

Pakistan and Afghanistan Relations

Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan are **neighboring Muslim countries** that share a long border, religion, and culture.

Even though both nations have many things in common, their political relations have often remained **tense and complicated**.

The main reason behind these problems is the **border dispute**, political misunderstandings, and interference of other powers.

After Pakistan's independence in 1947, Afghanistan was the **only country that voted against Pakistan's entry into the United Nations** because it did not agree with the border (Durand Line). Since then, both countries have had periods of both friendship and tension.

The Border Dispute (Durand Line Issue)

The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is called the **Durand Line**, which was fixed in **1893** during British rule in India.

After Pakistan became independent, Afghanistan **refused to accept the Durand Line** as the official border.

Afghanistan started supporting a movement called "**Pashtunistan**," demanding a separate country for Pashtuns living in Pakistan's border areas.

This created **serious political tension** between both nations.

The Durand Line issue became the **main cause of conflict** between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It led to **border clashes, propaganda, and mistrust**.

Because of this dispute, both countries could not build a strong and friendly relationship for many years.

Efforts by Iskander Mirza (1956–1958)

President **Iskander Mirza** tried to improve relations with Afghanistan during his time in office.

He believed that both countries should live peacefully as **Muslim brothers**.

He reopened trade routes like **Torkham and Chaman** and allowed border markets to work again.

He also encouraged **diplomatic and cultural exchanges** to reduce tension.

Iskander Mirza's efforts were a **positive step** towards peace and cooperation.

However, his government ended soon after, and the **efforts could not continue**.

Even though it was a short time, his policy helped reduce some hostility between both nations.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Policy (1971–1977)

After the separation of East Pakistan, **Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto** tried to make friendly ties with Afghanistan.

He wanted to build **economic and cultural relations** and encouraged cross-border trade. But Afghan leader **Daoud Khan** again raised the **Pashtunistan issue** and accused Pakistan of interfering in Afghan affairs.

In response, Bhutto secretly supported **Afghan Islamic groups** who opposed Daoud Khan's government.

Bhutto's policy was a **mixture of peace and defense**.

He tried diplomacy but also made sure that Pakistan's security was protected.

Although his efforts did not create lasting friendship, they **increased Pakistan's influence** in Afghan politics.

Zia-ul-Haq and the Soviet Invasion (1979–1988)

In **1979**, the **Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan**, and this changed the whole situation.

General **Zia-ul-Haq**, the military ruler of Pakistan, decided to support the **Afghan Mujahedeen** (fighters) who were resisting the Soviet occupation.

Pakistan received **help from the United States and Saudi Arabia**, and millions of **Afghan refugees** came to Pakistan.

Pakistan became a **frontline country** in the Cold War.

Pakistan's role made it **very important internationally**, but it also brought **big problems**.

Refugees, illegal weapons, and drugs entered Pakistan.

The Afghan war made Pakistan's border areas unsafe, and **terrorism and extremism** began to rise.

Still, Pakistan helped Afghanistan fight for independence.

Benazir Bhutto and the Rise of the Taliban (1988–1996)

After the Soviets left Afghanistan, there was **civil war** among different Afghan groups.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto supported the **Taliban**, a new group that promised peace and unity.

Pakistan helped the Taliban because it wanted a **friendly and stable government** in Afghanistan.

In **1996**, when the Taliban took control of Kabul, Pakistan was one of the **first countries to recognize** their government.

Benazir's policy was based on the idea of "**strategic depth**," meaning Pakistan wanted a strong friend on its western border.

At first, it seemed successful, but later it caused **international criticism** and linked Pakistan with **extremist groups**.

This policy had both **advantages and long-term problems**.

Present Situation and Impact

Even today, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are **not very smooth**.

The **Durand Line dispute** is still unresolved, and both sides **blame each other** for border

problems.

The long Afghan war created **refugee, security, and terrorism issues** inside Pakistan.

However, both countries still share **deep cultural, religious, and trade connections**.

Peace can only come if both nations **trust each other** and focus on **economic and educational cooperation** instead of political conflict.

Stability in Afghanistan is very important for **peace in Pakistan and South Asia** as a whole.

Conclusion

Pakistan and Afghanistan are **close neighbors and Muslim brothers**, but their relationship has always been **up and down**.

From the **Durand Line issue** to the **war against the Soviets** and the **Taliban period**, their history is full of challenges.

For a peaceful future, both nations must **respect each other's borders**, stop interference, and **work together for development and stability**.