

Q2

Pak Afghan relation tension - major factors and how can it be improved?

Pak-Afghan relations continue to remain strained with both sides unwilling to trust each other despite mediation efforts by China, Qatar and Turkey.

The issues are deep rooted with both sides entrenched in their position. The already strained relations started to get worse when the talibans took power in 2021 and US left the Afghanistan.

The issues included militancy problem, refugees repatriation, mistrust between governments, trade closure, border issues and opposing strategic interests in the region. Recent engagements failed to bear any noticeable result due to the mistrust and political obstacles.

The factors affecting the Pak-Afghan relations are following:

I Historical Border Dispute & the Durand Line Agreement

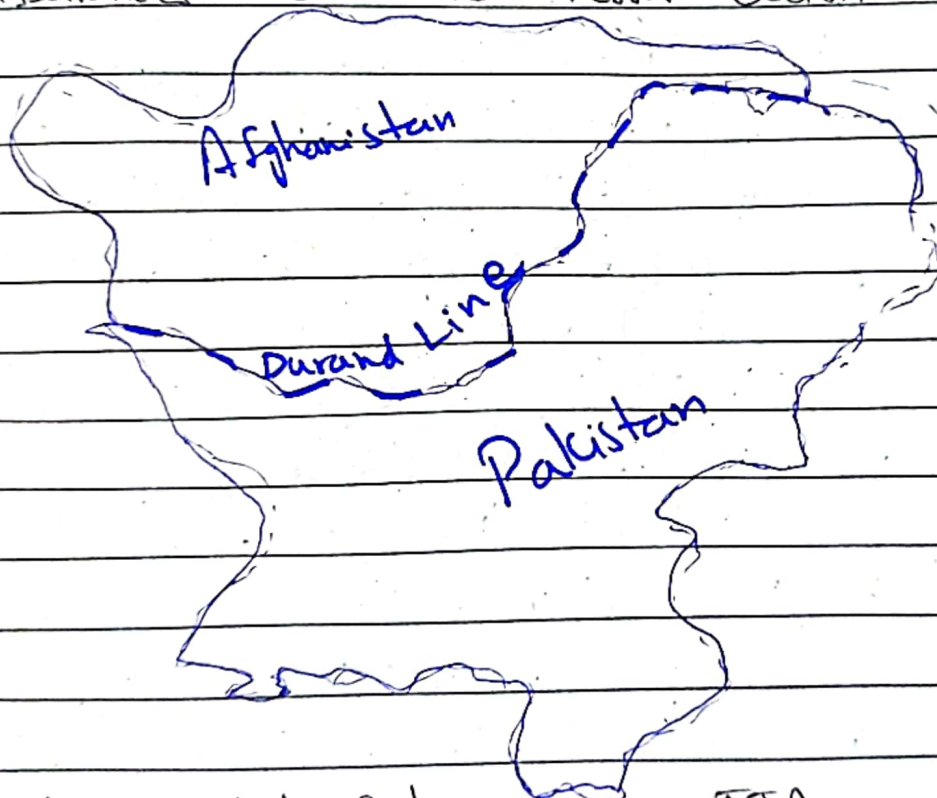
The 2640 km between ~~Agh~~ Afghanistan and Pakistan has been a source of tension since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The agreement of Durand line happened

in 1893 between British and Afghans and Pakistan inherited Borders of its Parent state of British India but Afghans refused to accept it as Part of Pakistan. First issue arose in 1947, with the creation of the new Pakistan state, when Pakistan went to UN for recognition and Afghanistan came out as the only nation opposing the Pakistan's inclusion in United Nation. In 1949, Afghan Loya Jirga unilaterally declared the Durand Line agreement void thus, creating challenges for Pakistan. Until today, other than the line of control and working boundary, Durand line remains the only international border on which no agreement with Afghanistan has been reached. Both countries man the border and citizens come and go through the checking Points but still the issue still remains between the two countries as irresponsible statements are often directed from Afghan side to undermine Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity.

II Terrorism and Border Incursions: The TTP Problem

TTP, being a banned terror outfit, has been involved into spreading

terrorism in Pakistan and targeting innocent civilians, minorities, children and security infrastructure. Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan wishes to implement their version of fundamental Islam and does not respect the law of land. In 2021, when Taliban came to power, the Pakistani state hoped to solve its problem of terrorism with the help of Afghan counterparts but moods turned sour when Afghans refused to put any pressure despite earlier assurances on the terror outfit. Attacks



have intensified since TTA came to power and it led to Pakistan doing targeted strikes against the terror outfit inside Afghanistan. Afghans wish to conserve their power and keep the organization secure as a leverage over Pakistan but Pakistan has refused to take

things forward unless Afghans take concrete actions against the terror outfit and end the safe heavens of terrorism inside Afghanistan.

III Breakdown of Trust & Failure of Diplomacy

The mediations by China failed to yield any result, so did the recent talks in Istanbul where Pakistan provided concrete evidences and demanded actions by Afghan authorities but failed to reach any conclusion. Afghan Taliban's offer to facilitate negotiations with the terror outfit but negotiations on a weak footing can never yield any result as proven by earlier negotiations with TTP.

IV Refugees Repatriation

Since the Soviet attack in 1979, Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees in millions with open arms but recent economic challenges has made the hosting difficult. Pakistan has been sending back the Afghan refugees in waves so they can return to their homeland after US withdrawal and can play their part in rebuilding their country but this has not been welcomed by the Afghan government.

and has caused even greater strain in the relation with Pakistan.

IV Economic Leverage & Trade Disruption

Afghans have accused Pakistan of using trade as a leverage as Pakistan closed the borders and stopped trade with Afghanistan after recent failed negotiations as the Afghan government is hesitant to take steps against terror outfit. This has further strained the relations and Afghan government has decided to use alternate routes for trade. The alternate route are not presently any feasible and Pakistani route is currently most viable option for Afghanistan due to its ~~weak~~ infrastructure and ports.

VI External Influence & Spoilers

Afghanistan has been looking for alternate partners to trade and build strategic relations with. Afghan relations and tilt towards India is seen with suspicion by the state of Pakistan as India has openly supported the banned Baloch terror outfits by helping their fighters receive medical treatment in India while also supporting ~~sea~~ and equipping such outfits against Pakistan. That's why

India is seen as a spoiler in this whole power dynamics while Afghans refuse any reasonable mediation efforts by friendly countries.

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→ Pathways Forward - How to Improve relationship.

1. Dialogue: End the long outstanding issues including the Durand Line by continuous dialogue.

2. Respect of Sovereignty: Both Pakistan and Afghanistan must respect each other's sovereignty.

3. Establish a joint security and border monitoring framework: Both countries should jointly man the border, share intelligence and manage border security transparently.

4. Confidence building measures: Use third party monitoring to verify the terror outfits and end support for terrorism so confidence can improve between two countries.

5. Trade & Economic Activities: Restart the

trade so people along borders can improve their life style and terrorism is discouraged.

6. Refugees issue & People to People

Connection: A humane solution of refugees return must be developed and people to people contact is increased so the confidence and trust between people increases.

Q3

Formation of New Provinces:

The debate of new Provinces is not new. There have been demands of Hazara, South Punjab and Urban Sindh Province but there have been challenges such as ethnic sensitivities, Federation structure, Political will, Resource allocation and Administrative challenges. Moreover, creating new Provinces can improve governance but the grassroots issues will continue to persist unless devolution of Power to grassroots level is done and local governments are made and empowered.

Discussing few of the hurdles in creation of new Provinces below:

I Legislative & Constitutional Complexities:

The creation of new Province requires 2/3rd majority in both houses of Parliament and the concerned provincial assembly. This requires a unanimous support by all the Political Parties that hold major seats in all Provinces. This makes the creation of new Province a very complex task especially for a minority (such as Hazara or the Urban Sindh Population).

II Political Resistance

The Politicians are not in favour of dividing their Power or to risk losing their influence over a group of people. There is little Political gain but the Power devolution is too much which makes the Politicians support creation of new Province but ~~too~~ do too less Practically on the ground for the creation of a new Province.

III Ethnic Sensitivity

The demand of new Province on ethnic ground holds a risk of more Polarization and the risk of ethnic and linguistic dominance. The new Provinces debate is needed to be redirected towards ~~re~~ the basis of need rather than ethnic demands. ~~Q.~~

IV Economic Viability

A new Province means a new assembly, high court, beureaucracy, administrative setup and Police. It all requires financial commitment. Disputes over NFC share, water share, senate ~~and~~ seats and natural resources will further complicate things. Economy is in no Position

to carry any such extra burden. Before new Provinces creation, fiscal discipline is needed so the economy is improved and fiscal space can be created for the creation of new Provinces.

IV Lack of National Consensus

With the inflation, terrorism, economic deterioration and issues in small Provinces (KPIC and Balochistan) reaching on consensus on creation of new Provinces will be difficult as the already deprived Provinces will get a bad message and take this practice as a way to lessen their powers more - ~~an~~

Before creation of new Provinces, the situation and administration of already existing Provinces is needed to be improved so a consensus of new Provinces may be created at a national level.

V Governance Challenges

The inefficiency and red tapism of the governance structure of Pakistan is not a hidden thing. Creating a new Province without improving the capability to govern will prove to be worse. The

administration needs to be improved.

VII Local government creation

The whole debate of new Provinces is the devolution of Power but the Power has not yet devolved in the existing Provinces. The local government system has not been introduced in even one of the Province. So, before creation of new Provinces, there is a need to devolve power to union council level so people and local administration is able to make their decisions without turning to the Provincial capital.

Conclusion and Way Forward

While creation of new Provinces can improve governance, reduce administrative overload and make the lives of masses easier by devolution of Power but it is not a solution of all the Problems Pakistan is facing. Pakistan need to tackle inflation, exports stagnation, security challenges, budget deficit and corruption. The new Provinces debate can be reopened after

strengthening the institutions, improving tax collection and economy, reducing poverty and inflation and after reaching a national level consensus on the creation of new provinces. Till then, the local governments are needed to be formed in the already existing administrative units which will not only reduce people's problem but will also strengthen the administrative and political institutions which will be needed for the new provinces.