

Q No-2

Pak-Afghan relations in the wake of repeated attacks by TTP and ISKP in Pakistan using Afghan land against Pakistan and in return Islamabad's decision to pull out Afghan refugees

Introduction:

Taliban came to power in August 2021. It was hoped that the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan would improve. However, attacks by TTP and ISKP have proved otherwise. Pakistan accuses Afghanistan that these terrorist organizations have sanctuaries in Kabul. While, Taliban refuses accusation made by Pakistan. It claims that Afghan-soil is not allowed to be used for terrorism. Contrarily, the surge in terrorism has been witnessed in Pakistan. Therefore, Islamabad has decided to expel illegal

Afghan refugees as government claims that they are involved in terrorist activities. The expulsion of Afghan refugees adversely affects Pak-Afghan relations. It can lead to closure of border for trade. It can also cause border tensions and the water dispute. In this section attacks by TTP and ISKP in Pakistan using Afghan land and decision of Pakistan to expell Afghan refugees and their impact on Pak-Afghan relations is discussed.

Attacks of TTP and ISKP in Pakistan

TTP and ISKP launched several attacks in Pakistan. The intensity of these terrorist attacks has been severe. It has caused huge cost in both man and material.

Example:

Maitung and Hangu attacks

Stance of Pakistan with regard to these attacks

Pakistan claims that these attacks that are mostly launched by TTP and ISKP. These terrorist bands have sanctuaries in Afghanistan. Therefore, it has demanded from Taliban to act against these terrorist organizations.

Stance of Taliban with regard to TTP and ISKP

Taliban claims that the accusation made by Pakistan are false. TTP and ISKP have no safe havens in Afghanistan. Rather, they are situated in Pakistan from where they are launching these attacks. Therefore, it should not be held responsible for its own failure.

Decisions of Pakistan to pull out Afghan refugees

Pakistan decided in Oct, 2023 to expell Afghan immigrants residing illegally in Pakistan. The number of refugees is estimated to be 1.73 million.

"Afghan refugees have 28 days left to leave Pakistan."
(Information Minister)

Reasons behind expulsion of Afghan Refugees

① Involvement in terrorist activities

Government claims that Afghan refugees are involved in terrorist activities. It points towards last 24 attacks among which 14 attacks were launched by Afghans. Therefore, it has decided to send them back in order to control terrorism.

② Universally accepted practice

Government states that it is under international law that illegal immigrants are deported or expelled. Thus, what it is doing is as per law.

Response of Taliban towards expulsion of Afghan refugees

Taliban have strongly reacted towards expulsion policy of Pakistan for variety of reasons. These reasons are discussed below.

① Economic factor

Afghanistan is facing severe economic turmoil. Since, Taliban have come to power it has not received formal recognition from any country of the world. Its foreign accounts have been frozen. In this

situation, Afghanistan sees sending back refugees to Afghanistan is economic burden on it. Therefore, it has asked to revoke this policy.

② Stigmatizing of Afghan Refugees

Afghanistan also sees expulsion as stigmatizing of Afghan refugees as they are expelled because of their involvement in terrorist activities which is also despised by Taliban.

Impacts of TTP and ISKP attacks in Pakistan and expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan on relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan

① Closure of transit trade

The trade can be adversely affected between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The reason is that Taliban would see expulsion of refugees by Pakistan as hurting of its interests that are ethnic and economic interests. While, Pakistan sees it as universally accepted practice to expell illegal immigrants.

② Border Tensions

Border tensions can also ensue between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The durand line that has been bone of contention between these two countries can also emerge. Taliban had been ally to Pakistan who have historically been silent on this issue can also raise it again.

③ Water dispute

Kabul river runs in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. This river

is tributary of Indus river. It irrigates many land in KP province. Afghanistan, which has plans to construct dams on it in the past, has gone back on reservations of Pakistan. However, Taliban now can initiate those projects leading these countries to severity of relations.

④ Terrorism

Terrorism can take place as TTP and ISKP can receive backing from Afghanistan and this can also lead Pakistan to launch attacks on Afghan soil. This could lead to full scale. It would be a worst-case scenario.

Conclusion:

To conclude, attacks of TTP and ISKP in Pakistan and Pakistan's expulsion of Afghan refugees has dented relations between Pakistan and

Afghanistan. These nations
are tend to close border. They
have propensity to come to
face to face on border issue
and water dispute. However,
Pakistan and Afghanistan are
neighbouring muslim countries.
It is not interest of both
countries to entangle in conflicts.
They should sit together to
resolve bilateral issues diplomatically.
It serves the interests of
the both countries.

