

QUESTION No. 2

Pak-Afghan Relations

Introduction

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have long been complex due to multiple factors, historical, geopolitical, security concerns and shifting alliances. Despite mediation efforts by China and other regional actors, number of deep-rooted issues continue to cause tension between both countries. Their relations could be improved by security dialogues, border management agreements and engagement through multilateral forums like SCO, OIC, and SAARC.

Major Factors Causing Tensions

1. Cross-border terrorism and militant sanctuaries

Pakistan accuses the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) of using Afghan territory. Since Taliban's return to

power in 2021 to launch attacks inside Pakistan but the Taliban government in Kabul denies harboring militants but has been ineffective in holding back TTP activities. Their ideological and tribal linkages with the TTP.

Complicate enforcement.

2. Durand Line Dispute

Border drawn by British in the colonial era in 1893 remains a major issue because ^{Afghanistan} Pashtun nationalists has never officially recognized the Durand line as an international border. Pakistan on the other hand considers it the de jure and de facto international boundary and ~~fencing it to prevent preventing it~~. Cross-border movements which Kabul sees as a unilaterally.

3. Refugees and Deportations

Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for decades. However, the recent push by Islamabad to forcibly deport undocumented Afghans, citing security concerns, has fueled anti-Pakistan

Sentiments. Kabul sees these deportations as discriminatory, further it is straining bilateral relations.

4. Taliban's Diplomatic Isolation

Current Taliban government is showing greater independence and acts in nationalist rather than pro-Pakistan interests. The Taliban's refusal to curb the TTP has led to sadness to Pakistan.

5. Economic and Trade Barriers:

Border closures and shifting trade policies have hurt Afghan and Pakistani traders. Afghanistan's increasing trade reliance on Iran and Central Asia for trade routes has reduced its dependency on Pakistan, weakening Islamabad's leverage.

6. Influence of External Powers

While China has tried to mediate, its influence is largely economic and limited in the political domain.

India's presence in Afghanistan has long been viewed with suspicion by Pakistan, though it's currently reduced.

How Relations could Be Improved

1. Structured Security Dialogue

Establish a formal security coordination between Taliban government and Pakistani authorities with the facilitation of China, Russia or regional forums like SCO.

2. Border Management Agreements

Joint patrols, biometric entry systems, trade friendly check points could help reduce tensions and violence.

3. Humanitarian Cooperation

Joint humanitarian initiatives could also improve people to people ties.

4. Trade and Economic Integration

Reopen and expand border trade points with smoother transit policies. Promote regional connectivity projects like CASA-1000, TAPI pipeline which incentivize both sides to maintain peace.

5. Engagement through multilateral forums

Utilize platforms like like SCO, OIC, and SAARC for dialogue and regional cooperation.

6. Cultural and Educational Exchanges
Promote academic, cultural and religious exchanges to reduce hostility and foster a better understanding between the populations.

Conclusion

Pakistan - Afghanistan relations remain deeply problematic, rooted in mutual distrust, security dilemmas and unresolved historical grievances.

Mediation by China only be effective when both states pursue interest-

Based approach rather than one guided by ideological rigidities.

Trust building, especially around border security and trade will be helpful for creating a stable and cooperative brotherhood.

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The formation of new provinces in Pakistan has been a recurring and politically sensitive discourse. Proponents argue that new provinces could improve administrative efficiency, bring governance closer to the people, and address ethnic or regional disparities. However, the idea is mired in complex challenges - political, ethnic, legal, and administrative.

Hurdles

1. **Amendment Requirement:** Creation of new province requires a constitutional amendment under Article 239 (4), which mandates a two-third majority in both houses of Parliament and consent from the concerned provincial assembly.
2. **Risk of Balkanization:** Creating provinces along ethnic lines could set a precedent for more separatist demands, potentially destabilizing the federation.

3. **Power Calculations:** Political parties often exploit the issue for electoral gains without a genuine commitment to reforms.

4. **Cost of Governance:** Establishing new provinces require huge administrative infrastructure, new capitals, assemblies, and bureaucracies which entails significant fiscal outlay.

5. **Ambiguity Breeds Conflict:** The absence of a clear roadmap often leads to competing demands and intra-provincial rivalries.

Recommendations

1. **Develop a National Framework for Provinces Formation:-**

Create a federal commission comprising experts, representatives from all provinces, and civil society to propose clear, objective, and transparent criteria for the creation of provinces.

2. **Conduct Consultative Referenda:-**

Where demands are strong, hold referenda under the supervision

of the Election Commission to gauge genuine public support.

This enhances legitimacy and democratic accountability.

3. Strengthening Local Government System:

Empowering local governments can address many grievances of smaller regions without needing new provinces.

4. Promote Political Consensus:

Encourage inter-party dialogue to develop a bipartisan roadmap.

5. Assess Economic Feasibility:

Undertake detailed economic and administrative feasibility studies for proposed provinces.

Conclusion

While the formation of new provinces in Pakistan may offer governance benefits and foster inclusivity, it remains fraught with political, legal, and economic challenges.

A balanced approach, grounded in Constitutionalism, economic rationality, and national unity is crucial. Rather

than viewing new provinces as a panacea. Pakistan must prioritize strengthening federalism and local governance as foundational steps toward genuine decentralization.