

Pakistan Afghanistan conflict:

Historical reflections of PAK-Afghan Ties:

1947 to 1979

Afghanistan opposed the Pakistan's decision of joining United Nations, and consequently terminated all agreements with British including Durand Agreement.

Afghanistan's view of Pashtunistan has remained a challengeable concern for Pakistan that led to strained relations and border skirmishes several times between both countries.

Bhutto during Daud Khan regime in Afghanistan put efforts to de-escalate tensions and increase trade and diplomatic engagements.

1979 to 1989

In 1979 Soviet led communist government regime in Afghanistan revived the pashtunistan issue.

Pakistan became the front line state under Zia ul haq regime opposing the Soviet expansionism. Pakistan trained the various mujahideen factions to fight war in Afghanistan in coalition of US and other European partners.

1989 to 1994

In 1989 following exit of Soviets from Afghanistan region the Pak supported Gulbuddin Hekmatyar regime against Soviet Led Government of Mohamad Najibullah. After fall of Najibullah civil war among various factions erupted in afghanistan.

Taliban capture Kabul and formed government in 1996, Pakistan faced international criticism for supporting militant government. In result Taliban led government refused to recognize Durand line border between both countries. Pakistan started to face rise of anti Pakistan militancy.

2001 to 2021

After 9/11 Musharaf joined US Camp of war on terror against Afghan Taliban “Al Qaida and “Haqqani Network” . US blamed Pak of playing double game however Pakistan concern was to counter India’s influence in Afghanistan.

Reasons of conflict between both countries:

Internal Security situation:

There were lesser attack in Punjab 2% while KPK impacted with 37% attacks FATA with 29%, Balochistan 26% attacks and Sindh 6% since year 2000.

There have been un-precedented increase in suicide attacks inside Pakistan since January 2024 most of them were carried out by Afghan nationals.

The emergence of Daesh in Afghanistan is another challenge for Pakistan security institutions to restrain its influence from spreading in Pakistan.

Extremism:

The Durand line array of extremist groups cooperation with ethnic Pashtuns in tribal belts of KPK is another key reason that military sees as a separatist threat. Balochistan liberation front that join hands with TTP targeting security services. The group also support anti state movement in Pakistan.

The reason that contributed in intensifying extremist mindset among Baloch population and driven insurgency in the region since 1948 includes exploitation of province's natural resources by center, Lack of Baloch representation in government, military heavy handed operation inside province, with iron fist foiling the reformist struggles of Baloch representatives inside province.

Impact of Conflict on both countries:

Regional instability:

For last months there has been increase in cross border crimes that include drugs trafficking, smuggling of goods, cross border movement of currency, human trafficking. Kidnapping and extortion. This has also contributed huge expansion of smuggling networks across Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran tri-border area. These factors are responsible for making conflicts between states at regional level and pose challenges to regional security.

Closure of bilateral trade:

Trade is crucial for economic growth and development of any particular country. Pakistan and Afghanistan join border at different crossing points chaman, Torkham and Ghulam khan being the major crossings. Security and border route closures are major hinderances for trade.

Closure of Torkham border for more than 04 days suspended all kinds of movement. This raised concerns among trading community. This caused 1.5 million dollars loss per day to national exchequer.

Civilian & Arms Personnel causalities:

Center of research and security studies indicated that more than 2400 security personnels have been killed in first 9 months in terrorist attacks inside Pakistan in 2025. Pakistan views that TTP is using Afghan territory for carrying out attacks inside Pakistan.

Violent extremism and terrorism originating from borderlands has targeted tens of thousands of Pakistani people including civilians among security personnels for last 02 decades.

In 2021

the militant attacks rose to 380 resulted in 539 deaths and 863 injured .

In 2023

600 plus militant attacks were reported, 976 people killed and 1354 injured

In 2024

70 percent militant attacks were reported and number of death increase by 81 percent and number of people wounded 62 percent.

Recent Border Tension:

On 9 October to kill noor wali Mehsud TTP head Pakistan carried drone strikes inside Afghanistan but he escaped. This triggered fighting on 11 and 12 October between both forces.

On October 15 both sides carried out strikes against each other.

On 17 October Pak-Afghan border Pak soldiers were killed in suicide attack in return Pak hit strikes inside Afghanistan on same day earlier both side agreed to hold strikes for 48 hours until conclusion of peace talks in Doha

on October, 18 Afghan side view it repeated violations of Afghan territory airspace and targeted several Pakistani military posts and killed 58 Pakistani soldiers

What are Pakistan's concerns:

Stabilization of internal security:

For last two decades Pakistan is facing internal security issues emanates from effects of war on terror Pakistan has loss 83000 lives in war on terror and economic loss of US\$ 126. US hit

430 drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004. Pakistan faced more destruction than all NATO countries.

Following the December 2014 drastic militant attack on Army Public School Peshawar, that took lives of 140 innocent people, the country formulated its first National Action Plan to deal with terrorism and made various anti-terrorist operations to name few were Al-Mizan, Rah-e-Raast, Rah-e-Nijat, Zarb-e-Azb, and Rad-ul-Fasaad and Azme-Istehqaam.

Pakistan tried to put pressure on the Taliban government in November, 2023 by enforcing a new laws on repatriation of illegal foreigners and by imposing ban on visa free border crossing activities in Torkham and other Area but this did not work.

In 2024 Pakistan security forces carried out 59,775 counter terrorism operations that resulted in death of 925 terrorist across the country.

Presently Pakistan is working on revived 14 Points National Action Plan to eliminate the terror activities inside provinces and border regions.

Eliminate cross border terror

The foot prints of TTP at PAK-Afghan border and killing of Pakistan Security forces is a great loss, this also adds hatred for country forces among people living alongside border region. Already Pakistan is facing extremism in KPK and Balochistan and the worsening of situation in these regions will have alternate impacts on internal security of country. For this Pakistan is keen to eliminate border terrorism and remove TTP from spoiling ties between both countries.

Curb Indian influence in Afghan

Afghan Indian Ties:

Some analysts view that recent visit of Foreign Minister of Afghanistan to India is not considered good among Pakistani leadership. The recent 04 days skirmish among Pakistan and India and exchange of air and surface missiles and drone attacks in each other territory, false flag operation of Phalgam valley, following that incident Indian side suspension of Indus water treaty and Pakistan facing of floods after release of excess water by Indian side all these conflicts indicate that Pakistan and Indian bilateral relations are not going well.

In view of current indo-pak rivalry Indian side moving ahead to link its ties with Afghan Taliban leadership when Pakistan is facing cross border and internal militant attacks is a point of concern for Pakistan authorities.

Indian SPY in Pakistan:

The arrest of Kalboshan Yadhav an Indian spy is a very clear example that Indian side has hand in operating cross border proxies to spoil security of Pakistan.

Indian Support for Dam in Kabul

The Indian side knowingly that Pakistan has water scarcity issues, is intentionally pursuing to help Afghanistan for building a dam on Kabul river which flows in to Indus river in Attock district in KPK Pakistan and used by population of tribal areas of both countries. If Afghanistan side built dam on this river Pakistan would have to face 16 to 17 % decrease in water availability.

Protection of CPEC Route:

The Balochistan is a key location for Chinese CPEC project and part of BRI, Baloch groups have violently opposed Chinese investment in the region. In view of increasing terror attacks on Chinese officials working under CPEC Chinese government asked Pakistan to hand over security arrangements of their officials in their own domain but Pakistan security forces view it as a defamation for security institutions and put question mark on their reputation. Resultantly the security forces refused and assured them to fix the problem at their best.

Diplomatic and strategic options available to Pakistan?

Diplomatic Options:

Track 1 diplomacy Approach can be implied by Pakistan to engage Afghanistan government on peaceful table talks, and remind them decades old instability region has faced during Soviet expansionism and US led war on terror that resulted in thousands of casualties and exploitation of resources of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Both countries can follow **Track 4 diplomacy Approach and** work on inter cultural activities that could be helpful to promote People to People ties and inter cultural activities can play a significant role in enhancing bilateral relations.

Trak 3 diplomacy approach can be of important significance in reinventing bilateral ties. Both countries can work on enhancing bilateral trade. Pakistan is Afghanistan largest trading partner in year 2024-25 bilateral trade reach to \$1.9 billion. Pak-Afghan transit trade agreement was signed in 2010.

Pak Export to Afghan is \$ 1140 million major items cereals, cement and medicines.

Afghan Export to Pakistan is \$691 million. Major items includes raw cotton, coal briquettes, apple grapes pomegranates.

Trade Routes: Trade is operated through cross border routes Torkham, Chaman, Ghulam Khan, Kharlachy, Badini and Angoor Ada.

Strategic Cooperation:

Both countries shall focus on establishing mutual security agreements to curb cross border terrorism and eliminate proxies like fitna tul Khawarij and TTP. Mutually led Intelligence based operation to eliminate cross border terrorism is also a good option available to both countries.

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