

Analyze the challenges Pakistan faces in managing its western border with Afghanistan, particularly in the context of cross-border terrorism and refugee influx in the post-Taliban Era.

Introduction:-

Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan stretching over 2600 Plus Km is one of the most difficult frontiers in the world to manage. The terrain is mountainous, porous and historically used for unregulated movement of people and goods. After the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, Pakistan's border management challenges have increased then decreased. Issues such as cross-border management challenges have increased. Infiltration by militant groups, illegal trade, and a renewed influx of refugees have placed significant pressure on Pakistan's security apparatus, economy, and social stability. Managing this border has therefore become a central national security concern for Pakistan.

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PAK AFG BORDER.



ANALYSES

- (i) Structure Issues of The Western border
- (ii) RISE of Cross-border Terrorism after 2021
- (iii) Refugee Inflow & its Impact on Pakistan.
- (iv) Border Management and Governance Problem.
- (v) Geopolitical Complications
- (vi) Economic and Social Impact

(i) Structure Issues of the Western border

- or Dispute over Durand Line
- or Harsh Terrain and weak border Infrastructure.

Dispute over Durand Line

Durand Line drawn in 1893, has never been recognized by the

Afghan Government Including Taliban.

This dispute create continuous tension because,

- Pakistan treats the border as an International boundary
- Afghanistan sees it as an artificial division of Pashtun tribes.
- Local tribes ignore the borders since families live on both sides.

Harsh Terrain and Weak border Infrastructure

The border passes through high mountains, narrow paths, remote valleys, Areas with extreme weather. These conditions make continuous surveillance extremely difficult, even with fencing and security posts, militants can still find unguarded routes.

(ii) Rise of cross-border Terrorism After 2021

- (a) TTP safe havens inside Afghanistan
- (b) Increase in cross-border attacks
- (c) Role of ISKP.

(a) TTP safe havens inside Afghanistan

After the Afghan Taliban took control,

TTP Prisoners were released.

Many TTP leaders released to Afghan Provinces like Khost, Nangarhar.

TTP regained manpower and launched strongest

attacks on Pakistan

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of giving TTP space -

(b) Increase in cross-border attacks

1. Since 2021,

1b) Pakistan border check-posts have been attacked

2b) Police stations in KPL were targeted.

3b) Suicide bombings increased.

4b) Militants used Afghan territory as a launching base.

(c) Role of ISKP

Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP):

1c) Opposes both Pakistan and Afghan Taliban

2c) Conducts high-casualty attacks in Pakistan

3c) Exploits border weaknesses and refugee movement

4c) Competes with the TTP for recruitment and Territory.

(iii) Refugee Inflow and Its Impact on Pakistan.

a) Large number of Afghan Refugees

b) Security concern within refugee populations.

c) Diplomatic friction over deportation policy.

(a) Large number of Afghan Refugees

Pakistan has hosted Afghan for over

40 years - After 2021, more arrived due to:

→ Taliban rule fear

Economic collapse

Hunger and unemployment

Drought and poverty in Afghanistan.

This increase pressure on Pakistan's Hospitals, Schools, Housing, Employment market & social services.

(b) Security Concern within refugee populations
Pakistan worries that militants may hide among refugees because:

- (1b) Many crossings are uncontrolled.
- (2b) Multiple refugees are undocumented.
- (3b) Some may be linked to TTP or ISKPr network.

(c) Diplomatic friction over deportation policy

Pakistan's illegal foreigners' Repatriation Plan led to tensions because, Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of human right violations. Pakistan argues it cannot host unlimited refugees during economic crisis. Border congestion increased and protests erupted on both sides. (Reuters, 2023).

(iv) Border Management and Governance Problems

- (a) Weak state presence in border area.
- (b) Controversy over border fencing.
- (c) Impact on Local Economy.

(a) Weak state presence in border area

Former FATA and border districts suffer from:
 Poor policy Smuggling networks
 Limited control High unemployment
 Tribal justice system & strong Militant influence

Weak state governance enables both militants and irregular migrants to move freely.

(b) Controversy over border fencing

Pakistan completed fencing along 2600 km. However Afghan Taliban removed fence segment called it illegal. Local people dislike this fence because it disrupts movement. Thus fencing created new tensions instead of eliminating old ones.

(c) Impact on Local Economy

Strict border reduced trade, increased transit delays, raised food prices in border towns and hurt daily wage workers.

(v) Geopolitical Complications

(a) Pak-Afgh Mistrust

(b) Role of Regional Powers.

(a) Pak-Afgh Mistrust

When Pakistan was established in 1947 all countries voted for Pakistan in UN except Afghanistan. Post 2021, Kabul refuses to act against TTP. Pakistan carries out airstrikes on TTP inside Afghanistan. This mistrust prevents any cooperation.

(b) Role of Regional Powers:

Other countries like India maintain diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, Iran strengthen ties with ~~the~~ western Afghanistan. China want stability for CPEC expansion.

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(6) Economic and Social Impact

Pakistan faces severe economic crises. Border problem worsen it by, Increasing defense spending, Reducing bilateral Trade, encouraging smuggling over legal business, Reducing investor confidence and increasing Policing cost.

Conclusion:-

Managing Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan has become an extremely complex challenge in Post Taliban era - Cross-border terrorism has increased, TTP has strengthened, ISKP remains a threat and millions of Afghans refugees continue to create social and economic pressures. The border's disputed status, difficult geography, weak governance, and deep mistrust between Kabul and Islamabad further complicate the situation.

(Please give me marks out of 20)