

Q:2

TENSIONS IN PAK-AFGHAN

RELATIONS

After The USA and NATO left Afghanistan, and Taliban took control of the Kabul, the relations between Kabul and Afghanistan has really been volatile. It first started from blame game and later on shifted to harsh diplomatic language, closure of border and trade. And now very recently it got escalated to cross-border skirmishes.

Pakistan blames Kabul for facilitating terrorist organisations operating from its land and attack Pakistan time and again. Another concern of Pakistan is increasing influence of India and its intelligence agency RAW in Taliban regime. It has been proved that RAW supports TTP and BLA for their terrorism activities in Pakistan, so presence of these two factors which complement each other (Terrorist organisations and its supporters) in Afghanistan can't be ignored by Pakistan.

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MAJOR FACTORS BEHIND PAK - AFGHAN TENSIONS :-

There are numerous factors which provoke tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some major factors are described below:

- 1- Safe - heavens to TTP and other terrorist organisations :-

TTP ~~is~~ has been freely operating from Afghan soil and using it as a launching pad against Pakistan. The incidents increased many - folds after the Afghan Taliban came to power. Pakistan has always demanded Taliban ~~government~~ government to act against TTP and stop providing them safe - heavens in ~~Pak~~ Afghanistan or else Islamabad would left with no choice but to attack those terror infrastructure and TTP leaders inside Afghanistan. Kabul regime have been reluctant to take any significant action against TTP, so Pakistan had to take charge in order to protect the interests and innocent civilians of Pakistan.

2- Border violations from Afghanistan:

Since Taliban came to power there have been multiple incidents of cross-border firing on Pakistani check-posts. Pakistan have recorded its protests, gave equal kinetic response, and tried to resolve issues ~~to~~ by dialogue.

3- Influence of RAW in Afghanistan:

It has been another point of tension between Islamabad and Kabul. RAW supports terrorists and separatist organization in Pakistan. The growing influence of RAW in Afghanistan adds insult to injury for Pakistan. Because RAW funds and supports terrorism in Pakistan financially and by secret intelligence information & TTP, BLA act according to that to spread wave of terrorism in Pakistan. The presence of both, together, in Afghanistan is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan in order to protect its territorial integrity.

4- Pakistan's operation against illegal Afghan refugees:

It's been another matter of tension, as Kabul has reservation against operation against illegal Afghan refugees living in Pakistan or involving in criminal activities -

WHY TALIBAN GOVERNMENT IS RELUCTANT TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST TTP?

The Taliban government is reluctant to take action against TTP. Kabul has partnered with TTP even at the expense of Pakistani state.

The reasons behind that are:

- Ideological brothers - [Afghan Taliban & TTP]
- To avoid internal conflict.
- If they act against another Jihadi organization (TTP), its own legitimacy would be weakened.
- Past history of fighting war on Terror together.
- Increasing influence of New-Delhi on Kabul.

How Pak-Afghan relations can be improved?

1. Through the on-going dialogue mediated by Qatar and Turkey:

The first round of dialogues has led to ceasefire. Pakistan has agreed to not attack or violate Afghanistan's territorial integrity if Kabul assures it that no cross border terrorism against Pak will take place anymore.

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2. Taliban needs to stop providing safe-heavens to TTP and BLA.

The root cause of all these tensions is the presence of terrorists on Afghan soil. For peace and trade to grow between Pakistan and Afghanistan Kabul must take actions against TTP and BLA.

3. Taliban regime should accept Durand-line as international border:

The ill-timed and absurd statements coming from Taliban regime against border issues and their claim of certain parts of ~~PA~~ Balochistan escalates tensions. Afghan government should act maturely and no such escalatory remarks should be given.

4. Information sharing:

In order to avoid any unfortunate incident or kinetic actions both neighbours should regularly share information at border level and between the capitals in order to curb terrorism & smuggling and build confidence.

Q3.

FORMATION OF NEW PROVINCES DISCOURSE IN PAKISTAN.

The arguments, social media trends and talk shows regarding formation of new provinces are barely out of sight in Pakistan. This debate resurfaces after some time and the same cycle of arguments, debates and hype follows.

Bad Governance : A fuel for debate of new provinces -

After every few months the topic of formation of new provinces re-emerges because of bad governance in existing federating units. It has been implied that the devolution of power to grassroots level can only happen if Pakistan has smaller administrative units, or it is also assumed by certain section that the cause of all miseries and ~~of~~ bad governance is merely large administrative units and not the infantile nature of local government. Although, the truth is that good governance can be achieved only through devolution of power and strengthening of local bodies, not by dividing federating units (provinces).

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HURDLES IN THE WAY OF FORMATION OF NEW PROVINCES :-

1- Federating structure of Pakistan:

Pakistan is not a strictly ~~unitary~~ unitary state. ~~As~~ ^{it} consists of multiple ethnicities and people of different languages and cultures. The governmental structure of Pakistan is federating - The rights are distributed b/w centre and provinces. The centre is ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~alone~~ ^{alone} powerful to cut or join pieces of land as it deems right.

2- Legal Hurdles:

Before dividing any province or establish new provinces - it is required to pass that legislation from that respective provincial assembly by two-third majority.

3- Issues of National unity:

In Pakistan the debates like river system, water share or formation of new provinces spark ethnic divide. The anti-state elements use these debates to fuel anti-state hatred or separationist mindset. So, before any such adventure risk and benefit analysis must be done.

4- Economic Hurdles:

Pakistan is going through rough economic conditions. During these times Pakistan needs austerity measures and formation of new provinces is total opposite of that. New provinces would require new assembly, governor house, civil service, high courts etc.

All of this would not be suitable or possible under rough economic conditions. So the idea of making new provinces is not viable and it would risk national unity without providing any significant benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS:-

- Government needs to empower local bodies to improve governance issues and for greater participation of people. (case in point - local government of Musharraf era)
- Timely local bodies election must happen in all provinces.
- NFC award should be renewed
- Good governance can't be achieved by merely dividing the provinces.
- Government must not ignore the voice & pulse of local population.

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Q:4

Revival of Militancy in KP and Balochistan :-

From ~~2008~~ 2008 to 2016, Pakistan ~~to~~ conducted several military operations to curb militancy i.e. Raah-e-Raast, Raah-e-Nijat, Zarb-e-Azb etc.

Due to the success of these operations militancy decreased significantly, hundreds and thousands of terrorists got killed and many more fled to Afghanistan and Iran but especially to Afghanistan.

~~But~~ As it's an established fact that military can only provide conducive environment for the success of operations, sole military adventure can not be enough. But Pakistan declared early victory after the success of military operations and adopted inconsistent policies. Due to inconsistent policies and some geo-political ~~in~~ developments militancy came back to Pakistan.

Reasons of revival of Militancy:-

1- Taliban coming to power in Kabul:-

The victory of Taliban not only lifted morale of TTP but infact TTP got help on ground. When NATO forces left, they left arms and ammunition worth 7 Billion Dollars - that modern war machinery helped in revival of TTP.

Another aspect was Afghan Taliban facilitating TTP at Afghan land where they can strategize, plan, gather personelle to attack pakistan.

2- Porous border of Ex-FATA region with Afghanistan.

The porous nature of border allows cross-border movements, sharing of information and launching attacks in pakistan.

3- Inconsistent Policies of the state:-

The policies of back to back governments since 2013 till date has been completely opposite to their previous governments. The blame game and shifting

of responsibility is always on the play. A government believed in ~~the~~ dialogues the next did not, one government talked about resettlement of Taliban but the other criticized this approach.

4. Non-existent or weak police :-

The military is not trained in policing lines. Army can't administer cities after a military operation as it causes the movements for protection of rights to emerge.

That's why we need a strong police force, well equipped and well financed to establish & maintain law and order after successful military operations -

Recommendations :-

1. Intelligence based operations :-

Instead of wiping out operations which disturbs or expels the whole local population from their area, Pakistan should go for Intelligence based operations. Its benefits are ;

- low collateral damage.
- less grievances of local population.
- increase rate of success.

2- Comprehensive approach to curb militancy :

Pakistan should use both soft and hard power in order to curb militancy completely. State should not spare the terrorists involved in killing of civilians but it can engage those who ~~are~~ have newly joined because of their grievances against the state or due to propaganda and brain-wash from enemies -

3- Consistent and proactive policies :

In the past, governments have been dealing with militancy with inconsistent approaches. The debates like good vs. bad Taliban should be forgotten and state should act against all militants in the same manner -

Temporary military victory should not be considered eternal but after the operation government should indulge in complete annihilation of terrorists, infrastructure development, uplifting of economic conditions and regulation of syllabus of Madarrasa.