

What are critical issues in Afghan-Pakistan Relations since Taliban takeover in 2021. Also provide practicable policy options in which both neighbouring states can resolve these issues.

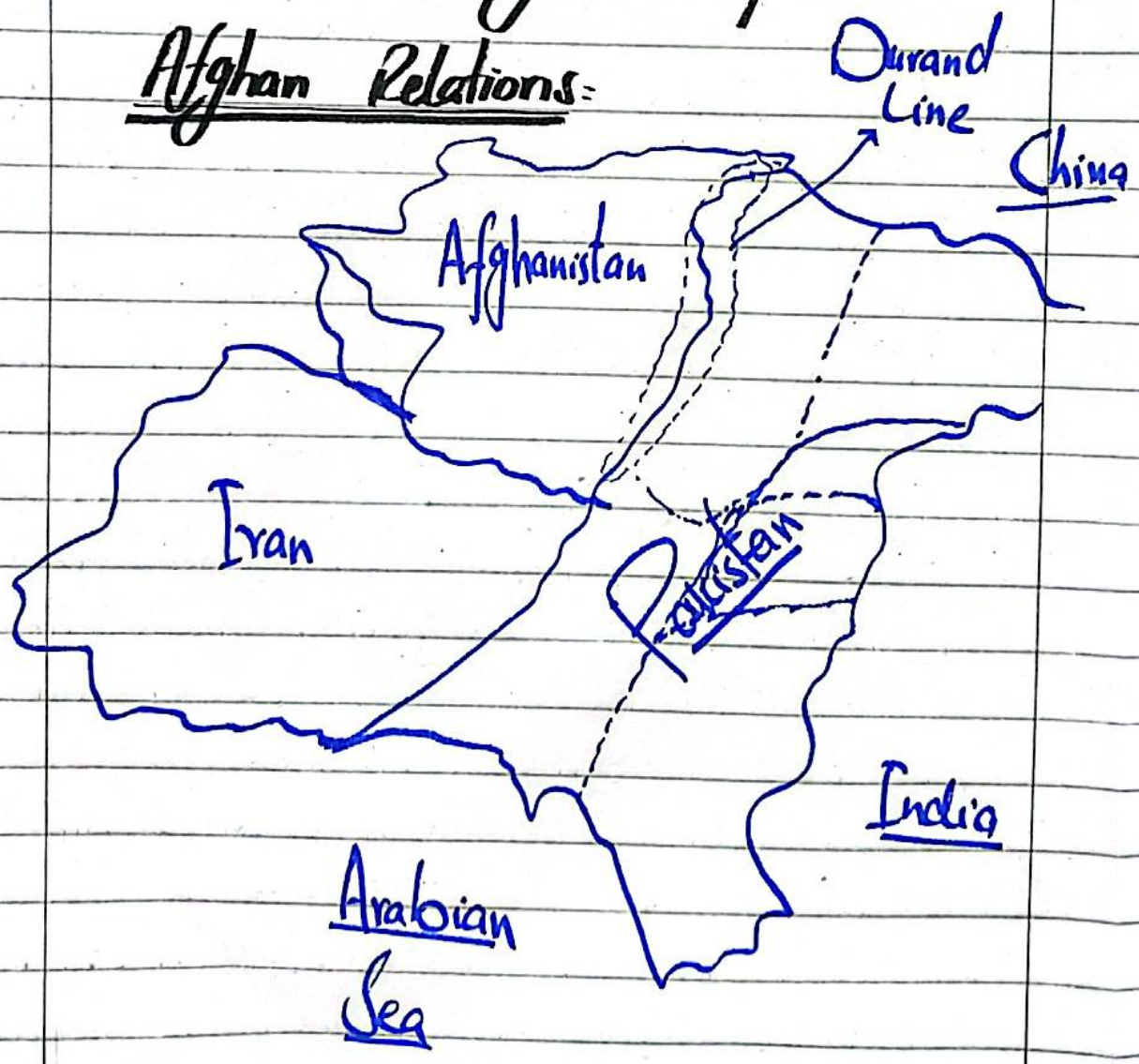
1 Introduction:-

The bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have long been fraught since time immemorial. Ranging from border issues to ideological difference, the bilateral engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan has always marked by differences and disengagement. In his book, Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the West Ahmad Rashid says

“The bilateral disengagement between both neighbours is not only driven by prevalent issues but it has deep roots in history, often driven by border management by British empire”

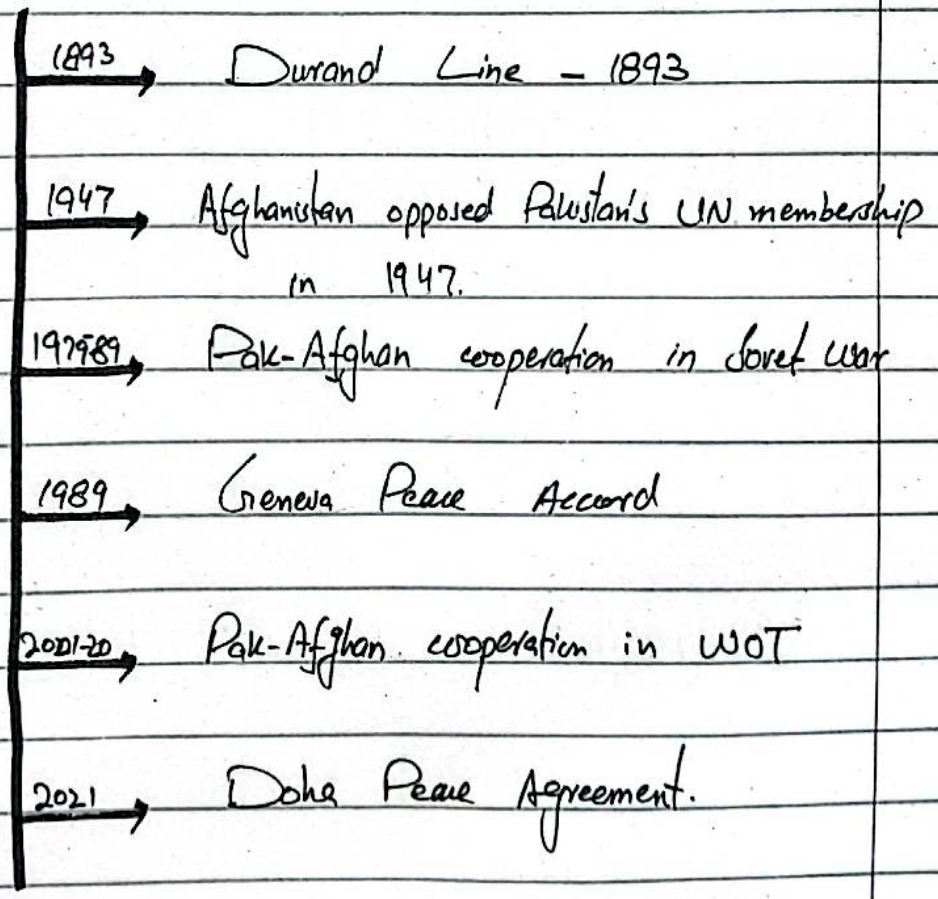
However, since the installation of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the mutual mistrust has widened owing to cross-border terrorism. Pakistan has left with minimum opportunities to maintain peace in neighbouring countries, except holding peaceful dialogue with incumbent Taliban regime.

2 Historical Background of Pak-Afghan Relations:



The Durand line between Pakistan and Afghanistan was established between Sir Durand and King Abdur-Rehman of Afghan empire in 1893. Since then, the people of Afghanistan are reluctant to recognize the border. Moreover the independence and UN membership of Pakistan was opposed by Afghanistan. After that the country supported Afghans in Soviet war and then War on Terror. The Geneva Agreement, Oslo Accord, and Doha Agreement were carried out with the help of Pakistan.

Timeline of Bilateral Relations



3 Issues of Pak-Afghan Relations

Since Taliban Takeover-2021:

(i) Cross-border Terrorism in Pakistan from Afghanistan:

The issue of terrorism in Pakistan is generated by Taliban-sponsored Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). TTP have safe haven in adjacent areas of Afghanistan and they operate from that area in Pakistan's tribal areas. Foreign Ministry of Pakistan said in issue briefing

“There are strong evidence that TTP is operating from Afghanistan and coming out its malicious activities in tribal areas of Pakistan”

(ii) Taliban's sponsorship to TTP.

TTP is sponsored by current Afghan regime

ideologically. Though the supreme leader issued a decree condemning terrorism in Pakistan, yet Allegiance of TTP fighters on the hand of Afghan government is question mark.

Financial Times comments

“The issuance of decree against terrorism and allegiance with TTP fighters show hypocrisy of emt encumbent Afghan government.”

iii) Human and Capital Smuggling

Human and capital smuggled have become a pravent issue on Afghan border. On daily basis thousands of Afghan refugee capture cross border and smuggle multiple things. The crackdown of law enforcement agencies reveals

“The border crossing between both countries have become a pouring passage for smuggling of goods and currency.”

iv) Repatriation of Refugees by Pakistan:-

Pakistan started major deportations drive against illegal and unregistered Afghan refugees, leading to mistrust between governments on both sides. Amnesty International says

"Pushing the shelterless people to country, where their lives are at risk will create a severe humanitarian dilemma"

v) Growing influence of India on Taliban:-

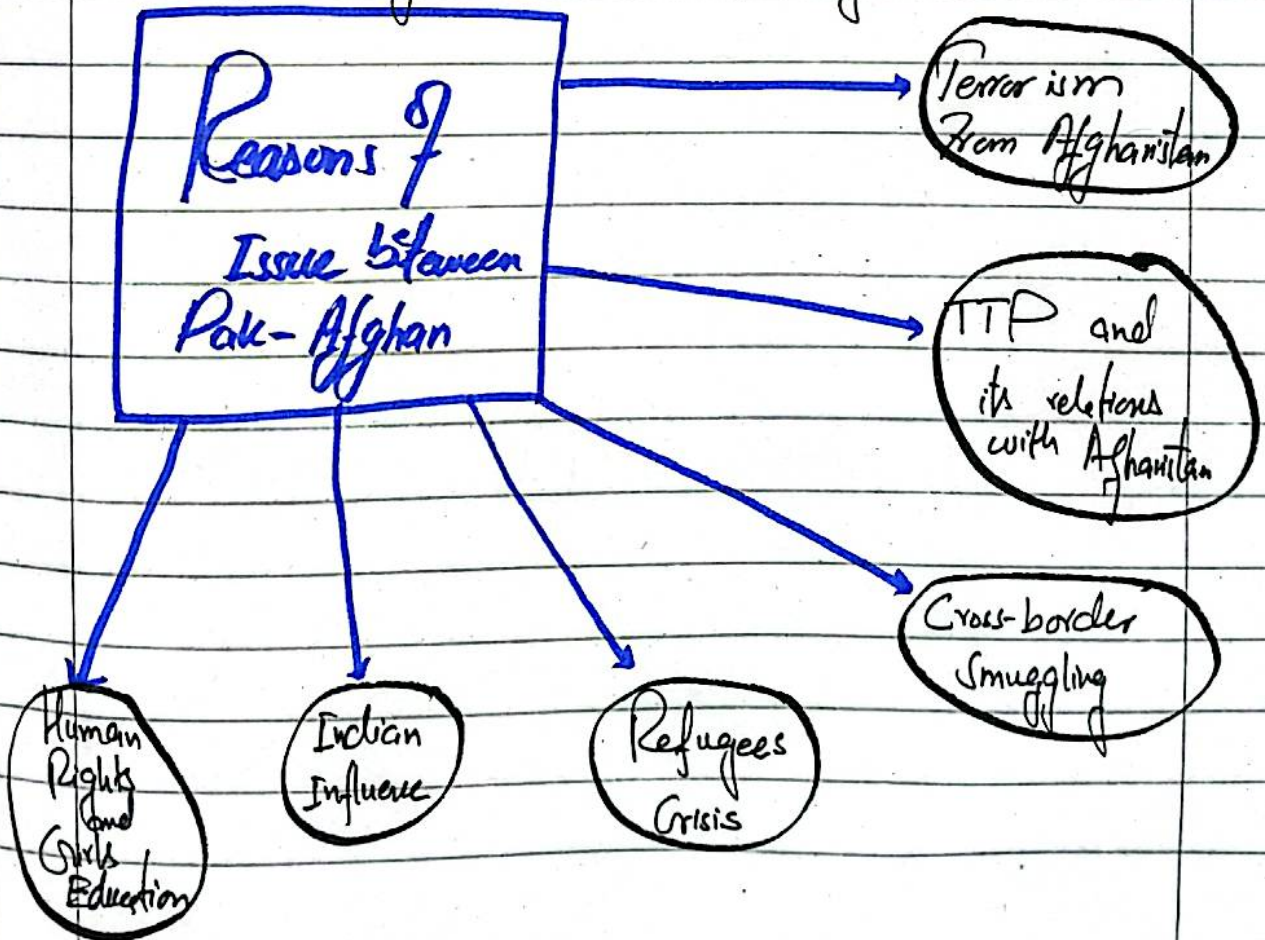
India is actively engaged in Afghanistan to destabilize Pakistan, validating the axiom "The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend". The recent meeting between Indian Foreign Secretary and Taliban's Foreign Minister in Dubai marked importance. Amir Khan Mullaqi says

"Taliban government want active collaboration of India in trade and nation building"

vi) Issue of Human Rights and Girls Education in Afghanistan.

Pakistan remained significantly active in highlighting human right violation and ban on girls education in Afghanistan. This is another reason behind disengagement. The Prime Minister of Pakistan says

“Pakistan is committed to ensure girls education in this region. Taliban government must do in this regard to allow all girls to get basic and higher education.”



4 Policy Options to Resolve Mutual Issues in Pakistan's Afghanistan

i) Collaboration in Countering Terrorism:

Both countries must collaborate to counter terrorism across the border. It is possible only by negotiations and sharing intelligence information. The Prime Minister said

"Pakistan is not reluctant to cooperate with Taliban regime against terrorism, because peaceful Afghanistan will guarantee peace in the whole region."

ii) Revival of bilateral trade.

It is necessary to revive bilateral trade between both countries. Transit Trade Agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan must be

made more accessible and beneficial.

iii) Peaceful Settlement of Refugee Crisis

The issue of refugees must be resolved peacefully by the mutual consensus of both countries in order to ensure well-being of people. Both countries must follow the Convention of UN to Resolve Refugee Issue.

iv) Intervention of major power in resolving issue

Russia and China are two major players in the region having active relations with Taliban regime. Both countries must intervene in this issue to resolve mutual issue. The Foreign Minister of China says

"Peaceful Afghanistan is crucial for the well-being of the whole region."

5 Conclusion :-

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two major muslim countries in Asia having deeprooted ideological engagement historically. The long-awaited settlement of relations between both countries is sine qua non in the contemporary geopolitical era. Both countries should collaborate to achieve common goals and set aside the mutual differences for the greater goods of millions of people in the region.