

Q Pakistan - Afghan relations continue to remain tense even after mediation by China. What do you think are major factors and how could it be improved.

STRAINED PAK - AFGHAN RELATIONS:

INTRODUCTION:

The relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been on a roller coaster since its inception. Both countries have been the playground for ~~super~~ super powers either at forefront or from a distance. Despite, the cultural and religious ties, and geographical proximity, Pakistan and Afghanistan has never seen long lasting friendly relations. This is mainly due to some deep rooted, unsolved geographic disputes and ~~the~~ the difference of opinion over the atrocities of militants that works under the cover of the intern Taliban regime. This along with a number of other factors can be attributed to the strained relations of the two Nations.

Tone of recent Pak-Afghan relations:

Since the takeover of Taliban of Afghanistan in 2021, Pakistan has viewed a surge in the terrorist activities. From 2024-2025, almost 2400 civilians have been killed in Pakistan. These terrorist attacks are attributed to TTP - Taliban Pakistan - a banned terrorist group. Pakistan has accused the TTP for using Afghan's soil against Pakistan. Pakistan has involved Afghan government on many platforms for cooperation against TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan has repeatedly provided covers to the banned groups, posing a challenge to Pakistan's security and stability. Afghanistan Taliban are violated a key point of the Doha Agreement, 2021 which states:

"Afghanistan will not let its soil be used for terrorist activities against any country."

3 China's mediation in Pak-Afghan relations and its outcome,

Pakistan has involved its diplomatic allies of both the countries to curb the menace of cross border terrorism. China's foreign Minister's visit to Afghanistan assured to stick to Doha Agreement's principles but its approach was per based on fallacy - contradicting reality. Moscow Summit (2025), where China, Russia, Pakistan and Tajikistan persuaded efforts for tackling cross border terrorism against neighbours.

The stability of Afghan and Pakistan's relations guarantees the stability of the entire region.

Moeed Yousuf

(Security Analyst)

4 Major Factors of strained relations:

1 Historical Grievances:

Durand line dispute

Cold War bitterness.

- 2 Inflexible and rigid Taliban government.
- 3 Ideological brotherhood with TTP.
- 4 Lack of cooperation on security measures.
- 5 Refugee issue tensing the relations.

Major factors for tense relations.

1 Historical grievances.

Durand Line.

Afghanistan do not accept the internationally accepted Durand Line border of 1893.

Accepting the Durand line will question their legitimacy as true rulers of Afghanistan.

This allows Afghanistan to non cooperation

over border fencing on the deadliest long

border. Unfenced border allows the

insurgents to carry out terrorist activities

in Pakistan and take back sanctuaries

in Afghanistan.

Border Fencing in a peaceful manner

will not be possible without solving the

Durand Dispute. (DW News)

1 Cold War bitterness: no room for them

The banned TTP was a production of US - allied by Pakistan to help curb USSR's occupation in Afghanistan. Banning them for a while out of use hurts the Afghanistan Taliban's sentiments.

2 Inflexible and rigid Taliban Govt

Cooperation with Taliban is a serious task because of their rigid and inflexible nature often taught by and learnt from Madrasa culture. Their false gratification over defeating major superpower boost their ego. They are of the view that the world should align themselves with their requirements. This attitude little room for cooperation.

3 Ideological brotherhood with TTP:

TTP and Afghan Taliban may have different approaches but their ideologies are the same. This sympathized relationship isn't in favour of the neighbouring countries.

"TTP and Afghan Taliban are two peas of the same pod."

3 Lack of Cooperation on Security measures:

Afghanistan's lack to innovation and technology coupled with poor or negligible intelligence leaves little room for cooperation on security measures. Lack of information sharing on terrorist activities makes for the security challenges.

"Only through data sharing and security cooperation can the terror be eliminated."

4 Refugee Issue - working as petrol on fire:

The repatriation of unregistered Afghans have sparked the tense relations. Pakistan cannot progress with the economic and social burden of refugees that are now a direct threat to the security as well.

On the other hand, Afghanistan's current position can not allow arrangements for the settlement of these refugees. This has further tense the Pak-Afghan relations.

5 Ways of improvement:

- Solution for historical skirmishes.
- Joint security ventures.
- Cooperation in trade and energy sectors.
- Multilateral agreements with regional partner for security.
- Cooperation on border fencing.
- Joint measures for efficient refugee repatriation.

6 Conclusion,

It is high time Pakistan diffuse the tense relations with Afghanistan and vice versa. They stability will not only ensure peace on the border but in the entire region. The cultural and religious ties can be harnessed for good relations. Calculated ~~strategic~~ steps must be taken by Pakistan to prevent the fall of Afghanistan into the India's patronship as Pakistan cannot afford threat from both sides.

Q The formation of new provinces is a recurring discourse in Pakistan. Critically evaluate the hurdles and give recommendations.

FORMATION OF NEW PROVINCES

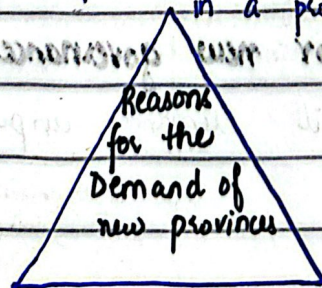
Introduction:

While Pakistan has started breathing without ventilators, once again in economic terms, the recommendations to reform the governance structure is offered on the plates. Pakistan since its inception has been divided into four units — eliminating the one unit concept and the cause of east Pakistan. Of all the people that are of the idea that new provinces can be a new dawn to the Darkest of Pakistan's night, little do they know the hurdles and apprehensions associated with new Provinces. While it is evident that the current setup is not in favour of progress but is the creation of new provinces the only solution to the cause?

2. New provinces - A recurring discourse

When the concept of new provinces is brought up, examples of India's (32) thirty-two and America's fifty (50) provinces are given. It is often quite difficult to administratively control over 250 million people in 4 provinces and two administrative units. The far flung areas are often neglected of progress while the cities enjoy. This has created a rift between neglected and flourishing cities. For instance, in Punjab, Lahore is promised to be the Paris whereas Mandi Bahaudin, Bahawalnagar like cities are neglected. Same is the case with the other provinces. Local bodies are often eliminated from governance, leading to poor public service. Revenue generation of provinces is also very poor due to lack of competition.

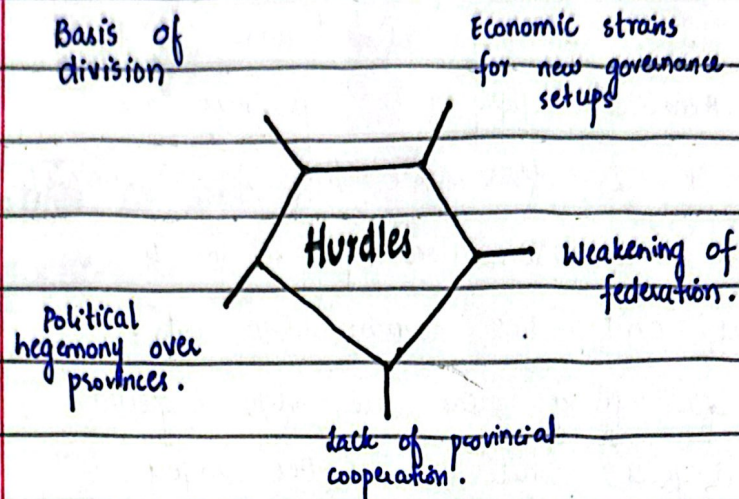
Unequal resource distribution in a province.



Lack of competition between provinces.

limited revenue generation and lack of progress of the current provinces.

Hurdles in the creation of Provinces



1. Basis of division :

The biggest hurdle will be the basis of division. Ethnicity as a base will further incorporate divide, leaving little room for nationalism of the whole state.

On the basis of language will pose danger to the some of the already existing big cities which will create a ~~threat~~ chaos. Thus division will remain a tussle between the new provinces.

2. Economic strain for new governance setups:

New provinces will demand unproductive

expense which the country is unable to afford in the current economic scenario.

The demand for new infrastructure, security, parliament and ministers will fall heavy on the countries pocket.

"New provinces will come with a lot of unproductive strain on the economy."

— Kamran Khan

(Journalist)

3. Weakening of federation:

The demand and information will cause the fabric of national integration one way or the other. Without proper mechanism for centre provincial relations the new provinces will pose threats to the federation. Pakistan saw serious threats with four provinces, ~~and they are~~ further ethnically or linguistically will call for weak centre ~~to~~ province relations.

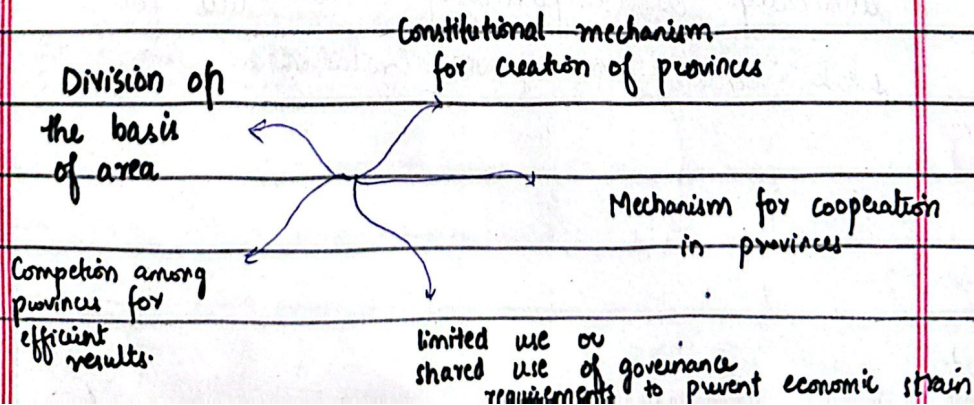
4 Political hegemony over the provinces.

The current setup has seen every province as a property of one ruling party. In order to pass the bills of new provinces, the two third majority cannot be obtained as the ministers of the ruling party will not like the idea of seeing their power split. Hence, without national consensus or political unity the (federation) of provinces seems a distant dream.

5 Lack of provincial cooperation.

New mechanism of cooperation will be required to work on collective targets such as climate, education, health and security.

Recommendations:



Conclusion:

The creation of new provinces is an elusive dream but not an impossible one.

Only through efficient measures like national consensus, mechanisms of power distribution and confidence for new start can make it a possible goal.

"The current setup for governance in Pakistan is suicidal."

Ghurat Hussain

(Economist)

Q: Pakistan and Saudi has signed a defense pact.

Critically evaluate its causes and implications.

Pakistan-Saudi Defense Pact:

Introduction:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has a history of cooperation over a range of subjects — thanks to the religious connectivity. Pakistan has offered security to Saudi Arabia on a number of events mainly in 1979 when the Hajj Terminal was occupied,

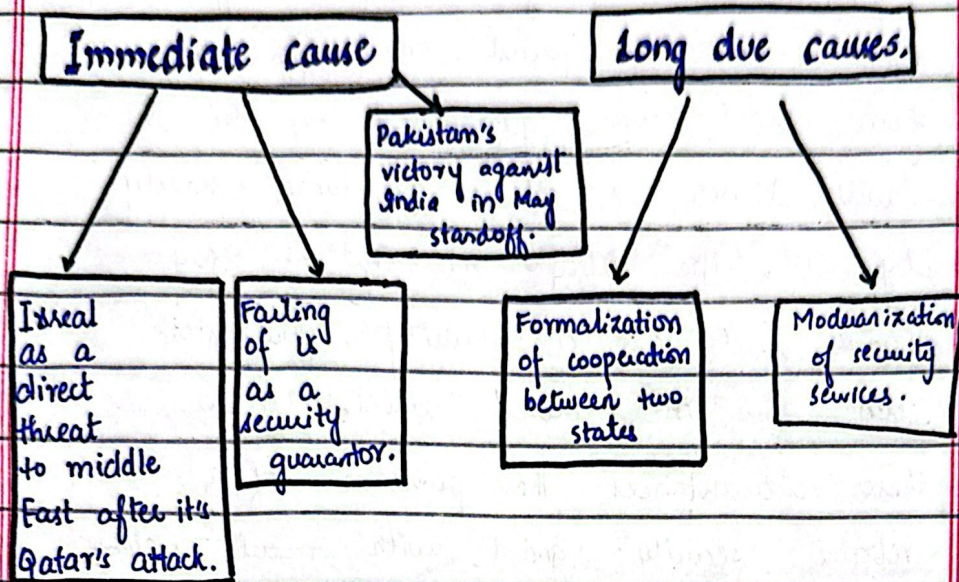
Similarly Saudi Arabia has also extended cooperation on economic & diplomatic fronts. However, the pact has never been formalized before. The age recent agreement will raise their relationship to new heights of cooperation and brotherhood.

Strategic Mutual Defense Pact:

The leadership of Pakistan signed this pact on 17th Sept. 2025 in the capital city Riyadh. This was a long ^{due} ~~new~~ agreement between the two states but it came at a time of geopolitical warmth when Israel has attacked Qatar, posing a threat to the entire middle east. Its main provision is similar to Article 5 of the NATO charter. The ^{substantive} ~~substantial~~ ^{main} line of the agreement is,

"An attack on one state will be considered an attack on the other".

3 Causes of the Pact



Immediate cause:

a Israel's attack on Qatar:

Israel attacked its ally Qatar under the cover of hitting Hamas leaders. This created a reign of terror in the entire region. Saudi Arabia needed a reliable security guarantor to tackle the imposed threat.

The sword of terror loomed

over the heads of the entire

middle East with Israel's

attack on Qatar.

(Middle East Institution)

2 Failure of US as a security guarantor:

Qatar is a long term US ally. Its protection against any aggression from Israel was guaranteed by the US. Saudi Arabia is offered the same amnesty by US. The attack on Qatar's soil failed US as a security guarantor even for the closest allies. Under these circumstances the provision of a reliable security guard, with nuclear power - was fulfilled by Pakistan.

Long due causes:

1 Formalization of cooperation:

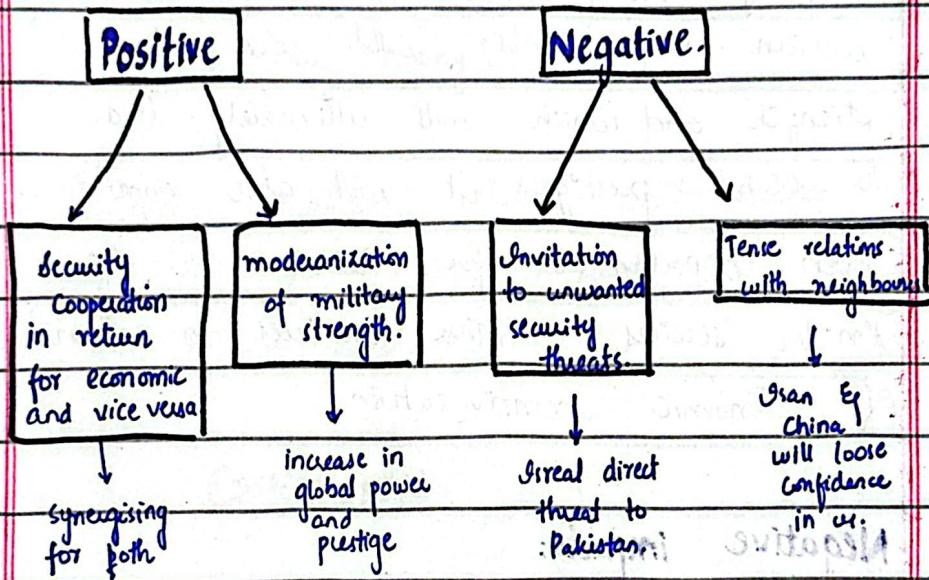
Pakistan and Saudi has been decade long friends but the need for formalization was always there. This pact is a way towards strengthening economic, diplomatic and security ties between the two countries.

2 Modernization of security services:

Pakistan's security in terms of military tactics and power is beyond satisfactory.

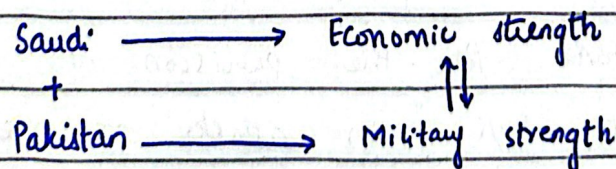
Only through modernization, can the power rise to new heights. In such times, Saudi Arabia can offer economic cooperation which Pakistan can utilize in its best service.

Implications of this cooperat pact:



Positive impacts: desert between of military

Security and economic cooperation.



Pakistan's military cannot work efficiently

without economic strength, similarly, Saudi's economic strength cannot guarantee its security. Hence, getting into a pact is beneficial for both.

2. Modernization of military strength:

Aligning our military with modern western requirements will raise our strength and which will ultimately lead to global prestige. It will also open opportunities for Pakistan to offer similar services to other countries in return of economic incentivization.

Negative impacts:

1. Invitation to unwanted threats:

Israel, once an indirect threat, can now ~~be~~ ~~seen~~ pose a direct threat to Pakistan. As the provision of the pact says, "An attack on one country, will be an attack on the other." Israel can use the already

agitated India to pose challenges for us.

2. Tense relations with neighbours:

Saudi - ^{being} because a staunch US ally can make China question its relation with Pakistan. It can be rightly said:

"The friend of your enemy is my enemy".

Similarly, Pakistan's relation with ~~China~~ Iran can strain as Saudi and Iran share deep enmosity.

CONCLUSION:

The Saudi-Pakistan Pact is indeed a great step in the relations of the two countries. This pact can be a benefit to both the countries only that through vigilant, incremented and clear foreign policy.

'This pact has unlocked new horizon of cooperation between the two reliable friends.'

Khawaja Asif
(Director, Ministry of Pakistan)