

~ (P#03) ~

## Pak-Afghan Relations

### Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan Relation have long been oscillated between brotherhood and distrust. From the colonial legacy of the Durand line dispute to the modern challenges of terrorism both the countries have faced security issues and external manipulation. But despite these recurring issues both the countries face similar challenges so cooperation is not a choice, but an absolute necessary necessity. For this purpose, many efforts have been made by Pakistan, China, Qatar and Turkey. However, relations remained tensed even after mediation efforts by China.

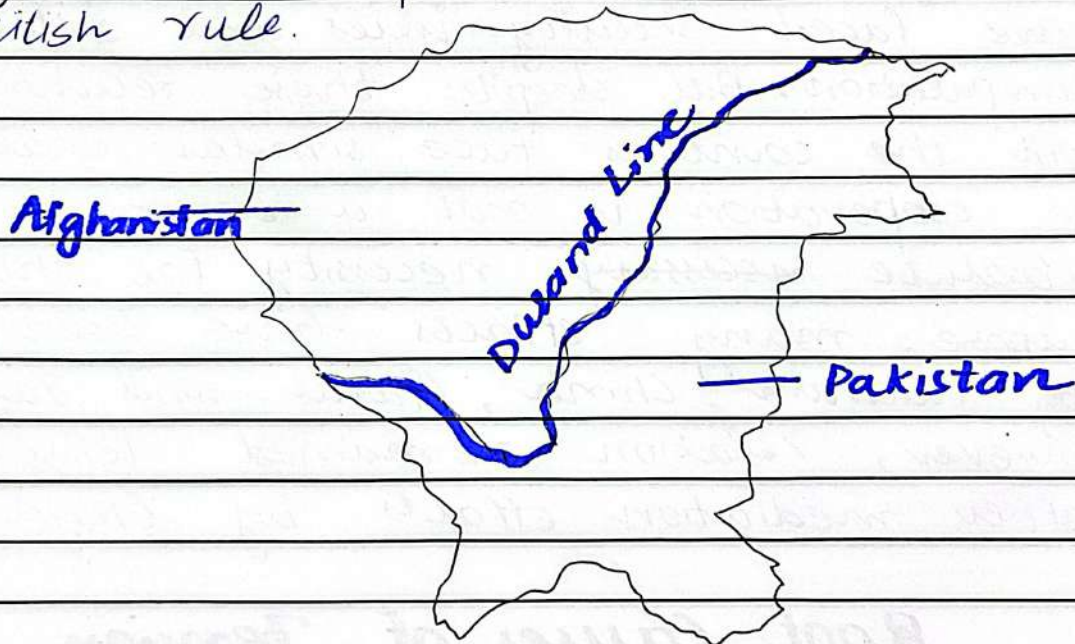
### Root Causes of Tension

#### (i) Durand Line Dispute:

The root cause of tensed relations between the two countries can be traced back to the colonial era when British ruler Lord Mortimer Durand drew an invisible border



between the two countries, dividing the Pashtun tribes across the two regions. This border is called Durand line. Even after this border was never fully accepted by Afghan ruler which ~~created~~ <sup>became</sup> a major source of friction between the two countries. Soon after Independence of Pakistan, Afghanistan started making claims that this agreement expired with the end of British rule.



## (2) Historical Roots of Mistrust

When Pakistan gained independence in 1947, <sup>Afghanistan</sup> Pakistan was the only countries who opposed its entry to the United States. Moreover, during the cold war, Pakistan aligned itself with the Western alliances.



such as CEATO and ~~SENTO~~ SENTO while Afghanistan aligned itself with the Soviet Union. However, this divide deepened further after the 9/11 attacks on US. Pakistan became a front level ally of A<sup>+</sup> US War on Terror, while Afghanistan was ~~e~~ invaded to topple the Taliban regime.

### (3) Irredentism Claims - Pashtunistan

~~Since~~ After independence of Pakistan, Afghanistan government advocated the idea of Pashtunistan - a separate homeland for ethnic Pashtun tribes which directly challenges the territorial sovereignty of Pakistan. However relations further weakened after Daud Khan aggressive campaign which lead to the complete breakdown in diplomatic and trade relations between the two states. In 1961, Iqbal

Rabbani writes that

"Pashtunistan issue born out of Durand Line politics, haunted Pak-Afghan ties for decades."



#### (4) Water Sharing

There is no formal agreement between the two countries over river water usage which result into tensions between the two countries. Pakistan opposes Afghanistan construction of dams over Indus Water tributaries flowing from Afghanistan to Pakistan.

#### (5) Border Management and Refugee Influx

Although this shared topography can be a source of peace, trade and cooperation, yet it leads to migration, illegal trading, terrorism, narcotic influx. Pakistan hosts over 3 million Afghan refugees which is an economical burden.

#### (6) Cross Border Terrorism:

Pakistan warned consistently has reminded Afghanistan government to take firm action against TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan), but Taliban government lack of response increased the security concerns of Pakistan. In 2024 alone, Pakistan has suffered from 500 attacks. Moreover, Indian political



influence in Afghanistan has further heightened Pakistan's security concerns. For this purpose, Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar went to Kabul in May 2025 to resolve the security concern. This visit was followed by China-Pakistan Afghanistan Trilateral meeting in May 2025. However in this meeting, China played a key role as a mediator. ~~but~~ Both the countries decided to resume full diplomatic relations and to extend CPEC to Afghanistan to improve cooperation and connectivity. However ~~a to in 2025~~ in Oct, 2025, border escalations further deepened the divide. A temporary ceasefire agreement was agreed upon in Qatar, but smaller escalations still continued even after that. On 6 Nov, 2025, Turkey held a peace talk with both of them, but during the meeting fresh firing took place which further worsened the relations.

## Policy Recommendations.



## (1) Economic Cooperation

Afghanistan being a landlocked state needs Pakistan's port for trade. Similarly, Pakistan needs Afghanistan for access to central Asian routes.

**Abdul Satar in Pakistan's Foreign Policy states**

**"Afghanistan geography makes it a gateway to Central Asia and a constant security concern for Pakistan"**

Regional projects like TAPI pipeline, CPEC, CASA-1000 requires stable relations with Afghanistan. So both countries should form Joint Economic Commission to increase economic connectivity.

## (2) For Afghanistan Resolving Durand Line Dispute

Afghanistan needs to stop making irredentism claims and for that reason. Durand line dispute should be resolved and Afghanistan needs to honor this agreement because this agreement is in accordance with international law.

## (3) Joint Contextual Economic Framework



Both countries need to form joint monetary system to enhance border management. Joint counter terrorism framework needs to be done. In addition to this, Afghanistan needs to take firm action against TTP and Pakistan needs to keep pushing for peaceful dialogue.

## Conclusion

Despite sharing the same faith, ethnicity and geographical proximity, both countries also have deep historical roots of mistrust. Before resolving those dreams, stability could not be achieved because Pakistan western peace is closely related to Afghanistan with whom it share a 2430 Km.

~(Q#02)~

## Devolution of Power After 18th amendment

### Introduction:



Pakistan's political history is often marked by centralization of powers and weak provincial autonomy. The 1973 constitution was aimed truly federal and democratic in nature, but different military regimes weakened it due to different amendments. The 8<sup>th</sup> amendment under Zia rule and 17<sup>th</sup> amendment under Musharraf rule centralized power and concentrated transformed the system to semi-presidency. So, 18<sup>th</sup> amendment reversed these centralized trends. That's why, it is often called "**negotiated legislative revolution**" because it devolved power to the provinces and local government. However, its implementation faced financial, political hurdles so powers were not devolved to the district level which went against the spirit of devolution.

## **Devolution of Powers - Strengthening Political autonomy**



- Political Autonomy
- Local Government 140A
  - NFC Award 160(3A)
  - Resolution of PA for governor rule 232(4)
  - Abolishment of Concurrent List

To strengthen political autonomy, local government were made necessary under article 140A. In addition to this, in this amendment, <sup>these imp</sup> on reduction of Provincial share in future Awards. which ensured the financial autonomy of ~~star~~ provinces. Resolution of provincial assembly was required to impose Governor Rule. Similarly, 44 subjects which belonged to federal government were devolved to provinces and only 3 subjects remained with the center.

## Challenges in Devolution

### 1) Financial and Fiscal Challenges



Although 18th amendment gave financial autonomy but to

18th amendment gave financial and fiscal challenges to the provincial government. Provinces got new responsible, but not enough funds to exercise that power. Many profitable ministries remained with the federal government and non-profitable ministries were transferred to the ~~federal~~ provincial government. Local governments also faced the same challenges. Many local taxes were abolished like Octroi tax and they had to depend on provincial government who did not give them financial autonomy.

## 2) Political and Bureaucratic Hurdles

Provincial government delayed forming local government which led to the weak service delivery at the grassroots level. Bureaucracy also resisted devolution because they didn't want to be answerable to the local politicians.



### (3) Federal Encroachment and Jurisdictional Overlap:

Federal government recreated many devolved ministries under new names such as for Education and Health which caused confusions. Many provincial & federal institutions like Federal HEC and Provincial HEC had overlapping powers.

### (4) Suggestions for improvement

#### (1) Institutional and political reforms:

Local governments should be made mandatory, not just on papers, but they should be given real political and financial autonomy so that decision making happens at the grassroots levels. Civil society needs to be trained to work in a decentralized model. Local people should be incorporated in local projects to strengthen service delivery at the lowest level.