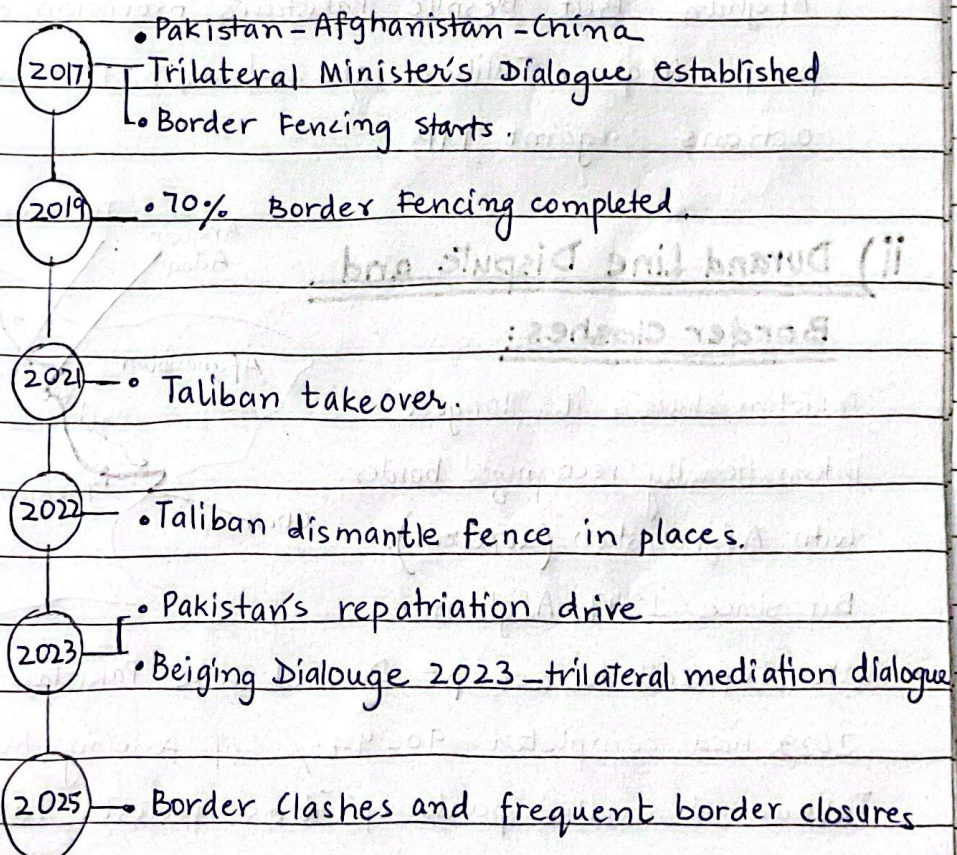


QUESTION: 02:PAK-AFGHAN TENSIONS DESPITE CHINA'S MEDIATION:Introduction:

Pakistan and Afghanistan, despite ~~not~~ having geographical proximity, are facing tensions even after China's mediation there have been ~~no~~ futile. A number of factors play a crucial role in exacerbation of the relation. A short timeline below give an overview of ^{turning points} Pak-Afg relations.



⇒ FACTORS behind Pak-Afghan Reconciliation Failure

i) Cross border terrorism & TTP havens:

Pakistan reports that there has been 65% increase in terror attacks and 500% increase in suicide attacks in Pakistan after Afghan Taliban takeover in Aug. 2021. among which 70% attacks were carried out by TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan), an offshoot of Afghan Taliban.

UN's Analytical support and Sanction overview report confirms the TTP's safe havens in Afghan. But despite Pakistan's provision of proof Afghan Taliban are adamant to take actions against TTP.

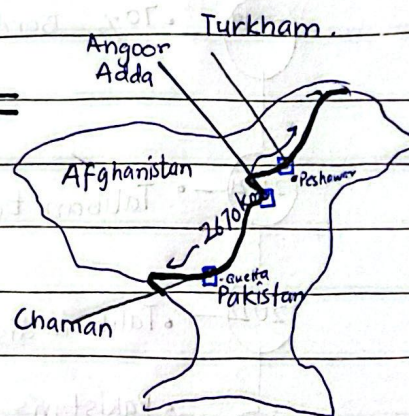
ii) Durand Line Dispute and Border clashes:

Pakistan shares its longest internationally recognized border with Afghanistan (2670 km).

But since 1947 Afghan

have refused to accept Durand line. Pakistan in

2022 had completed 90-94% of fencing but Taliban dismantled parts of it as protest. Pakistan's motive is to tackle other issues like smuggling, illegal border crossing, etc. but Taliban and Afghans consider the border a division between their



ethnic brothers (Pashtun who live Pakistan) and have the desire to form Pashtunistan (including areas across Durand line on Pakistan's side). Borders clashes in Torkham, Angoor Ada and Chaman are a normal now.

iii) Refugee Repatriation drive 2023-24:

Pakistan has been giving shelter to Afghan refugees since 4 decades but in 2023 Pakistan's Apex Committee started Afghan refugee repatriation drive. Motive behind repatriation was internal security of Pakistan as 17% of attacks in Pakistan are caused out by Afghan nationals. Afghanistan considers this a 'collective punishment', as its economy is further going to be strain in efforts to accommodate these much people.

iv) Drug & Smuggling Networks:

According to UNODC 2022, Afghanistan produced 85% of world's opium. But despite Taliban ban on cultivation (yield has dropped 95%) but the stockpiles are still ~~smu~~ trafficked via Pakistan. Stolen expensive products; cars, mobile phones, electronic appliances, etc and other stuff is often smuggled across border to evade law enforcement agencies and custom tax. Dollar smuggling across Durand line contributed to Pakistan's 2022-23 currency crisis.

v) Trade disruption and Transit trade issues:

Trade between Afghanistan & Pakistan dropped from \$2.36 billion to \$1.7 in 2025 before clashes. and has even dropped more due to quotidian

border clashes leading to border closures.

Transit trade issue, re smuggling back of products into Pakistan that are destined for Afghanistan, - to evade custom taxes. Afghanistan has shifted trade routes to Chahbahar port (Iran) and Uzbekistan to reduce reliance on Pakistan.

vi) India's expanding influence:

India pledged \$3 billion development assistance since 2001 and has resumed ~~limited~~ engagements with Taliban via Delhi's 2022 "technical mission". Pakistan's share in Afghanistan market dropped from 33% in 2012 to 21% in 2016 due to new competitors entering Afghanistan's market. Since India re-establishment of relations with Afghan it has been influencing Afghanistan approach against Pakistan.

vii) Divergent Strategic Visions for Region:

Afghan Taliban government seeks autonomy from Pakistan and reject strategic depth concepts. Pakistan expects counter^{er}terror cooperation & border recognition. Taliban's ideological rigidity and Pakistan's conventional state diplomacy create incompatibility.

viii) Weak institutional links:

Pakistan's shifting civil military policy has created ambiguity for Kabul. On the other hand, Taliban's Afghanistan's fragmented power centers create (Khandakzi Taliban Vs. Haqqani) complicate negotiations.

→ Why China hasn't been able to resolve issues:

- China cannot force Taliban to act against TTP, it can influence through economically, not coercively.
- Pakistan wants counter terrorism guarantees but Taliban have clashing ideology and interest on the stance.
- China's priority is preserving investment and protecting Xinjiang, can't prioritize Pakistan's internal security over it.

Ways FORWARD:

i) Joint Cooperation ^{to} Counter Terrorism:

Pakistan and Afghanistan should form a counter ter Joint counter terror action committee (JCCAC) to eradicate terrorism. Create protocols for intelligence sharing regarding terrorist organization like ISKP, TTP, etc.

ii) Bilateral Trade and Border Management:

Mutual recognition of Durand line as international border should be a long-term. But for the short term both

- i) countries should decide protocols for border fencing,
- ii) create green channel for safe humanitarian crossing and
- iii) Create demilitarized zones with joint monitoring.

iii) Normalizing Trade and Economic Integration

- i) Modernization of Torkham and Chaman border posts
- ii) Digitalization of custom and anti smuggling mechanism.

iii) Expansion of Pak-Afghan Transit trade Agreement (^{PATT} ~~PTTA~~) to include other products.

iv) Both countries should aim to restore trade back to \$2.5-3 billion for increased economic integration.

iv) Managing Repatriation:

Both should collaborate and mutually decide repatriation actions to ensure prevent strain on anyone of the countries. In this way and by including international organization in the efforts e.g. UNHCR, the crisis can be managed effectively.

v) Reducing Pakistan-India Spillover:

There should be dialogues between Pakistan and Afghanistan stressing neutrality doctrine and guarantee by Kabul to prevent the usage of its national and soil from harming Pakistan.

vi) Chinese and Regional Support:

Chinese BRI / CPEC Phase-II can integrate Afghanistan through ^{projects like} Kabul-Peshawar motorway, Trans Afghan Railway, Gwadar Kandahar Trade Corridor. Such economic stakes will increase compliance with peace.

vi) Diplomatic arrangement & Soft Power:

Revival of Scholarship program, cross border cultural exchange programs, and other such programs to break the ice and increase person to person interaction and coordination.

Conclusion:

Pakistan Afghanistan tensions persist despite China mediation due to structural deficiencies, Divergent strategic visions, TTP sanctuaries, border dispute, irregulated transit routes, refugee crisis. But through Joint action Plans between Pakistan and Afghanistan on Refugee management and Regulating Trade & to counter terrorism, use of soft power can not only de-escalate the tensions but also have other positive impacts on social, economic, security levels. ~~But~~ And the most important aspect will be a ~~a better, so so~~ progressive region developing and succeeding mutually.