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BATCH : 401

Question - 3

Pak-Afghan Improved?

PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS - ISSUES AND WAYFORWARD

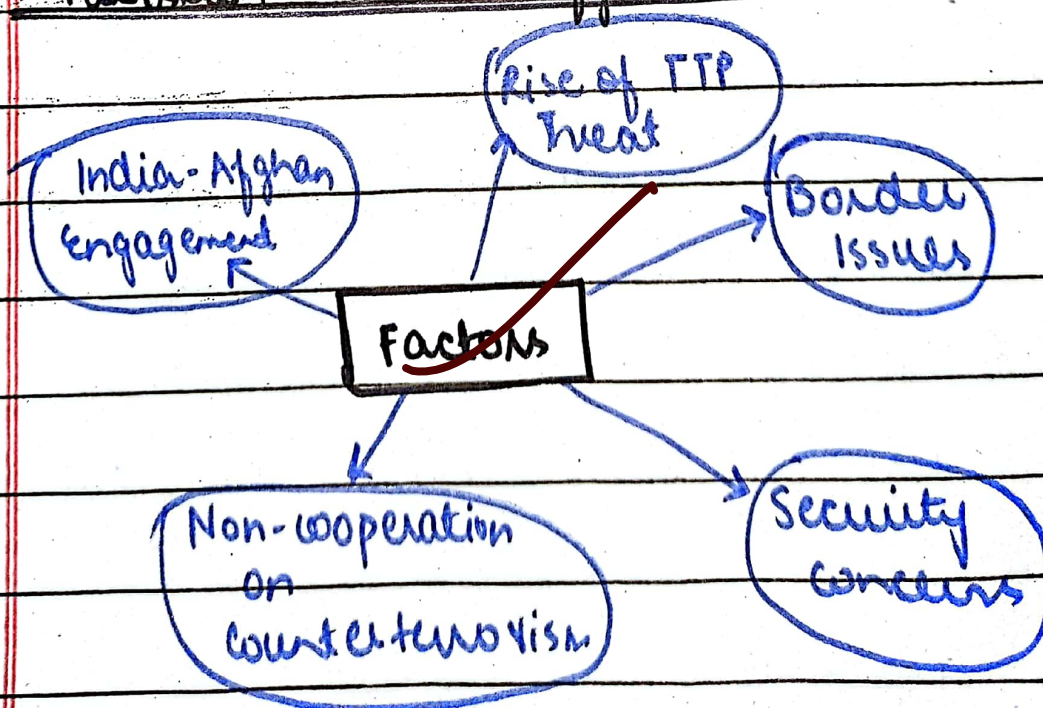
1) Introduction:

From acceptance of Durand line to the extension of CPEC as trilateral agreement, Pak-Afghan relations could never have a sigh of relief. Recently, China tried to mediate the relation between the two countries by extension of CPEC, but still there is a tense situation across the border. There has always been the security issues between the two countries and pragmatic approach is need to have peaceful future.

2) Pak-Afghan Relations Background:

Pakistan and Afghanistan share long, porous border (Durand line) and deep ethnic, cultural and historical ties, particularly with Pashtoon population. Relations have been strained often due to border disputes, refugee crisis and cross-border militancy. Afghan's internal conflicts and Pakistan's security concerns have escalated tensions between the two.

3) Factors Contributing Tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan:



a) Duand Line and Border Management Issues:

Duand Line Dispute is a long standing irritant between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Kabul refuses to accept it as ^{inter}national border leading to repeated clashes and closure of border crossing, disrupting trade and people-to-people contact.

b) Strained Pak-Afghan Relations and Security Concerns: (Rise of TTP Threat)

Pakistan and Afghanistan relations have deteriorated since Taliban returned to power in 2021. Pakistan blames Kabul for sheltering TTP militants responsible for 70% rise in terrorist attacks in 2024. This cross border military threatens Pakistan, China and regional projects.

c) Non-cooperation on Counter Terrorism:

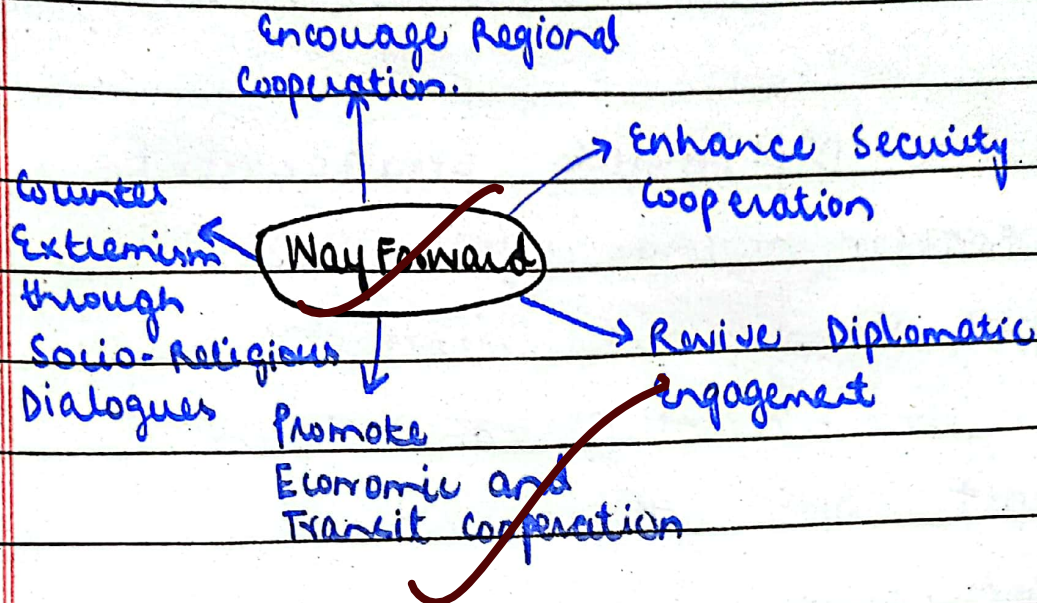
Afghanistan has largely failed to act against militant groups like TTP despite repeated request from Pakistan. Promises by Taliban authorities to disarm have been remained unfulfilled. This non-cooperation has fuel frustration of Pakistan to conduct limited cross-border strikes.

d) Emerging Indo-Afghan Engagement and Pakistan's Concerns:

Recent warming ties between India and Afghanistan raised strategic concerns for Pakistan.

The closer Indo-Afghan relations can undermine its influence on regional security. Pakistan says that such ties should not compromise its own security or bilateral commitments.

4) Ways to Improve Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan:



a) Encourage Regional Cooperation:

Both countries should actively participate in regional platforms like SCO and SAARC. This behaviour can strengthen self sufficiency and reduced reliance on global powers.

b) Enhance Security Cooperation:

Both countries should improve intelligence sharing and border management to curb cross-

border tensions. Joint military dialogues can reduce blame games and misunderstandings.

c) Revive Diplomatic Engagement:

Regular dialogues, high-level visits (just like Pakistani Foreign Minister has done recently) can help build trust and address security concerns.

d) Promote Economic and Trade Cooperation:

Boosting bilateral trade through border markets and transit agreements can uplift both economies. Working on trilateral CPEC agreement seriously by resolving security issues can build strong relations.

B- Dialogue through Socio-Religious Platforms

Joint efforts are needed to dismantle terror network along the border. Scholars, civil societies and religious leaders can promote peace narratives.

5) Conclusion:-

Despite fragile relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan mainly due to security concerns and cross-border militancy, both countries tried to maintain be in good terms. Pragmatic and dialogue based measures are needed for future peace of the two countries.

Question - 2.

18th Recommendations:

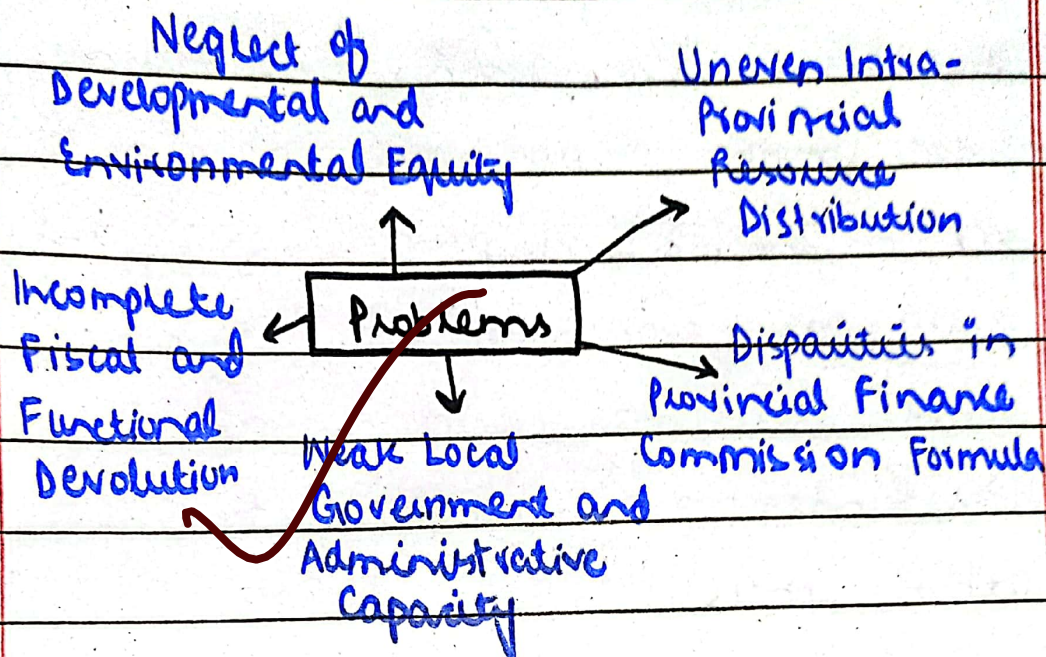
Devolution of power in the context of 7th NFC Awards and 18th Amendment - Problems and Recommendations

1) Introduction:

18th Amendment and 7th NFC

Award are the remarkable milestones towards provincial autonomy and enhancement of administrative powers of the provinces. However, the transfer of authority only remain with provincial level, leaving districts with limited decision-making power. Addressing this shortcoming is necessary to ensure that devolution reaches its targeted beneficiaries.

2) The Problem of True Devolution of Power in 7th NFC Award:



a) Uneven Intra-Provincial Resource Distribution:

7th NFC awards increased provincial shares from 47.5% to 57.5% of the divisible pool, but most funds did not reach districts. 70-75% of spending remained concentrated in the urban centres, leaving peripheral districts underfunded with less than 15% budget reaching local governments (Ministry of Finance 2023)

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(b) Disparities in Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) Formulas:-

Provinces were prioritized differently for fund distributions. Punjab on the basis of population (75%), KPK on the basis of poverty (25%) and Balochistan was ignored. Poor and remote districts received very less funds as compared to urban ones.

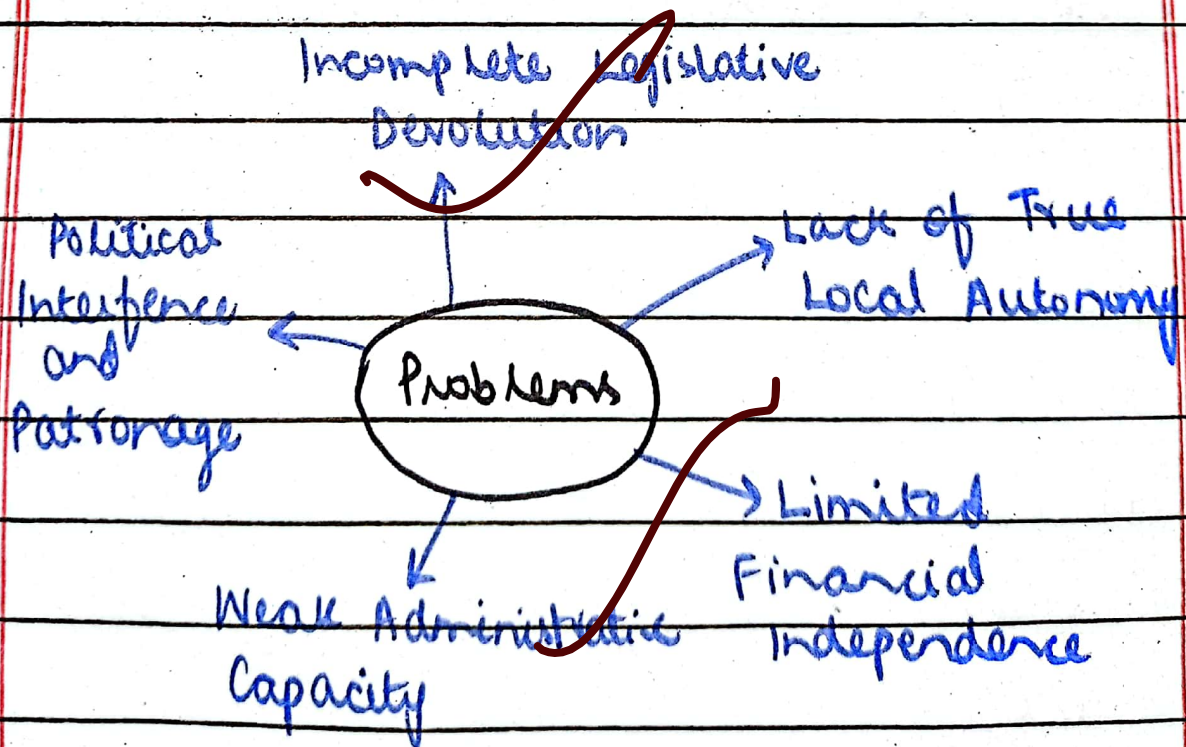
(c) Weak Local Governments and Administrative Capacity:-

According to World Bank Reports 2021, most of the funds in Punjab and KPK remained unutilized. Only 18% of education and 14% of health spending were managed at the district level.

(d) Incomplete Fiscal and Functional Devolution

Despite 17 ministries were transferred to provinces, districts remained weak in autonomy. Provincial bureaucracies controlled key departments and revenue sources were unclear, limiting district independence.

3) 18th Amendment - Problems with Devolution of Power:



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(a) Lack of True Local Autonomy:-

District Nazims could propose budgets according to amendments, but ~~the~~ final approval rested with the provincial finance department. According to ~~PLDAT~~ report 2018, district councils in Punjab and Sindh could only implement provincial directives, only 20-25% of local developmental projects were initiated independently.

(b) Limited Financial Independence:

True devolution requires fiscal autonomy, without which districts are dependent on provincial handouts. World Bank (2016) report shows that over 70% of district level funding comes from provincial transfers.

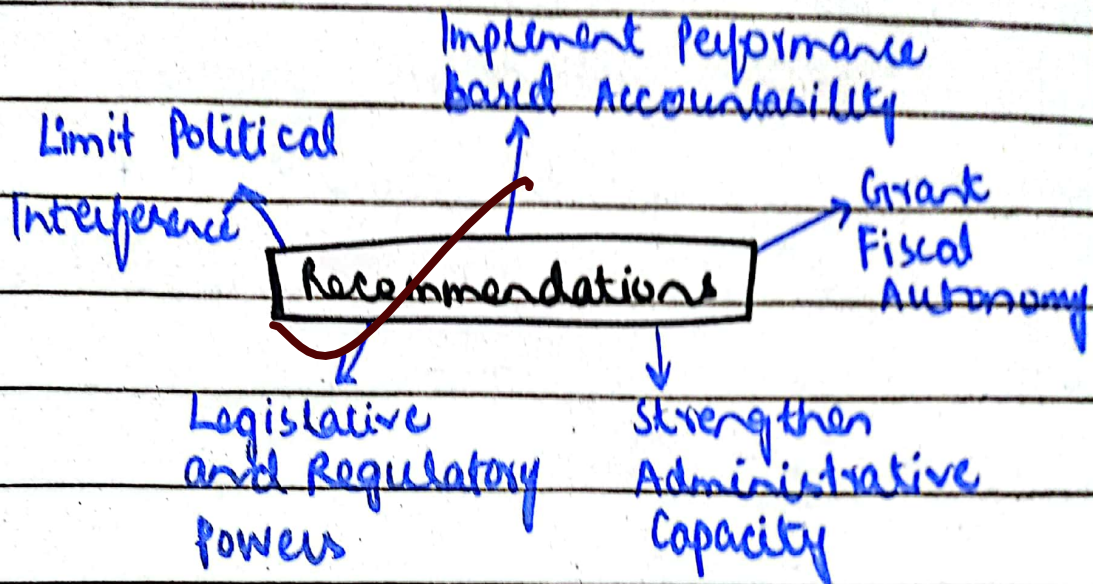
(c) Weak Administrative Capacity:

Even devolved powers fail if districts lack skilled personnel to manage health, education and infrastructure. UNDP (2015) study on local governance found that over 60% of district-level administrative staff lacked formal training in modern public administration.

(d) Incomplete Legislative Devolution:

Districts cannot legislate or create policies, they implement provincial laws only. The Local Government Acts in Punjab and Sindh (2013) confirm that districts can only confirm by-laws, which require provincial approval.

4) Recommendations to Achieve True Devolution Power at District Level:



(A) Grant Fiscal Autonomy to Districts:

Districts should be allowed to collect and spend local revenue.

Financial independence will allow districts to prioritize local developmental projects without provincial delays.

(b) Strengthen Administrative Capacity:

District governments must receive trained bureaucrats, technical staff and capacity-building programs.

(c) Legislative & Regulatory Powers:

District councils should have authority to pass by-laws, regulate local services, and manage minor taxation properly.

(d) Limited Political Interference:

Legal safeguards should be established to prevent arbitrary dissolution or interference by provincial governments.

(e) Implement Performance-Based Accountability:

District governments should be

evaluated on service delivery
and project implementation rather
than political allegiance.

5) Conclusion:

While 18th Amendment and 7th
NFC Award strengthened provincial
autonomy, they failed to ensure
devolution of power to districts.
Without fiscal, legislative, and
political independence, district level
empowerment remains incomplete.

