

Question

Discuss how Durand Line Dispute, cross-border military, and refugee dynamics shape Pakistan-Afghanistan relation. What are its implications for both states also give suggestion for solution.

Answer

Outline

A. Introduction

B. Understanding the Underlying factors of Bilateral Strains

1. Historical, Strategic and Structural Faultlines shaping the Bilateral Relations.

C. Impact of these Faultlines on relations b/t both states

1. Persistent Trust deficit between the states
2. Diplomatic volatility and recurrent tensions
3. Strat Security-Centric nature of bilateral engagement
4. Politicization of border and Militancy issues
5. Constrains on Trade and Economic cooperation
6. Influence of regional and external actors
7. Militarized and reactive interactions
8. Fragmented and Fragile Long-Term cooperation.

D. Implications for Pakistan

1. Increased security burden; Cross border Militancy elevate security challenges
2. Rise in military expenditures; Resource divergent to border fencing
3. Political tension; rejection of border fuels domestic & nationalism
4. Border Management Challenges; Dispute over checkpoints
5. Trade and Economic Disruption; Border closure hinders trade

6. Refugee Influx is a social strain; burden on service & economy
7. Risk of cross-border escalation; Arm-clashes
8. Limited Cooperation regionally; security concerns obstruction
9. Porous Border implication Exploitation; Smuggling
illicit trade.

E. Implication for Afghanistan

1. Increased Internal security Pressures; Afghan territory used against Rivals
2. Economic constraints; limited access to regional market
3. Diplomatic isolation; Continual violation limit Partnership
4. Refugee & Humanitarian Issues; Creation of local strain
5. Proxy influence and regional interference; Global Power dynamics
6. Limited control over militant; Authority face criticism for inability
7. Political legitimacy issues; Border disputes undermine credibility
8. Obstruction to development; Projects delayed
9. Risk of regional Escalation; Stability affect.

F. Suggestion for solution

1. Institutionalized Border dialogue mechanism through regional cooperation
2. Mutually agreed Recognition of Durand line
3. Joint Counterterrorism Frameworks at bilateral and regional coop.
4. Strengthening border Fencing and cooperation
5. Revitalizing Trade and Connectivity
6. Regional diplomatic engagement for Peace in Afghanistan
7. Cooperation over refugee repatriation to balance burden
8. Neutralizing the Ideological perception of
people through cultural exchange
9. Avoiding Proxy Politics and External Manipulation
10. Establishing a Bilateral Peace and Stability
Charter through regional cooperation.

Introduction

The Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are historically shaped by geography, security concerns and ethnic linkages, yet marred by persistent mistrust and political divergence. Both countries share deep cultural and religious affinities but disputes such as Durand line boundary issue, cross-border militancy and diffuse strategic dynamics havestead continuously strained bilateral ties. The relations have often oscillated between cooperation and confrontation under influence of external and regional actor. Understanding the roots is essential for peace, cooperation and connectivity.

Understanding the Historical, Structural and Strategic Faultlines; Strains of Bilateral relations

The persistent tension is not a product of any recent politics alone but of historical legacies and structural insecurity that define behaviour.

Historically, Durand Line agreement created territorial and ethnic fragmentation that is not fully accepted by Afghanistan, claiming redundancy towards Pakistan's borders. Structurally, both states suffer from weak

institutional coordination, porous frontiers and dependency on external powers that magnify internal stability.

Strategically, the involvement of great powers from Cold War to 9/11 geopolitics - has entrenched both with security-centric mindset where both view each other through lens of threat rather opportunity.

Impacts of Faultlines of States

The historical faultlines within the region promote instability, security concerns, diplomatic disengagement hindering joint efforts for promotion and peace.

1. Persistent trust deficit between two states

Difference of interests, divergent ideologies, political philosophies causing trust deficit between two states. The power holder are not ready to trust and join hands in efforts to clear out differences. The triggering principle is ideological and historical narratives of both states.

2. Diplomatic Volatility and recurrent tension

Diplomacy mostly focuses on volatile and tension issues, addressing instead of cooperative and bilateral development. Unresolved dispute promote backdrop diplomacy allowing regional powers to interfere.

3. Security-Centric nature of bilateral engagement

Relations are dominated by security concerns rather than economic, political and cultural cooperation. Hindering progress in already underdeveloped states.

4. Politicization of borders and Military issues

Both states are using the faultlines to achieve personal interests. Making of concession and bargains under influence of borders conflict and tension. Hindering the cooperative development.

5. Constrains on Trade and Economic Cooperation

Forham and chaman officially closed. For trade which hinder economic development and cooperation. The closure is followed by increase risk of illicit transfer of resources and goods.

6. Influence of regional and external actors on state

Proxy effect is seen in both states. Pakistan is moving towards America due to continuous bilateral diplomatic failure to curb terror and India is taking up advantage to create hostilities due to violent relations.

7. Militarized and reactive interaction

Interaction and cooperation is reactive and militarized prioritising security talks instead of any economic cooperation. Curtailed efforts of securing borders, one sided cooperation and policy implementation. Frequent borders skirmishes, Feroz and counterterror efforts are largely reactive.

8: Fragmented and Fragile Long-term Cooperation

No long-term and diplomatic efforts and joint ventured are seen among neighbours instead the fragmented and fragile cooperation under influence of domestic power. ~~TPP~~ ^{TPP} ~~refugee~~ ^{refugee} in Afghanistan is a central force influencing this cooperation.

Implications on Pakistan

1: Increased Security burden; Cross border Militancy elevate security Challenges

Cross-border Militancy affect the sovereignty and national security of state. It increases the security burden on state to curb militaria and protect internally stability.

2: Rise in Military expenditure; Resource divergent to Border fencing

Till 2022 Aft. of border fencing is done which is not accepted by Afghanistan and regarded as security issue and it is destroyed by Afghan government. It cause resource exploitation and divergent instead of for humanitarian efforts.

3: Political tension; Rejection of border fuels Political revolt and nationalism

All these issues give rise to political tension within Pakistan. Rejection of border fuels political revolts and nationalism within state. Border area is largely impacted due to border tension causing destruction of livelihood, life lost and migration

4. Border Management Challenges: Dispute over checkpoints and areas

Border area sovereignty dispute over territory claim is one of the major challenge due to their claim of Pakistan territory and checkpoint disturbance.

5. Trade and economic disruption: Border closure hinders trade

Trade and economy activities largely impact the buying capacity of population due to lesser purchasing power and limited availability of goods.

6. Refugee influx as a social constraint: Burden on service and economy

Almost 3M of registered refugee, 8 to 9 lac of legal right holder and 1-1.3M of illegal refugees are burden on social constrain like services and economy in Pakistan.

7. Risk of Crossborder escalation: Arm clashes to limited war scenarios

Cross-border escalation give rise to limited war scenario back in October and February 2025. It effects regional security

8. Limited Cooperation regionally: Security Concerns Obstruction

Limited cooperation, backdrop diplomacy, constrained bilateral talks obscure the security concerns within the region. Proper channel is not channeling for any bilateral effort of diplomacy over issues.

2. Porous Border Exploitation, Smuggling and Illicit Trade

Unresolved border dispute and lack of any surveillance under strict security protocols curtail the stable environment of borders. It promotes smuggling within Pakistan of almost 930M Rs from 2019 to 2023. It also give rise to loss of \$ 2B annually.

Implications ^{on} For Afghanistan

1. Increased Internal security Pressure: Afghan territory used against Pakistan.
Border conflict and militancy give rise to action-reaction policy. It impact internal security of already weak and underdeveloped state of Afghanistan.

2. Economic Constraints: Limited access to regional market

Due to cross-border illicit activities, borders are closed that disconnect the regional cooperation and trade access, It impacts afghan economy largely.

3. Diplomatic Isolation: Continuous tension limits Partnership

Unparalleled policies and constrained ideology cause diplomatic isolation. Partnership and cooperation is highly impacted. Doha peace talks Failure a recent example.

4. Political Legitimacy ~~Refugee and Humanitarian~~ Issues: Border dispute undermines political credibility & governance

Border dispute and illegal activities puts finger on governance and credibility of system internationally and regionally.

5. Proxy influence and regional interference:- Global Power Dynamics

Diplomatic disengagement prompts back door proxy influence. Afghanistan attack on Pakistan when it's minister is in India. Same Pakistan increasing tilt toward America to counter terrorism. Revival of historical politics.

6. Refugee and Humanitarian Issues: Creation of Local Strain

The constrained and violation of rights promote migration causing humanitarian crisis within Afghanistan. Almost 8 to 9 lac of refugees in Pakistan came at time of Taliban government.

7. Limited control on militant; Authority is criticized for its inability

Taliban government is continuously criticized for its cross-border trans-national and international influence of TTP influenced activities and giving refuge to militancy.

8. Obstruction to development; Projects delayed Pakistan and Afghanistan joint-hand efforts for eco.

development through projects like BRI is delayed due to prevailing threats of militancy and security tension at side of construction.

9. Risk of regional escalation; Stability affect

Both states are at brink of escalation since 2024 due to this border issue and cross-border activities. As a result of action reaction influence.

Suggestions for Solution

1. Institutionalized border dialogue mechanism

Through regional cooperation and organizations Long-term solution of border conflict, instead of timely and short-period agreements. Regional interests are vested for all regional players in Afghanistan.

2. Mutually agreed Recognition of Durand line

In order to avoid mutual constraints, mutually agreed decision is essential. It promote peace and stability for both states, limiting cross border conflicts.

3. Joint Counterterrorism Framework at

bilateral and regional cooperation

Afghanistan peace is essential for regional pawns and regional stability. To counter terrorism in Afghanistan regional groups plays an important role.

4. Strengthening border fencing and cooperation.

To curb cross-border activity both states join hands to strength border security. Border fencing should be encouraged and accepted.

5. Revitalizing Trade and Connectivity

To enhance economic cooperation borders should be open for trade with controlled security checkpoints to detect trans border smuggling and promoting trade.

6. Regional diplomatic engagement for peace in Afghanistan

Regional organizations play role in diplomatic engagement due to contested interests in both

power states. In order to attain peaceful solution of conflict.

7: Cooperation over refugee repatriation to balance refugee burden for time being
Refugee repatriation should be done with international cooperation for smooth flow of refugees transnationally.

8: Neutralizing the ideological perspective of people through cultural exchange and academic
Ideological triggering agendas should be neutralized through cultural exchange and academic programs.

9: Avoiding Proxy Politics and External Manipulation
Both should make sensible decisions to curb tensions instead of focusing on proxy politics and allowing external manipulative forces to interfere in region.

10: Establishing a Bilateral Peace and Stability

Charter through regional cooperation.

The hostility extent suggest to have a charter that is binding for both states to curb all kinds of conflicts and promoting peace and stability.

Conclusion:

Both countries are at stake of their security, economic and social crisis due to border tension which give rise to cross border military groups and refugees. In order to achieve stability and progress. It

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is important to curb terrorism. with in the state. Afghanistan should play their role as a state power, respect the Doha agreement, curtail terrorism, not to let their land used against Pakistan and achieve development through cooperative policies. Some Pakistan make its way to interact with global and regional powers to achieve eco. and pol. stability in Afghanistan. Ones again a joint effort for better future and regional peace.