

Part - II

Q. 2. Answer:

↳ Pak - Afghan Relations : challenges and Pathways to Improvement.

Pak-Afghan relations have historically been complex and fragile, and despite mediation efforts by China, tensions continue to persist. The strained relationship is shaped by historical grievances, security concerns, ethnic and political complexities, and the influence of regional and global powers. Understanding these factors is essential to identify practical measures for improving bilateral ties.

Major Factors Contributing to Tension

- Security concerns and Cross-Border Militancy

A primary source of tension stems from security threats and militant activity along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Pakistan has repeatedly expressed concerns over terrorist groups operating from Afghan territory, including factions that target Pakistani security forces and civilians. Conversely, Afghanistan has accused Pakistan of supporting proxy groups that destabilize Afghan territory. This cycle of

mutual suspicion continues to prevent trust-building, as both sides perceive each other as a potential threat rather than a partner.

- Border Disputes : The Durand Line Issue

The Durand Line, demarcating the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan, has been a longstanding point of dispute. Afghanistan has historically refused to fully recognize this border, claiming it divides ethnic Pashtun communities. Repeated border closures, checkpoints, and restrictions on movement further aggravate tensions, affecting trade, travel, and bilateral relations.

- Ethnic and Political Divides

Both countries share a significant Pashtun population across the border, creating overlapping ethnic and cultural ties. Political divisions within Afghanistan - among the Taliban, various factions, and former government officials - also complicate relations with Pakistan. Different political allegiances influence how Kabul interacts with Islamabad, often linking domestic Afghan politics with bilateral disputes.

- Influence of External Powers

The role of regional powers - India, China, Iran, and the United States significantly affects Pak-Afghan relations. India's engagement in Afghanistan is often perceived by Pakistan as a strategic challenge, while China's mediation is seen as constructive but limited unless backed by both countries' political will. U.S. involvement, especially in military operations, historically added layers of complexity to the bilateral relationship.

- Refugee and Humanitarian Concerns

Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for decades. While they contribute to labour and cultural exchange, their presence also brings economic, social, and ~~future~~ security challenges. Disputes over repatriation, legal status, and humanitarian aid have occasionally escalated into diplomatic friction.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Enhance Bilateral Dialogue and Trust-Building

Sustained high-level diplomatic engagement is essential. Pakistan

and Afghanistan should establish regular dialogue mechanisms, focusing on security, trade, and migration. Confidence-building measures, such as joint border patrols, hotlines for crisis management, and transparency in intelligence-sharing, can reduce misunderstandings.

- **Collaborative Counterterrorism Initiatives**

Joint counterterrorism measures, including intelligence-sharing and coordinated operations would directly address mutual security concerns.

By demonstrating cooperation against extremist groups, both nations can gradually build trust in each other's commitment to peace.

- **Border Management and Infrastructure Projects.**

Investments in border infrastructure, legal trade corridors, and people-to-people exchanges can ease tensions. Economic collaboration, such as joint markets and road networks, encourages interdependence and reduces friction over territorial disputes.

- **Regional Engagement and Mediation.**
Leveraging China's mediation and

DATE: ___/___/___

regional organisations like the Shanghai cooperation organisation (SCO) could create multilateral pressure and incentives for cooperation. Regional forums help include third-party stakeholders, ensuring that solutions are balanced, sustainable and internationally supported.

- Humanitarian Cooperation on Refugees
Establishing a joint framework for Afghan refugees, including voluntary and safe repatriation programs, access to education, and healthcare, can reduce social and economic pressures on Pakistan and ease bilateral tensions. Collaborative humanitarian programs signal goodwill and responsibility-sharing.

↳ Conclusion:

In conclusion, Pak-Afghan relations are shaped by historical legacies, security dilemmas, ethnic ties, and regional geopolitics. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted and patient approach emphasizing mutual respect, regional cooperation, and consistent dialogue. While China's mediation provides an important platform, sustainable peace can only be achieved ~~by~~ when

both countries demonstrate Political Will, Prioritize Security collaboration, and engage in economic and humanitarian Cooperation. If Implemented carefully, these measures have the potential to transform a cycle of mistrust into constructive partnership, benefiting not only Pakistan and Afghanistan but also the stability of the South Asian region.

↳ Q.3. Answer:

The demand for new provinces in Pakistan is not new, it resurfaces whenever issues of Poor governance, regional inequality, and ethnic marginalisation dominate public discourse. While smaller administrative units could improve governance and representation, political, constitutional, and economic hurdles have prevented progress.

Major Hurdles

- Constitutional and Legal Barriers under Article 239 (4) of the 1973 Constitution, altering provincial boundaries or creating new provinces requires.
- A two-thirds majority in both National Assembly and Senate, and

- Approval by the concerned Provincial assembly with a two-thirds vote. This makes consensus extremely difficult. For instance, repeated efforts to create a South Punjab Province have stalled due to lack of agreement in the Punjab Assembly.
- **Political Resistance**
Political parties often use the issue for electoral rhetoric but resist implementation. The PML-N fears losing dominance in Punjab if it is divided, while Sindhi nationalists reject any idea of carving Sindh, viewing it as an attack on Sindhi identity. Similarly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hazara community faces political neglect - despite long-standing demands for the province.
- **Ethnic and Linguistic Sensitivities**
Demands for new province also follow ethno-linguistic lines rather than administrative logic. The Saraini movement in South Punjab, Hazara movement in KP, and calls for urban Sindh provinces reflect identity politics. Without careful handling, such demands can deepen ethnic divisions, as seen in the 1971 East Pakistan crisis, where political

alienation led to Separation.

- Financial and Administrative Challenges.

creating new provinces involves massive costs - new capitals, assemblies, bureaucracies, and

courts. According to Planning Commission (2023) assessment, even one new province will cost over Rs. 250 Billion in initial setup.

In Pakistan's weak economic conditions, such projects risk straining the federal budget and delaying development priorities.

- Lack of Political will and continuity

Political promises rarely translate into action. PTI's 2018 manifesto

pledge to create South Punjab within 100 days but only set up a symbolic Secretariat in Multan

and Bahawalpur without real authority or budgetary control.

Such token steps erode public trust and show absence of sustained political will.

- ↳ Case Examples

- South Punjab Region makes 42% of Punjab's population but receive less than 20% of development

DATE: ___/___/___

Funds (Punjab Budget Report, 2021).

Although a South Punjab Secretariat was created in 2020, its officers still report to Lahore, exposing the hollow nature of decentralization.

- **Hazara Province Movement:**

Sparked after the 2010 renaming of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hazara residents felt their identity erased. Repeated protests highlight the need for recognition and administrative fairness, but lack of Provincial Consensus blocks progress.

Recommendations

- **Strengthening Local Governance**

Efficient devolution under Article 140-A can address administrative inefficiency without redrawing maps. Empowering local bodies in budget control, service delivery, and policing would reduce pressure for new provinces.

- **Build Consensus Through Dialogue.**

A National Commission on Administrative Reforms should be established, including political parties, civil society and provincial representatives, to evaluate proposals based on governance need, not ethnic or political motives.

- **Pilot Administrative units.**

Instead of immediate Provincial Status, regions like South Punjab and Hazara could start as a autonomous administrative Zones with defined fiscal powers.

If Successful, they can later evolve into provinces.

- Ensure Economic Viability

Before creation, each proposed province should undergo a fiscal feasibility assessment focusing on revenue potential, resource base, and infrastructure cost. Economic viability must precede political approval.

- Promote Equity and Integration.

The debate must focus on governance efficiency and equity, not ethnicity. A fair resource allocation formula under the NFC Award should ensure all regions, existing or new, receive equitable shares of federal funds.

↳ Conclusion:

Creating new provinces in Pakistan can improve governance, representation, and regional equality but only

~~strengthening~~ ~~and~~ ~~economic~~ ~~but~~ ~~too~~.
~~strengthening~~ if pursued wisely.

without consensus, financial planning, and administrative readiness, it risks political instability

DATE: ___/___/___

and economic burden. Strengthening local governance, transparent dialogue, and focusing on genuine administrative reform. Not ethnic boundaries should be the first step.

Only through inclusive decision making and sincere devolution can Pakistan transform the demand for new provinces into an opportunity for stronger federalism and national cohesion.
