

# PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*'Study the past and you would define the future.'*  
Confucius



**Major General  
Malik Amir Muhammad Khan  
Serving General Officer**

## Abstract

Due to geographical contiguity, Pakistan and Afghanistan are interdependent on each other and their bilateral relations affect regional stability, growth, security, integrity and global peace. Historically, their relations have been strained due to divergence of stance on various bilateral issues. The common security and economic challenges, shared faith, ethnic and cultural similarities could not help restore trust between the two states which helped India to interfere and disrupt the bilateral engagement. The bilateral mistrust developed during partition of India, when Afghan government demanded accession or separation of Pashtun tribal areas and revoking of Durand Line. Failing in its demands, Afghanistan voted against Pakistan's membership in the UN in 1947 and consistently opposed Pakistan at regional and global level. Bilateral issues were exploited as political tools against Pakistan to incite public support which mired mutual cooperation. On the contrary, Pakistan supported Afghanistan during troubled times, extended economic facilitation and pursued reconciliation. Scholars believed that the rise of Afghan Taliban in August 2021 would ensure improved bilateral relations between the two states however, the disconnect further exacerbated on the issues of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), repatriation of unregistered Afghan refugees, illegal trade, huge outflow of foreign currencies, particularly USD and border management. The article will evaluate Pakistan-Afghanistan relations in historical context, identify bottlenecks and explore mutual cooperation avenues leading to certain policy recommendations for durable regional peace and stability.

## Keywords

Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bilateral Relations, Disputes, Stability.

## Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two Muslim neighbouring countries with strategic geo-contiguity and shared security and economic future. Their interdependence is further cemented by common religious faith, ethnicity, regional and global interests. Despite converged interests and common challenges, their bilateral engagement is marred by mutual mistrust and disputes.<sup>1</sup>

The mutual mistrust has its roots in the pre-partition British era when in 1893 'Durand Line Agreement' was signed between the British India and Afghanistan, demarcating international border between the two states. At the time of partition of Indian subcontinent, Afghan government demanded revoking of the border, accession of tribal region or establishment of a separate state for Pashtuns. Failing in fulfillment of its demands, Afghanistan opposed Pakistan's entry into the United Nations (UN) in September 1947.<sup>2</sup> Though the negative vote was withdrawn and diplomatic relations were established in 1948, the move, however severely damaged bilateral relations. Since independence, Afghanistan has consistently interfered in Pakistan's internal affairs and incited its people on the issues of 'Pashtunistan' and international border.

Diplomatically, Afghanistan supported India's anti-Pakistan stance and projected Pakistan as a security threat for its sovereignty. It joined Soviet Russia and India in protesting against United States (US) military support for Pakistan in 1955 and its entry into Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Afghan government presumed that reinforcement of Pakistan would imbalance the regional security paradigm and encourage interference in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's strategic location at the cross roads of Central and South Asia has been imperative for regional peace and security. It has been confronted with multifarious challenges including political instability, civil unrest, power struggle and foreign intervention which has damaged the social and economic fibre of the Afghan society. The announcement of Jihad against Soviet invasion in 1979 and the concentration of Muslim fighters from around the world further undermined Afghanistan and regional stability. Pakistan extensively supported Afghan Jihad to preserve Afghanistan's sovereignty, regional stability

and Pakistan's security. Pakistan's relentless efforts in resettlement and rehabilitation of millions of Afghan refugees have been globally appreciated. After Soviet withdrawal, accelerated peace and reconciliation efforts were initiated by Pakistan to strike deal between warring Afghan factions and install an inclusive Afghan government in Kabul for durable peace.

Wary of growing Indian influence in Afghanistan and inflexible stance of various Afghan groups, Pakistan supported Afghan Taliban to secure its regional interests. However, the post 9/11 environment changed the regional dynamics dramatically. Failing in its efforts to influence Afghan Taliban to expel Osama Bin Laden, Pakistan joined the global war on terrorism and aligned itself with the US policy. Though Pakistan consistently supported the US backed Afghan government and extended political, economic and diplomatic cooperation for stability and prosperity, Afghan government did not reciprocate in the same tone. Instead, Afghan government objected to Pakistan's efforts of fencing the international border for joint monitoring mechanism and undermined Pakistan's peace efforts. Unwaryed with Afghanistan's negation, Pakistan continuously vowed for Afghanistan's peace through reconciliation between Afghan Taliban and the US administration. 'Doha Agreement' signed in February 2020 resulted in the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and the victory of Afghan Taliban in August 2021.

With the rise of Afghan Taliban to power, the global stakeholders and Pakistan expected regional stability,



denial of Afghan soil to terrorists' activities and installation of an inclusive Afghan government which would pledge freedom for women, respect for human rights and an end to terrorists' organizations. To this end, Pakistan urged global community/ international forums to release financial aid to the war-torn country and lift international sanctions to address humanitarian crisis. Pakistan extended all out diplomatic and economic support to newly installed Afghan government to deny space to terrorist outfits and restore reconstruction and resettlement process. Pakistan has seriously extended cooperation to Afghanistan in the fields of economic development, border management, refugees' crisis, drugs control and intelligence sharing; which if judiciously undertaken has the potential to enhance bilateral engagement and stability.

The Afghan Taliban government averted international pressure and did not adhere to the 'Doha Agreement'. It rejected Pakistan's demand for elimination of terror hubs and released Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ranks. It offered reconciliation between Pakistan and TTP, for peaceful settlement of the issue through dialogue. It is also evident, that TTP activities inside Pakistan have increased since Afghan Taliban took over Kabul. TTP is used as pressure instrument against Pakistan by Afghan Taliban. Afghan Taliban's stance on fencing, TTP and other core issues have seriously affected bilateral relations.

Pakistan is aware of the spillover effects of Afghan crisis. Instability in Afghanistan creates vacuum for foreign interference, particularly India, causing serious security ramifications for Pakistan and regional peace. Increased Indian influence would allow India to help terrorists' organizations to reorganize inside Afghanistan and undertake sabotage activities inside Pakistan. India would also provoke extremist, militant and ethnic tendencies inside Pakistan. Afghanistan's instability would also hinder Pakistan's efforts for regional integration and reach out to Central Asian Republics (CARs) for energy needs.

Relations between the two Muslim neighbouring states have always affected regional stability and peace with serious repercussions for Pakistan. Geographically, they have no other option but maintaining cordial relations, progressive engagement and harmony for public welfare, denying foreign intervention and stern policy against terror groups.

## Afghanistan's Geo-Strategic Significance

The geographical contiguity of Pakistan and Afghanistan allows interdependence on each other and reinforces regional integration. The mountainous terrain astride 2430 kms of shared border restricts cross-border movements through existing routes and passes.<sup>3</sup> The Wakhan Corridor - a narrow strip of territory (350 kms long and 13-65 kms wide), located in Northeastern Afghanistan provides access to China and separates Pakistan from Tajikistan.<sup>4</sup> This corridor was mapped by the British to contain Soviet Union's interference in the subcontinent.

Afghanistan is pivotal to regional integration and connectivity.<sup>5</sup> It provides shortest land route between the energy rich Central Asia with other regions including South Asia. It acts as a bridge for oil transportation from energy rich Central Asia to other regions through Pakistan. Its instability would barricade oil passage preventing the countries of Caspian Sea, i.e. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia, to access energy market. The landlocked nature of the country increases its trade dependency on neighbouring states especially Pakistan. Karachi and Gwadar ports provide ideal sea link and accessibility to Afghanistan to accelerate its trade with India and Middle East.

The instability, economic deterioration, ill-governance and the spirit of Jihad allowed concentration of terrorists' organizations in Afghanistan causing regional instability and security dilemma. Being in the backyard, Afghanistan has security significance



for Pakistan and any development has direct impact on Pakistan's security cum social milieu. The non-cooperation policy of Afghan Taliban with Pakistan on eliminating the threat of TTP has further strained the fragile relations between the two neighbours allowing space to India's exploitation strategy. Increased India-Afghan cooperation will undermine Pakistan's regional influence and force it to enhance security measures on two fronts.

### Pakistan's Afghan Policy

Aware of Afghanistan's geo-strategic location, internal dynamics, security implications for Pakistan and foreign dependence, Pakistan has always supported peace and stability in the neighbourhood. Considering stable Afghanistan as essential for peace and stability in Pakistan, Pakistan's Afghan policy has always been friendly and responsive.<sup>6</sup> Though the policy has been changing due to global dynamics, Pakistan emphasized on restoration of stability and economic activities to deny foreign interference, terror breeding and Indian exploitation.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan also emphasizes on peaceful settlement of bilateral issues without compromising on the status of international border and national sovereignty.

To further cement bilateral engagement and drive for collective growth, Pakistan-Afghanistan transit trade agreement was signed in 2010.<sup>8</sup> Joint trade and accelerated economic cooperation would facilitate regional integration attracting prosperity for the neglected regions of the two countries. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has enormous potential towards regional connectivity which will extend to CARs through Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup>



### An Appraisal of Pakistan - Afghanistan Relations

Bilateral engagement between the two neighbours have mostly been on uneven path. The presence of age-old trust deficit did not allow both the countries to capitalize on their socio-economic potential thus affecting the regional growth. Their divergence impelled India, non-state actors, and terrorists' organizations to intrude and subvert their security environment. A comprehensive analysis of historical Pak-Afghan relations, would present a conclusive outlook of the future bilateral relations and its regional implications.

#### • Post Subcontinent Partition Relations

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have their roots in the British colonial era. Under security perspective, modern Afghanistan was formed through demarcation of its borders with neighbouring countries, by the British and USSR governments.<sup>10</sup> The British India and Afghanistan agreed to recognize 'Durand Line' as international border between the two countries in 1893.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours stabilized allowing states' focus on economic revival. At the time of partition, Afghanistan tried to force the British to revoke the status of international border as well as the tribal regions along the border. Failing in its undue claims, Afghanistan provoked controversy over the two issues inciting Afghan public against Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

Disregarding decision of 'Pashtun Loya Jirga' to accede to Pakistan at the time of partition, Afghanistan consistently exerted pressure on Pakistan to divert public attention from their failure in governance and economic fields.<sup>13</sup> In a step ahead, Afghan government opposed Pakistan's UN membership alleging it for human rights violations in tribal areas. The relations severed between the two states due to Afghanistan's unexpected position against Pakistan which was already under security threat from India. Despite failed attempts to stir public sentiments, Afghanistan continuously pursued the policy of interference inside Pakistan. Imposition of restrictions on Pakistan-Afghanistan transit trade resulted in serious tribal incursion into

Pakistan in 1950-51. Though Afghanistan branded these insurgents as 'freedom fighters' and denied Kabul's support to them, however, the evidence proved contrary.

- **Bilateral Engagement during Soviet Invasion**

Pakistan extended security, diplomatic and economic cooperation, for its internal stability, despite Afghanistan's tug of war. Through access to Karachi port, Afghan markets were linked for imports and exports.<sup>14</sup> The unrestricted movement astride border reinforced people to people contact and development of public association. The relations between the two states went to peak during the time of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet's desire to access warm waters and influence wide regions against the Western front confronted Pakistan's interests hence, Pakistan and Afghanistan displayed joint front with the Western support. Pakistan also accommodated millions of Afghan refugees who migrated into Pakistan for shelter. The resilience of Pakistani nation to support Afghan Jihad improved Pakistan's relations with various Afghan factions, especially Afghan Taliban. Pakistan's active involvement and support for its neighbour increased its influence in Afghanistan which helped in driving reconciliation between the warring factions. The failure of reconciliation led to resurgence of Afghan Taliban which helped both countries improve bilateral engagement however, other factions opposed Pakistan's support for Afghan Taliban.

- **Post 9/11 Relations**

In post 9/11 environment, Pakistan aligned itself with the world community in combating terrorism and facilitated US invasion of Afghanistan to secure its national interests and avoid global isolation.<sup>15</sup> Afghan Taliban announced their reservations on Pakistan's position however they remained diplomatically dependent on Pakistan. The security situation in Pakistan deteriorated due to spillover effect of Afghan conflict, especially after the emergence of TTP in 2007.<sup>16</sup> Although, TTP formally pledged their allegiance to Afghan Taliban and their supreme leader, Pakistan retained its engagement with Afghan Taliban to drive regional stability, restore Afghanistan's

peace and influence TTP through Afghan Taliban. Such engagement was necessary to maintain influence in the neighbourhood, refute India's designs and contain TTP's ingress and sabotage activities inside Pakistan.<sup>17</sup>



Pakistan's sacrifices and efforts for peace restoration and regional stability remained futile as the US and Afghan coalition government alleged Pakistan for covert support to Taliban, cross-border terrorism and interference in Afghan affairs.<sup>18</sup> Afghan government's reliance on the US led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) for financial aid, military reorganization, economic revival and promotion of democratic values in Afghan society further antagonized bilateral engagement between the two neighbours.<sup>19</sup> The conflicting stance helped India exploit the regional environment hence it provoked accelerated anti-Pakistan activities. Through extensive financial contribution and technical assistance, India initiated joint development projects inside Afghanistan and financed TTP for destabilizing Pakistan. The situation eventually resulted into cross-border fire incidents and casualties on both sides.<sup>20</sup>

- **Post US Engagement**

With the resurgence of Afghan Taliban, after the US withdrawal in August 2021, Pakistan believed that in accordance to the 'Doha Agreement' Afghan Taliban would eliminate the menace of terrorism from its soil while turning hard on TTP.

But TTP activities and cross-border terrorism gained further momentum, creating uncertainty in bilateral relations. Pakistan's efforts for establishment of joint mechanism to monitor cross-border movement have been severely undermined by Taliban's reservations/ grievances on border fencing and frequent firing incidents.<sup>21</sup> Aligned with the global stance, Pakistan declined to recognize Afghan Taliban government due to violation of their commitment to respect women and human rights and install an inclusive Afghan government. Pakistan's efforts for lifting of international sanctions to address humanitarian crisis in the war-torn country, have not been acknowledged. Afghan Taliban have also protested against Pakistan's policy of reverting unregistered Afghan refugees.



### **Genesis of Mistrust between Pakistan-Afghanistan**

The mistrust between the two states surfaced due to conflicting stance on legitimacy of international border and Pashtun tribal areas.<sup>22</sup> However, many other factors also contributed to the widening gap which hindered conflict resolution due to political interests of various Afghan elements:-

- **International Border**

Afghan government consistently demand revoking of 'Durand line agreement' contesting it to be invalid due to departure of the British and creation of Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> It has continuously protested

against fencing by Pakistan and the construction of border posts. Pakistan vigorously stands on its legal status as acknowledged by international law, Durand line agreement and article 5 of Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1919.<sup>24</sup> Although Afghanistan governments are convinced regarding the legal status of the border, they believe that departure from their erstwhile stance would be fatal for their vested political interests.

- **Pashtunistan Issue**

Although Afghanistan has not changed its stance, it has been silent on the issue due to unwavering loyalty of the tribal people with Pakistan. At the time of partition, Afghanistan declined to accept tribal areas as part of Pakistan and demanded its independence.<sup>25</sup> The demand for Pashtunistan accelerated in December 1947 when India intervened in Kashmir valley. Skirmishes along the Western borders also started which forced Pakistan to remain alert on Eastern as well as Western borders. Similarly, Afghanistan protested to the announcement of 'one-unit system' in West Pakistan in 1955 which involved integration of the tribal areas. Strong rallies and protests were organized against Pakistan inside Afghanistan, Pakistani embassy in Kabul and consulates were attacked and Pakistani flags were burnt. The reaction from Pakistan was also very severe inciting public sentiments. This time again, the US administered reconciliation between the two neighbours. However, the issue remained vulnerable to Indian exploitation and provocation.<sup>26</sup>

- **Water Sharing–River Kabul**

Kabul river is significant for irrigation system in Pakistan. Hindering the flow of Kabul river into Pakistan would create problems for the water stressed country. Afghanistan has shown its reservations over the use of its water by Pakistan. For optimum utilization of its water, Afghanistan is in process of constructing dams on the river with Indian support. With the construction of these projects, Pakistan will suffer about 16-17 % drop in water share.<sup>27</sup> In the absence of water sharing treaty between the two states, the issue would become a major source of conflict which will always be exploited by India.<sup>28</sup>

- **Indian Factor**

The bilateral differences between Pakistan and Afghanistan have always been exploited by India to destabilize Pakistan. Through increased India-Afghan collaboration, India aspired to mitigate Pakistan's influence in the neighbouring country.<sup>29</sup> The Indian consulates along Pakistan's Western borders have been covertly operating against Pakistan through financing terrorists' groups and TTP.<sup>30</sup> Today, India is refining its relations with Afghan Taliban government to resume its development projects in pursuit of her nefarious designs.

- **TPP Factor**

Despite their commitment to deny Afghan soil to be used by terrorists, the presence of Al-Qaida, Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), and TTP is threatening the regional peace. TTP has increased its terrorists' activities inside Pakistan. Whereas, Afghan Taliban have ignored Pakistan's concerns and did not take any action against TTP despite clear evidences. On the contrary, many TTP ranks were released after their take over in August 2021. It is clearly evident that Afghan Taliban are using TTP factor to keep Pakistan under pressure.

- **Border Management**

To regulate the uninhabited/ porous borders and monitor any movement of terrorists and illegal traders, Pakistan installed fence and constructed numerous border posts.<sup>31</sup> The strategy helped in reducing cross-border movement and confined it to established trade routes between the two countries. However, Afghan Taliban objected to the fencing referring it to be violation of the undeclared borders. Unprovoked firing by Afghan forces resulted into many casualties on Pakistan side.<sup>32</sup>

- **Refugees Repatriation**

Pakistan's recent decision to repatriate unregistered Afghan refugees has been criticized by Afghan Taliban government. Pakistan does not object to million of Afghanis living in Pakistan but registered as Afghan nationals. The return of refugees would help stabilize Pakistan's economy and security while allowing Afghan Taliban to settle them and involve them in reconstruction of the country.

- **Pakistan's Reconciliation and Afghan's Apprehensions**

Pakistan has always pursued reconciliation among the Afghan factions and Taliban-US for restoring peace and stability. However, Pakistan has been alleged by Afghan governments for inclination towards Afghan Taliban and also for violation of Afghan sovereignty. Afghanistan's baseless allegations led to mistrust between the two nations.

## **Prospects of Peace and Cooperation**

The geographical contiguity, common culture and faith presents ample opportunities to accelerate economic growth and security cooperation between the two states.<sup>33</sup> The avenues of cooperation are:-

- **Common Linkages**

The common religious faith, culture and linguistic association present avenues for securing geo-strategic economic and security interests. Such common grounds would enhance interdependence, regional integration, and help both countries address their commerce and energy needs.

- **People to People Contact**

The people to people relations are based on common faith, language, and culture with shared necessities of life.<sup>34</sup> Disregarding Afghan government official relations, Afghans enjoy cordial relations with Pakistanis especially after their prolonged association developed during their refuge in Pakistan.



- **Economic Interdependence**

Being a landlocked country, Afghan Transit Trade needs Pakistan's ports for trade connection with the outer world.<sup>35</sup> Pakistan is one of the largest trading partners of Afghanistan as it exports goods and services worth approximately USD 3 Billion annually. At the same time, Afghanistan is significant for Pakistan to access energy rich CARs and pursue regional integration.

- **Security Interests**

Pakistan and Afghanistan face the common challenge of terrorism which has risked regional stability and peace. The presence of Al-Qaida, IS-K, and TTP in Afghanistan have dangers for regional unity and spillover effects for Pakistan. Moreover, peace would be difficult till installation of an Afghan inclusive government and implementation of stern policies against TTP and other banned organizations. The terror challenges can be overcome with joint mechanism along the border and cooperation.

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

The flagship project of CPEC under One Belt One Road (OBOR) has the capacity of regional integration and economic growth for all the regional states including Afghanistan. The war-torn country is suffering through humanitarian catastrophe after the departure of the US and is in dire need of

economic revival. Hence, CPEC as a project can bring the two neighbouring states together.

- **Diplomatic Cooperation**

Due to international sanctions on Afghan Taliban, the humanitarian crisis have increased manifold. Pakistan has been urging the international community for provision of financial aid and relaxation of sanctions in order to address various issues in Afghan society. Such efforts will align Afghanistan and Pakistan towards future cooperation.

### **Recommendations**

Considering their past association and war history, Pakistan and Taliban government in Afghanistan have the capacity to amicably resolve bilateral issues through mutual cooperation; promoting bilateral interests and economic growth.

- **Recommendations for Afghanistan**

- **Adherence to International Demands.** Afghan Taliban must fulfil their commitments of 'Doha Agreement' and install an inclusive government. Afghanistan should also deny its soil for use of terrorist activities and expel all banned organizations from the country. The stern policy against terrorists, involvement of all factions in governance, respect for women and human rights would lead to recognition of Afghan government, more



stability and lifting of international sanctions. Such measures would lead to economic prosperity and regional cooperation.

- **Anti-Terrorists' Policy.** Announcement of a clearly defined 'anti-terrorists' policy would help improve Afghanistan's relations with neighbouring countries and remove the stigma of being a 'terror sponsor' state. Actions against TTP would also balance bilateral engagement with Pakistan. Improved relations would help Afghanistan become the pivot to regional integration and connectivity ultimately leading to economic prosperity and peace.
- **Improved Governance.** Weak governance leads to exploitation of youth by the terrorists and extremist' elements. Improvement of governance would accelerate economic activities denying space to extremist' elements. In order to achieve the aim, besides strong commitment and resolve, all elements of National Power must be mobilized.
- **National Reconciliation.** Afghan Taliban led 'Loya Jirga' involving all factions would be helpful in developing consensus for peace in the society and avert the chances of another civil war. Consensus should also be developed for a national constitution and its implementation.
- **Ideological Underpinning.** Afghan government needs to understand that Pakistan came into being on the religious and cultural grounds and the people of the tribal areas always maintain the century old legacy of their loyalty to Pakistan. Moreover, Afghanistan stance that since Pakistan is not a 'successor state' but a 'clean state' hence border redefining is required with Afghanistan, is wrong. They need to understand that as per the definition of international law, Pakistan clearly qualifies as a successor state as it replaced another state. This position has been legalized by the Indian independence Act 1947.<sup>36</sup> The ideological understanding will help Afghan government convince their people about the status of international border.

- **Recommendations for Pakistan**

- **Policy Orientation.** Pakistan should remain aligned with international community and urge Afghan Taliban to respect women and human rights, install an inclusive Afghan government and deny use of soil to terrorists. On the other hand, Pakistan should remain committed to help Afghan Taliban government in addressing various economic, social, and financial challenges. Pakistan should accelerate its diplomatic efforts to convince international community that humanitarian crisis in the country has exacerbated due to international sanctions which needs to be lifted or softened for denying terrorists' ingress into the society. Sincere efforts would allow Pakistan to maintain its influence in Afghanistan and deny access to India's nefarious designs.

- **Engagement with all Afghan Factions.** The past policy of Pakistan engagement with only Pashtun majority Afghan Taliban has agitated other Afghan factions which does not favour Pakistan. To ensure stability in the neighbourhood, Pakistan must adopt a broad-based approach involving all Afghan factions/ ethnicities and regional stakeholders including Russia, Iran, China, for a holistic political stability.



- **Economic Interdependence.** For improved bilateral relations, accelerated economic cooperation is necessary. Pakistan being accessible to Afghanistan should facilitate its exports and imports to help generate revenue to stabilize its economy. Besides bilateral and multilateral economic engagements, Pakistan can extend private sector partnership, joint investments, reduced tariff rates and infrastructural development to Afghanistan. Due to current economic position, Pakistan would not be able to support Afghanistan's reconstruction which would force Afghans reliance on India and Iran. Therefore, Pakistan should immediately restore its economic sustainability to influence Afghanistan.
- **Developing Afghan Stakes in CPEC.** Afghanistan must realize that over the years, Pakistan's approach has changed from Geo-Politics to Geo-Economics. CPEC project has enormous economic potential which can be extended to Afghanistan. Afghanistan has also shown its desire to benefit from the project. Pakistan needs to involve Afghanistan as a stakeholder in the connectivity project and extend special incentives to Afghanistan. Access to CPEC and Gwadar would allow Afghanistan to maintain its cordial relations with Pakistan and deny space to India and TTP to sabotage economic activities in the region.
- **Technical Training Opportunities.** Afghanistan is in dire need of skilled manpower for reconstruction of the country. Extending technical education and opportunities through various exchange programs would enhance Afghan's confidence in Pakistan. Special seats should be maintained in all the universities for Afghan students on reduced charges to promote good will.
- **Investments in Selected Sectors.** Pakistan must invest in communication infrastructure specially in Eastern and Southern Afghanistan, to reduce diversion of trade through other routes. Moreover, Pakistan must also help Afghanistan in its capacity building efforts through investment in human capital.
- **Military Cooperation.** Since Afghan Taliban government is focused on revival of an Afghan Army, therefore Pakistan should support Afghanistan in training of its officers, soldiers and help them rebuild Afghan Army. Pakistan should reserve maximum seats for Afghan soldiers in training institutes and provide Afghan Army with cost effective military equipment.

#### • **Recommendations for Mutual Cooperation**

- **People to People Contact.** People to people contact can fetch rich dividends in bridging the gap between the two neighbours. Initiating mutual cooperation programs, joint ventures of governmental working groups and intellectual collaboration would be helpful in this regard.

- **Security Cooperation.** Pakistan and Afghanistan realize the necessity of security cooperation for economic growth and prosperity. Pakistan should seek Afghanistan's support for regional peace and stability which is possible through mutual cooperation and promoting joint mechanism. Denial of soil's use against each other, non-interference, and joint border mechanism would ensure security of mutual interests. Afghanistan has to respond positively to Pakistan's demand



of stern measures against TTP which would build Pakistan's confidence in Afghan Taliban and will promote further harmony.

- **Border Management.** The installation of fence, radars, sensors, and check posts will ensure continuous surveillance and monitoring of the borders and restrict the movement of illegal trade and terrorists.<sup>37</sup> Afghan authorities must realise its significance and join Pakistan in further reinforcing border management. Bilateral facilitation in intelligence sharing would encourage confidence building and enhance capacity building in effective border management.
- **Refugees Management.** Since situation in Afghanistan has improved with the resurgence of Taliban, therefore, both the countries should amicably resolve the refugees' issue and return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan should be immediately undertaken through a mutually agreed phased programme.
- **Role of Media.** Media can play a pivotal role in confidence building measures at both sides and further improve people to people contact. At present, media has created an environment of mistrust through conflict reporting and non-coverage of issues of common interests, between the two neighbours. To improve bilateral engagement and enhance cooperation, collaboration

between media and journalists of both the countries must be enhanced. TV channels should be allowed to operate on both sides of the borders. Pashto & Persian TV and Radio channels should be established to promote friendly behaviour towards Pakistan. As a policy, negativity towards each other must be avoided.

## Conclusion

Afghanistan and Pakistan have a long history of tense relations defined by five recurring drivers: sovereignty concerns, security interests, geopolitical dynamics, cross-border ties, connectivity and trade.<sup>38</sup> Relations between the two have seen the ups and downs in the recent history. At various times, players with vested interests have been playing with the common masses of both the countries to create differences amongst them. But it's an undeniable geographical reality that Pakistan and Afghanistan will have to co-exist. Owing to the geo-political significance of the region, the area is likely to remain the focus of regional and world players. There are enormous opportunities for both the countries to work together for improving the overall condition of their respective people. The security environment, terrorism, deteriorating economic situation, and climate change are major challenges confronting both the countries which needs joint mechanism and harmonized operations. The installation of Afghan Taliban government in Afghanistan has provided an excellent opportunity to both the countries to resolve their bilateral issues amicably and create environment for mutual growth and prosperity.



## NOTES

1. International Crisis Group, "Resetting Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan," 28 November 2014.
2. Mohib Ullah Durani, Ashraf Khan, "Pakistan- Afghan Relations: Historic Mirror", The Dialogue, Volume IV Number 1, 02\_ashraf.pdf ([qurtuba.edu.pk](http://qurtuba.edu.pk))
3. Captain H.L.Nevill, "Campaigns on the North-West Frontier" (London) : John Murray, 19120).
4. International Boundary Study of the Afghanistan-USSR Boundary (1983)by the US Bureau of Intelligence and Research Pg. 7,, accessed on 5 July 2015.
5. Maj Gen Shaukat Iqbal, "The Great Game and Security Challenges for Pakistan," Paramount Books, Karachi,2014.
6. Rabia Akhtar & Jayita Sarkar, "Pakistan, India, and China after the US Drawdown from Afghanistan," South Asian Voice, January 2015, accessed on 21 June 2016.
7. Moed Yusuf, "Decoding Pakistan's Strategic Shift in Afghanistan", IPRI, May 2013, v, <http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRI13wcaMY.pdf>, accessed on 25 August 2016.
8. Afghan-Pakistan Trade Transit Agreement 2010 (APTTA), <http://www.commerce.gov.pk/APTTA/APTTA.pdf>, accessed on 16 September 2016.
9. Perspectives from the Region in 2014, Sources of Tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Regional Perspective.
10. Latuf Rehman, "Durand Line Agreement: A Historical Perspective," published in "Afghanistan 2014: The Decision Point," National Defence University Islamabad, Sep 2013.
11. Arwin Rahi, 'The Duran Line: Separating Myth from Reality', The Express Tribune, 11 February 2022.
12. Raza Muhammad and Doctor Muhammad Saif Ur Rehman, "Emerging Regional Security Milieu in Post 2014 Afghanistan," Margalla Papers, 2014 Vol 18, PP.31.
13. Rubin, "Fragmentation of Afghanistan," p.19, 26.
14. Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, "Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid," (Westview, 2002).
15. Dr Hidayat Khan, "Pakistan's Contribution to Global War on Terror After 9 / 11," IPRI Journal 2013.
16. London Times, Financial Times, 9/18/2001. Also see: Press Trust of India, 9/17/2001.
17. Weinbaum, M., 'What Pakistan seeks in Afghanistan', Foreign Policy Association blog, Middle East Institute, 20 December 2012, <<http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2012/12/20/>>, accessed on 3 March 2016.
18. Mr Imtiaz Gul, "State of Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations 2012,"[www.pildat.org](http://www.pildat.org) accessed on 27 April 2016.
19. Levison Wood, Geraint Jones, Escape from Kabul: The Inside Story, Hodder & Stoughton, March 2023.
20. <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/06/13/comment/deterioration-in-pak-afghan-relations/>, accessed on 13 August 16.
21. Ureeda Khan, 'A Breakthrough in Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations?', The Diplomat, 7 June 2023.
22. Bushra Fatima, "Pakistan-India Relations: The Afghanistan Factor Post 9/11 Era," University of Punjab.
23. Latuf Rehman, "Durand Line Agreement : A Historical Perspective," published in "Afghanistan 2014 : The Decision Point," National Defence University Islamabad, September 2013.
24. Pakistan plans border minefield, BBC News, 26 December 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/6210057.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6210057.stm) accessed on 27 April 2016.
25. Gartenstein – Ross, Davees and Tara Vessey, "The Forgotten History of Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations", Yale Journal of International Affairs, March 2012.
26. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, "Neither a Hawk, Nor a Dove," Oxford University Press, 2015.
27. Sharing Water Resources with Afghanistan, published in Dawn Nov 13, accessed on 3 November 2016.
28. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, "Neither a Hawk, Nor a Dove," Oxford University Press, 2015.
29. Larry Hanauer& Peter Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan – Implication for United States and the Region," Published in RAND 2012, accessed on 7 November 2016.
30. The Express Tribune, <http://tribune.com.pk/> dated 15 May 2015, accessed on 30 May 2015.
31. Qudssia Akhlaque, "Pakistan, Afghanistan agree on border commission,"The Nation, December 03, 2013, <http://www.nation.com.pk/editors-picks/03-Dec- 2013/pakistan-afghanistan-agree-on-border-commission> accessed on 12 November 2016.
32. Amina Khan, "Pak-Afghan Relations: Come Back to the Boardroom," Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad 12 July 2016.
33. Babar Shah, "Pakistan's Afghanistan Policy: An evaluation," Vol. XX Spring/Summer No. 2/3, Strategic. Studies, A quarterly Journal of Institute of Strategic Studies. [Online] Available [http://www.issi.org.pk/strategic\\_studies\\_html](http://www.issi.org.pk/strategic_studies_html), 2000, accessed on 5 May 2015.
34. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, "Neither a Hawk, Nor a Dove," Oxford University Press, 2015.
35. Ishrat Hussain, "Pak - Afghan Economic Ties," Published in Dawn on 14th Feb 2015, accessed on 2 November 2016.
36. Ahmer Bilal Soofi, Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Management: A Legal Perspective, (Pildat, 2019), <https://rsilpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Pakistan-Afghanistan-Border-Management-A-Legal-Perspective.pdf>.
37. Paul Cruickshank, "Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy The Militant Pipeline Between the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Region and the West," Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, New America Foundation, February 2010, [www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/cruickshank.pdf](http://www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/cruickshank.pdf)
38. Grace Easterly; Elizabeth Threlkeld, 'Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan', US Institute of Peace, 12 August 2021.