

Question

What is meant by term "Proxy War"?
Are there any extrinsic factors at play in the internal security situation of Pakistan?

Introduction:

A proxy war is an indirect war against enemy through local groups or other states instead of direct involvement of powerful states. Because of its important, Pakistan geo-strategic location, Pakistan has often been affected by such rivalry among regional and global powers. Pakistan's internal security is challenged due to Afghanistan, Iran, Israel involvements and non-state actors, ethnic and sectarian within the country that exploited by India and West especially the U.S., causing political instability.

Understanding the term Proxy War

Proxy wars occur when two or more powers support opposing sides in a conflict without engaging themselves. These powers supply funds, military, intelligence or political back to local actors who fight on their behalf. Proxy wars are common in regions of geostategic importance, where direct warfare can convert into large-scale international conflict.

Classical Example of Proxy war:

There are some examples produced by cold war. The Korean War and Vietnam War became battlefield for US-Soviet Union rivalry. The Afghan-Soviet War saw the U.S. and Saudi Arabia supporting Mujahideen through Pakistan. Saudi-Iran rivalry has fueled proxy conflict in Yemen, Syria etc. These show proxy wars exploit weaker or unstable states to larger powers.

Global Dynamics of Proxy Warfare:

Avoiding Direct Confrontation

Major powers use proxies to escape the human and economic costs of open war and to prevent the huge loss of money and life.

Exploiting Internal Division

When a country is divided by religion, ethnicity or politics, foreign power find it easier to interfere, and they support one group against another to weaken the government ^{from} within.

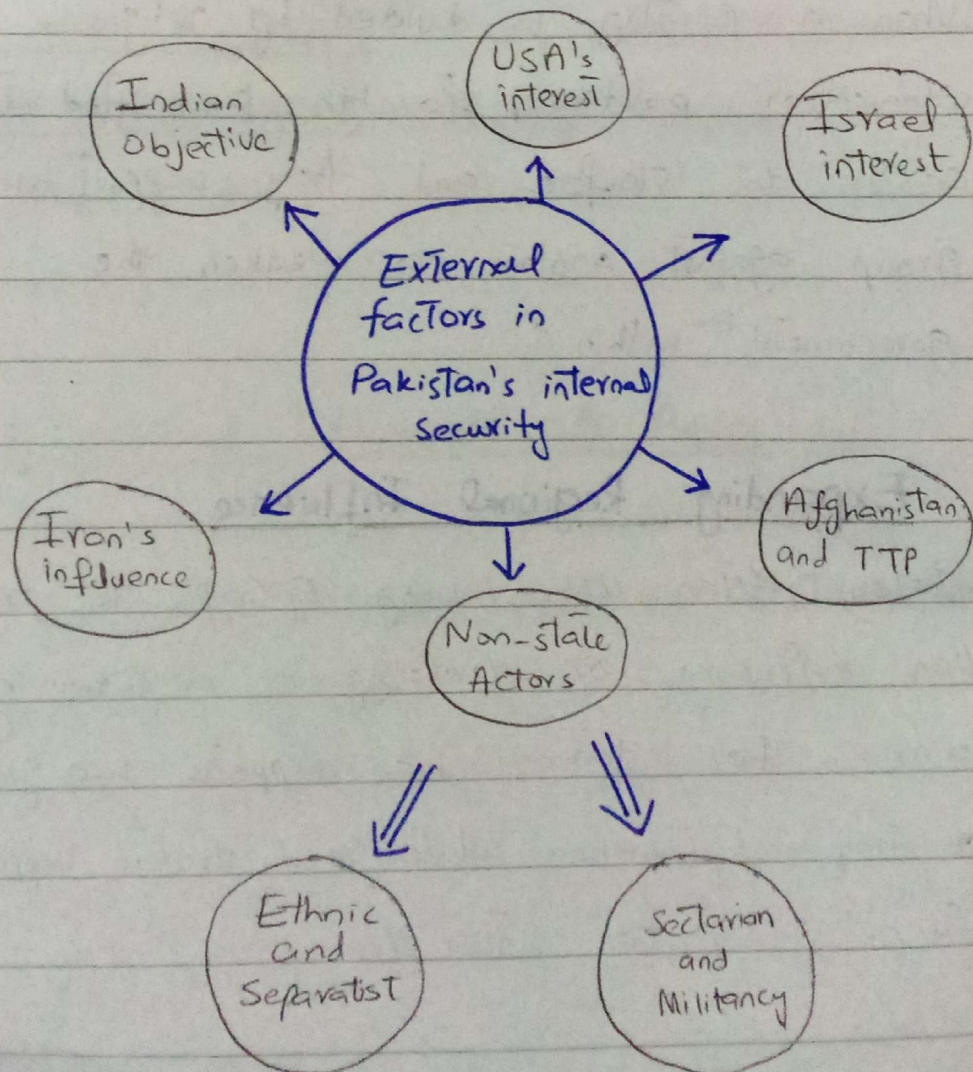
Expanding Regional Influence

States often use proxy groups to spread their influence or ideology in neighbouring areas. For instance, Iran supports Shia group in Iraq and Lebanon while Saudi Arabia supports Sunni group to counter Iran.

Modern Hybrid and Cyber Proxies

In the 21st century, proxy warfare has expanded to cyberspace, media manipulation and disinformation campaign which target the perception and political stability of rivals.

External factors in Internal Security of Pakistan



1. Indian Strategic Objective:

a) Separatism Movement Backed by Regional Actors

Pakistan have consistently alleged that Indian intelligence agencies like RAW have provided covert assistance to insurgent group in Balochistan, such as Pakistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Pakistan Republican Army (BRA). Analysts linked the clashes between 2019 to 2025, to increase militant activities in Gilgit-Baltistan and KPK for destabilizing the internal environment of Pakistan through proxies and cyber propaganda.

b) Hybrid and Information Warfare

According to the EU DisinfoLab report, 2024, Indian-linked online networks have amplified anti-Pakistan narrative globally. This reflects the evolution of proxy wars in digital domain, where misinformation and psychological operation are used to erode Pakistan's international image.

2 The US' Strategic Pressure:

a) Post. Afghanistan Re-alignment

After the US. withdrawal from Afghanistan, strategic focus shifted to the Indo-Pacific Region, strengthening cooperation with India. Analysts believe this reorientation created a security vacuum in Afghanistan that empowered groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TLP) and ISIS-Khorasan, both of them which have increased attacks ratio inside Pakistan since 2023-

b) Use of Economic Tools

Global financial institution such as (IMF) International Monetary fund and Financial Action Task force (FATF) shaped by Western powers, indirectly affect Pakistan's economic and security decision. Their condition often limit Pakistan's freedom in making its own policies and weaken focus on internal stability, which have direct influence on state's governance capacity.

3 Israel's Expanding Strategic Role:

a) Defence Partnership with India

Israel enhances India's military and intelligence capability through defence and technological cooperation with India particularly in drone system and AI-based surveillance. These developments indirectly influence Pakistan's strategic calculations along the Line of Control (LoC) and within the context of hybrid warfare.

b) Power Dynamics with U.S.

Israel's growing influence in Washington's Middle East Policy has shaped the U.S. perceptions of South Asian security. Traditionally, Pakistan supports Palestine and its ties with Muslim states often clashes with US-Israel strategic interest. Consequently, Pakistan faces recurring diplomatic pressure to align with Western security priorities, which sometimes conflicts with its own internal and regional objectives.

4. Afghanistan and TTP Factor:

a) Cross border Terrorism

Since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021, militant activities along Pakistan-Afghanistan border have surged. The Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) reported that about 70% of terrorist incidents in KPK in 2025 originated from Afghan territory. Despite repeated dialogues, Taliban's limited control over TTP has strained bilateral relations.

b) Durand Line Dispute

A core irritant in Pakistan and Afghanistan relations is the "Durand Line". Its porous and unrecognized status allows smugglers, TTP and armed forces to move freely across the border which fuels terrorism and instability in KPK and Balochistan.

Afghanistan reluctance to accept border line, as seen in the October, 2025, which intensified the domestic security challenges.

5 Iran's Strategic Influence:

Iran's influence in Pakistan stems from sectarian and strategic interests. Supports for Shia groups occasionally in Southern Punjab and Balochistan cause Shia-Sunni conflicts. Moreover, Iran's alignment with India's Chabahar Port project indirectly challenges Pakistan's Gwadar Port under CPEC. These add a strategic dimension to bilateral mistrust.

6 Non-State Actors as External Proxies:

a) Ethnic and Separatist Insurgency

Insurgent groups including BLA continue to target infrastructure and CPEC Project. Several incidents are recorded every month. Recently, Chinese engineers were massacred near the Dasu Hydropower project, attacked an army camp in Gwadar etc. Analysts reported foreign hand in creating anarchy in Pakistan by massive political crisis.

b) Religious and Sectarian Militancy:

Militant outfits TTP and ISIS-Kharasan exploit religious divisions and borders. Recent data shows terrorist incidents increased by almost 80% from 2014-25 with major attack in North Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan. It reveals how foreign funded networks intensify domestic insecurity.

Conclusion:

Pakistan's internal security is closely linked with the actions and interests of external power. Regional rivalries, border disputes and foreign backed groups have created complex challenges for the state. Pakistan needs strong internal unity, effective border management and balanced foreign policy, which stabilizes the peace and internal strength in the region.