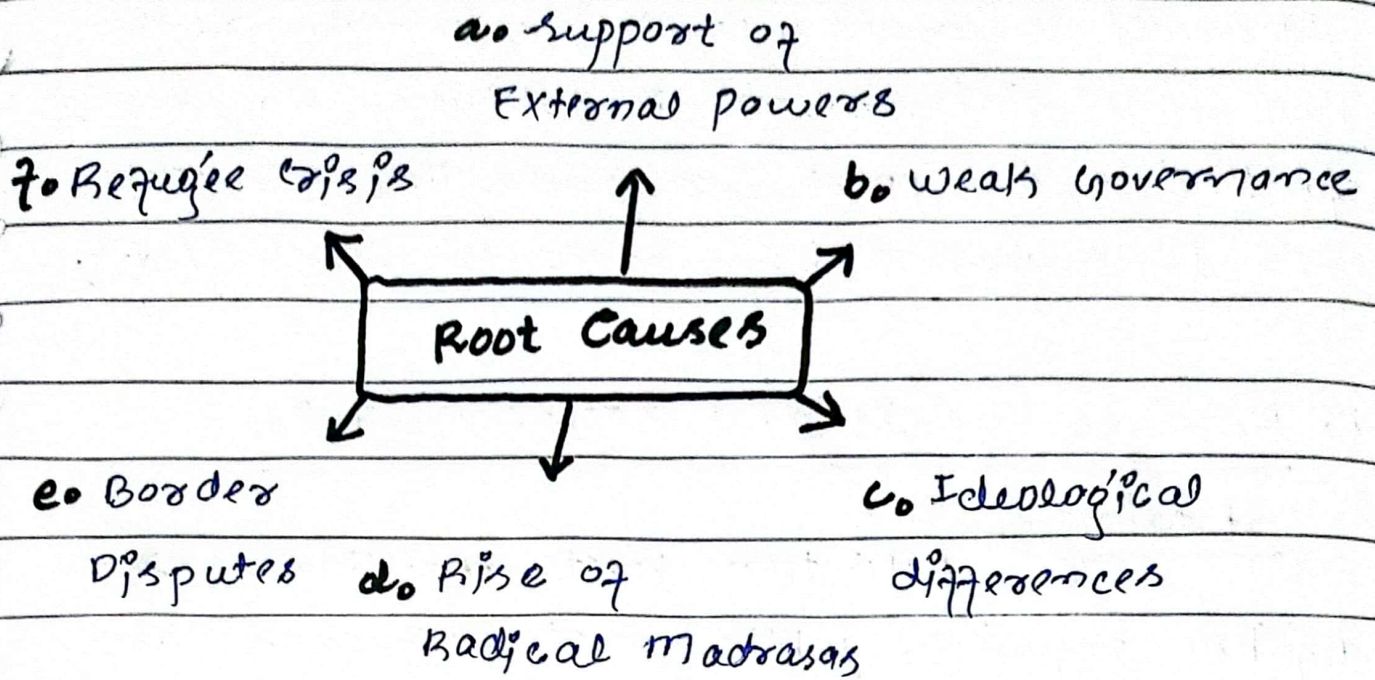
2. Background: A History of Complex Relations and Border Challenges

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, its relationship with Afghanistan has been strained by disputes over the Durand Line, Afghanistan's reluctance to recognize this boundary has led to enduring tensions, compounded by political instability in Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the subsequent rise of the Taliban. These factors created an environment conducive to non-state actors, such as the Taliban and, more recently, ISIS-Khorasan, who exploit these challenges to further destabilize the region.

3. Root Causes of Escalating Terrorism

The causes of escalating terrorism in Pakistan

Afghanistan relations are as follows:



a. Ideological and Political Disparities :-

Divergent ideologies and political agendas between Pakistan and Afghanistan have hindered cooperation. For instance, Afghanistan's varied stances toward the Taliban have affected its counter-terrorism policies.

b. Porous Borders and the Durand Line

Dispute :-

The unregulated border has enabled the free movement of militants, complicating both countries' efforts to curb terrorism.

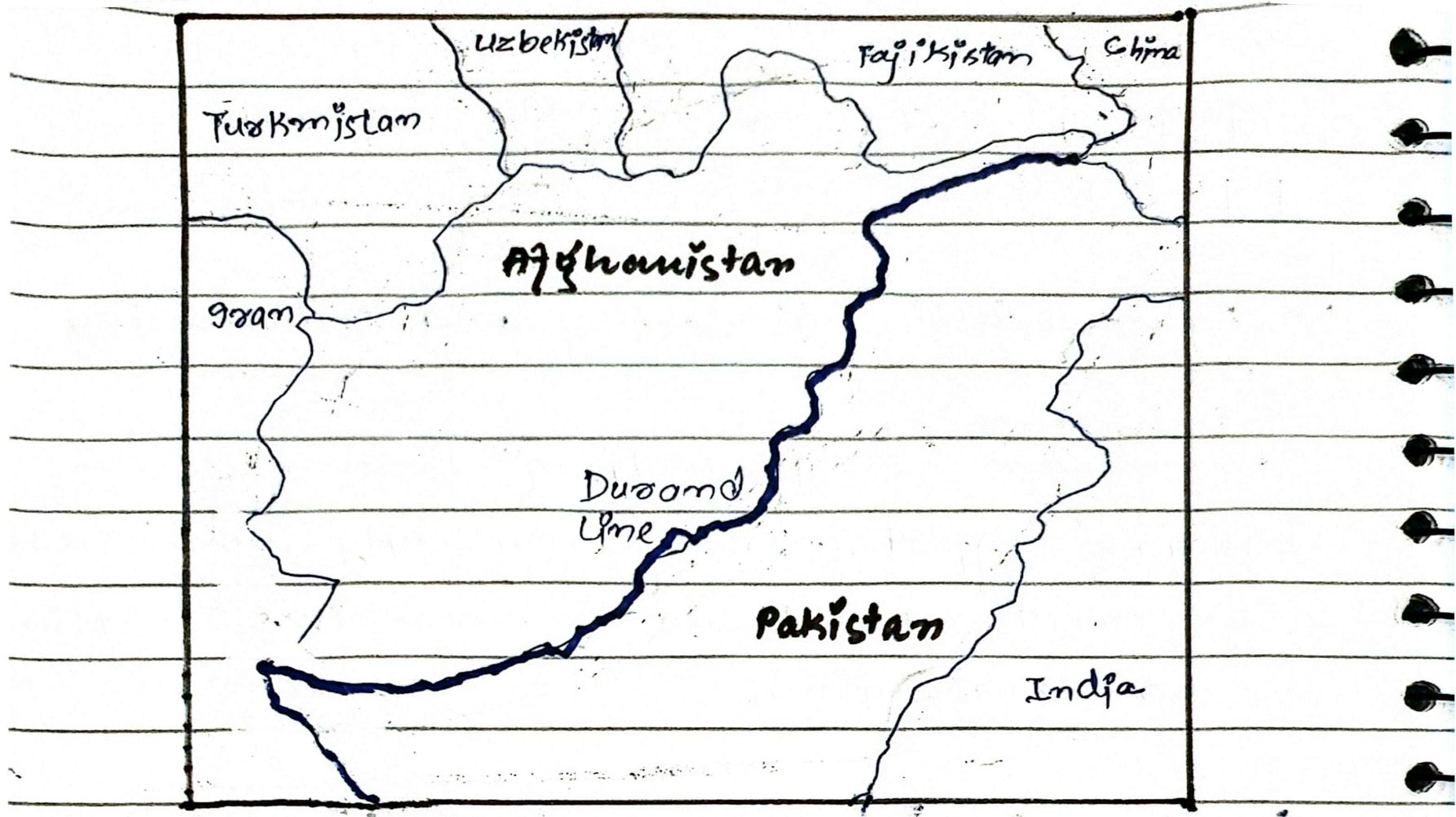


Figure : Geographical Representation
of the Durand Line Bordering
Pakistan and Afghanistan.

c. Support of External Power :-

Foreign interventions and support for certain factions have amplified regional instability. Reports of funding and support for groups like the TTP and IS-Khorasan have added to the complexity.

d. Refugee Crisis and Socioeconomic Strain :-

Pakistan hosts millions of Afghan refugees. While most refugees are peaceful, some extremist factions exploit these populations to spread radicalization.

e. Weak Governance and Lack of Border Control :-

Afghanistan's limited control over its borders allows militant groups to use remote areas as bases, posing significant challenges for Pakistani security forces.

f. Rise of Radical Madrasas :-

Certain religious schools in both countries promote extremist ideologies, providing recruitment grounds for non-state actors.

4. Terrorism Impacts on Regional Stability

- ▶ Increased Civilian casualties
- ▶ Strained Diplomatic Relations
- ▶ Economic Setbacks
- ▶ Rising Internal Security Costs
- ▶ Destabilization of Border Communities
- ▶ Challenges for Regional Stability

a. Increased Civilian Casualties :-

The August 26 bombing in Balochistan illustrates the toll of terrorism on civilians. In recent years, such incidents have left hundreds dead or injured.

b. Strained Diplomatic Relations :-

Recurring terrorist incidents, especially cross-border attacks, have damaged trust, making it difficult for both nations to engage in productive dialogue.

c. Economic Setbacks :-

Insecurity in the region

deters investment; worsening economic conditions, particularly in the affected border areas where development projects are often postponed or halted.

d. Rising Internal Security Costs

Pakistan's need to fortify its borders and improve internal security has resulted in increased defense expenditures, diverting resources from essential sectors.

e. Destabilization of Border Communities

The recurring attacks have made it hard for people in border regions to live securely, affecting their education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

f. Challenges for Regional Stability

The Afghanistan - Pakistan terrorism issue has implications beyond the two countries, impacting regional stability in South and Central Asia.

5. Proposed solutions for mitigating

Terrorism

- ▶ Joint Counter-Terrorism Operations
- ▶ International support and mediation
- ▶ Enhanced intelligence sharing
- ▶ Border control and fencing initiatives
- ▶ Educational and socio economic programs
- ▶ Empowering civil society and community initiatives

a. Joint Counter-Terrorism Operations :-

Conducting cooperative security operations across the borders could address threats more effectively, though it would require high levels of trust and transparency.

b. International support and mediation :-

The UN and other international bodies can

play a role by mediating agreements and providing resource for counter-terrorism initiatives.

C. Enhanced Intelligence sharing :-

actionable intelligence can enable both countries to preempt attacks. Recent attempts to improve information-sharing have shown potential, but more consistency is needed.

• Khan highlights an "intellectual crisis" in Pakistan, stemming from policies during the Zia-ul-Haq era, which institutionalized religious extremism and strained Pakistan's governance and stability."

[Riaz Muhammad Khan, Afghanistan Pakistan: Conflicts, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity, 2011]

60 Border Control and Fencing Initiatives :-

Pakistan has already begun fencing the Durand line to prevent illegal crossings. Enhanced border control measures could reduce the free movement of militants.

61 Education and Socio Economic

Development Programs :-

Developing educational and economic opportunities in border areas can weaken militant recruitment efforts, addressing extremism root causes.

62 Addressing Radicalization in Madrasas :-

Reform

targeting religious schools involved in radicalization could reduce militant recruitment, especially among vulnerable youth populations.

5. Empowering Civil Society and Community

Initiatives :-

Promoting local peace-building efforts and community programs can counteract extremist narratives within border communities.

6. Conclusion: Towards Lasting Peace and Security

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is at a crucial juncture. Non-state actors pose a significant threat to both nations, requiring a concerted and cooperative approach to combat terrorism.

By implementing joint measures, Pakistan and Afghanistan can work toward a future where peace replace the current violence. **As**

Qutub highlighted, collective action is essential to "safeguard regional peace and security".