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Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Security: Prospects and Challenges (2014-2025)

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Abstract

The Durand Line, forming the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, remains one of the most unstable and densely populated geopolitical regions in South Asia. This qualitative study examines evolving security dynamics from 2014 to 2025 through the Security Dilemma, Border Management Theory, and Regional Security Complex Theory to assess Pakistan's border security strategies. These include physical barriers, enhanced surveillance, the 2017 fencing project, and military operations such as Operation Zarb-e-Azb. Findings show that although barriers and surveillance reduced tactical vulnerabilities, they failed to resolve underlying ideological and political tensions. The Taliban's return in August 2021, initially seen as stabilizing, instead strained bilateral ties amid persistent threats from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Islamic State Khorasan Province. Strict border controls and closures at Torkham and Chaman harmed trade and worsened humanitarian pressures. The study recommends integrated border management emphasizing economic integration, coordinated patrols, regional cooperation, and balancing security with humanitarian and diplomatic trust.

Keywords: Border Security Issues, Durand Line, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Socio-economic Effects, Tehreek-e-Taliban.



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Introduction

Since Pakistan's independence, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has been a source of contention between the two nations. With the exception of Nadir Shah and King Zahir Shah, who recognized the Durand Line (the border) and accepted that areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were part of Pakistan, most Afghan governments, including the Taliban, have refused to accept the border's legality (Oztiğ, 2021).

Aspect of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) land in Pakistan belongs to Afghanistan according to their claim. People base this argument on their belief that these territories belonged to Afghanistan during the 18th century. The Durand Line serves as the main subject of dispute between the two nations because British Indian Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand and Afghanistan's King Abdur Rehman Khan collaborated in 1893 to create the boundary. The agreement defined the complete 2,640-kilometre (1,610-mile) line that separated British Indian territories from Afghanistan (Omrani, 2009). Afghanistan questions the legitimacy of this border. Because Pakistan was the successor to the British government in India, the areas claimed by Afghanistan became formal Pakistani territory after its establishment. As the successor state, Pakistan had complete jurisdiction over these lands and was accountable for the people who lived there, with all of the rights and responsibilities that entail.

Afghanistan continued to challenge the ownership of these areas (Gaston, 2015) arguing that the 1893 agreement was forced upon the Afghan King, Abdur Rehman, by the British government. Afghanistan also claimed that the agreement was only meant to last for 100 years, which ended in 1994, and that it was made with the British, not Pakistan, so it should be considered invalid.

Pakistan has continuously backed international law, asserting that the Durand Line is a genuine border that has been recognized by Afghanistan on several occasions. This means that the Durand Line ends Afghanistan's power or influence over the territory and people of Pakistan (Durani, 2002).

Through their porous border with Afghanistan extremist groups used this primary infiltration route to conduct multiple strikes throughout both countries. Pakistani military units faced extensive security challenges to protect this border because dangerous Afghan terrain and insurgent bases made the task very difficult. Operation Zarb-e-Azb represented the start of a military strike by Pakistan against militants who received backing from Afghanistan. The success of these military missions faced limitations because Afghanistan state officials refused to collaborate. The government of Afghanistan failed to maintain effective collaboration with Pakistan after Kabul fell to Taliban insurgents in August 2021 thus making the border situation worse (Jan, 2022).

A prolonged war in Afghanistan resulted in millions of population displacements throughout the country making Pakistan their last refuge. The combination of a massive influx of refugees and weak legal systems and inadequate border policies exhausted Pakistan's society and depleted its resources. Illegal border crossings performed by refugees created more security vulnerabilities along the border regions. The worsening economic situation of Afghanistan following the 2021 Taliban takeover of Kabul made many Afghans consider crossing national borders but increased border security concerns for Pakistan. The international community criticizes Pakistan for neglecting its duty to protect Afghan refugees despite holding the distinction as one of the largest caretakers of migrants. The process of Afghan refugee return alongside repatriation plans has led to ongoing disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan because Pakistan blames Afghanistan for protecting militants while failing to stop cross-border terrorist attacks (Jamil, 2022).

Pakistan launched its substantial border wall project between Afghanistan during the years subsequent to 2014. Pakistan initiated the border wall project in 2017 with the goals to block extremist movement while limiting unlawful border access while reducing border disputes. The Pakistani military endorsed the boundary initiative but Afghanistan protested vehemently because they believed Pakistani fencing violated their territorial rights. The Durand Line stands as a disputed border since Afghanistan denies accepting this official border which Pakistan established. The physical barrier implementation created worsening relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in their diplomatic sphere. The Pakistani government treated border fencing as vital protection against national attacks but Afghanistan treated the measures as Pakistani moves to claim disputed areas. Extremists managed to break through the fencing barrier along the border because the wall proved to be neither fool proof nor permanent (Zaidi, 2024).

During August 2021 Kabul fell which created a historic turning point in Afghan history while reshaping the border defense posture between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Border security underwent major changes after the Taliban seized control of the country. Pakistan at first showed support for the Taliban takeover because the nation believed Afghanistan would restore peace through this political shift. The Taliban failed to control border areas resulting in increases of both militant activity and trafficking between countries (Jones, 2008).

Geopolitical situations at the regional level influenced security issues that occurred between the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The security policies of Pakistan regarding Afghanistan changed drastically because of its relations with India together with the United States. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) becomes a major factor in border security complexity because of increasing Chinese regional influence across the region (Saoud, 2019).

Geographical proximity due to common ethnic links coupled with cultural connections between Afghanistan and Pakistan has created a complex political web since both countries face regular security issues. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan features high permeability making it simultaneously serve for cooperation and causes disputes. Both sides of the Afghan-Pashtun cultural and social relations have maintained their historical bonds that reach across the border. The two nations experienced recurring conflicts and political tension between them as well as periods of mutual mistrust. The sustained Afghan conflict between Soviet invasion and Taliban emergence then followed by American military action brought major consequences for the entire area. The Pakistani involvement in Afghan political matters through support to several factions has seriously damaged bilateral relations. The solution to the intricate historical and sustained difficulties in Pakistan-Afghan relations stands as a fundamental requirement for establishing peace and stability across South Asia (Akram, 2020).

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan exists in abnormal conditions. The lengthy mutual border between these essential Muslim border nations divides the Pashtun ethnicity into two territorial areas. Additionally, both nations possess shared ties in ethnicity, language, culture, and religion. The border tribes maintain historic social connections yet their governments continue to hold opposing positions against each other. This antagonistic relationship existed mainly because of premeditated interests and fundamental misinterpretations between both sides. Since Pakistan obtained independence on August 14, 1947, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has worsened to an utmost tense state (Chandrasekaran, 2012).

Based on its diplomatic goals Pakistan supports the advancement of both peace and stability within Afghanistan. The peace and security of Pakistan depend on this because it also functions as a method to end the ongoing bloodshed. The Taliban organization maintains faith in their particular

belief system. Peaceful discussions are essential to find viable ways that can restore normalcy in the war-torn country because their strict rules demand such engagement to avoid combat as an approach to achieve peace in Afghanistan (Fergusson, 2011).

Research Questions:

Q1-How well have border fencing protocols and military surveillance efforts with monitoring tasks succeeded in reducing illegal migrations, drug trafficking, and armed assaults between border territories?

Q2-How do strict border security policies affect the socio-economic conditions within local areas, their economies, trade relations and overall regional peace?

Q3-How has the Taliban's resurgence to power in Afghanistan impacted the security conditions along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border?

Research Methodology

The research uses descriptive research methodology to interpret previously accessible data and qualitative analysis technique is used to describe Pakistan-Afghanistan border security issues and challenges to obtain answer for research. A secondary research approach is used to explore security matters along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border through collection of existing data. This research analyses border insurgency across international boundaries together with the political importance of the Durand Line and fencing tactics for border control. The data will be sorted into main themes through thematic analysis to enable better comprehension of security complexities within both nations. The data collected from journal, documents, books and articles. To study cross-border insurgency and Durand Line politics and Taliban resurgence and border security approaches that include fencing. The research aims to analyse existing security measures and border issues.

Literature Review

The article “*Trade Corridors and Cross-Border Threats: An Analytic Study of Afghanistan's Reliance on Pakistan*” was written by (Khalil, Shah, & Imtiaz, 2025). According to academic studies, the recurrent border closures, in terms of disrupting the trade flows, local livelihoods, and regional connectivity, are detrimental. Pakistan has a weakness in economic interdependence with Afghanistan that serves as a source of vulnerability and could be a stabilizing aspect in the relationships of border security. Border crossings such as Torkham and Ghulam Khan have in the past been regarded as economic lifelines since Afghanistan was highly dependent on Pakistan to provide a transit route to seaports. But the security-based closures often have the effect of disrupting trade, increasing prices, and promoting the diversification of trade in Afghanistan by means of Iran and Central Asia. Researchers have argued that such disruptions intensify the fragmentation in the region and create fewer economic incentives to work together. At the same time, transit cooperation and trade facilitation are mentioned in the literature as unused techniques of building confidence. It indicates that cooperative monitoring processes, harmonization of customs and predictable trade regimes might result in minimization of smuggling and maximization of interdependence. Therefore, economic involvement is introduced as a means of strategic use which when combined in a bigger structure of cooperative security can reinforce the stability of the border as opposed to a mere commercial one.

The article ‘*Bridging the Divide Challenges and Prospects in Pakistan-Afghanistan Bilateral Relations*’ was written by (Shah, Nasib, & Wazir, 2025). Without political rhetoric and systematic collaboration, immediate solutions such as closing borders and military actions may temporarily

decrease violence but unable to bring about sustainable peace as recent empirical evaluations and security analysis confirms that they add to scholarly inferences. The available research has found that cross-border mobility decreases are usually followed by militant activity declines; however, these gains are typically inverted once the restrictions have been reinstated, as it highlights the challenges of employing coercive strategies in isolation. Next, the authors underline the significance of frequent communication systems, conflict control approaches, and confidence-building training as the precondition to the long-term border security. The literature nowadays represents Pakistan-Afghanistan border as a socio-political territory that requires permanent investment in governing, diplomacy, and regionalization to transform established conflict patterns into collaboration and stability with each other.

The article '*The Future of Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Taliban Diplomacy*' was written by (Ali, Chaudhry, Ch, Shaikh, & Muhammad, 2025). After invasion of Afghanistan by Taliban and creation of new political structure in the country, the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are at the crossroad. This paper will examine the opportunities and issues that will affect the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the future in the context of post-Taliban diplomacy. In addition to the geopolitical aspects of the interaction between the key world actors, several critical issues are also discussed such as border security, refugee management, connectivity in the realms of trade, and the prospects of economic cooperation, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Nevertheless, the presence of such long-term problems as cross-border militancy, ideological differences, and mistrust would be a significant hindrance to the very long-term peace. Through these dimensions, this essay aims at providing an in-depth understanding of the future of the bilateral relations with the need to promote collaborative relations and pragmatic foreign policies to utilize the opportunities to sort out the frequent problems.

The article '*Security Dilemma in Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations: Durand line Conundrum, Territorial Claims and Geopolitical Interests*' was written by (Azam, 2024). The relationship between the two countries has been embroiled in a complex security dilemma due to Afghanistan denying the Durand line as the international boundary between the two countries, as well as its territorial claims that cross within the Pakistani territory across the border. This security dilemma has changed and acquired several characteristics due to various factors such as the developments in their bilateral relations and the dynamics in the region. The interference of the two countries into the internal matters of each other is closely intertwined with the processes related to the political and security matters. This security dilemma has also been aggravated by the fact that Afghanistan supported the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), developed linkages with India, and promoted the cause of Pashtunistan, all of which have been a source of frustration among the people of Afghanistan. In its turn, this has led Pakistan to intervene in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union and a civil war that followed it, as well as to act in support of the United States during the American occupation of Afghanistan, which has made the people of Afghanistan unhappy. This essay is meant to demystify the complicated dynamics between these trends and factors that serve as the backbone to why this security dilemma in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations continues to abate.

Pak-US Relations and Afghanistan: A Critical Analysis was written by (Fatima, Mustafa, & Liaqat, 2025). This article examines the developments of Pak-US relations since Pakistan's independence, with a specific focus on the impact of conflict situations in Afghanistan on bilateral ties.

Pakistan's Efforts for Peace In Afghanistan: Us As A Factor is research by (Ux Fatima, 2025). This study elucidates the efforts of Pakistan to maintain peace in Afghanistan.

Geopolitical Dynamics of Afghanistan and Concerns of Regional and Global Actors vis a vis Pakistan is an article written by (IMRAN, MUSTAFA, & BHATTI, 2020), elaborates the changing dynamics of Afghanistan and its importance for the regional as well as super powers.

(IMRAN, MUSTAFA, & BHATTI, 2020)

Historical Background

Post-9/11 Strategic Realignment and U.S. Involvement (2001–2004)

U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Taliban evict

The U.S. government immediately rushed towards Afghanistan where Taliban government had sheltered Al Qaeda after it declared a global war on Terror in the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the United States. To topple the Taliban administration, the U.S.-led military operation, which officially commenced on October 7, 2001, with Operation Enduring Freedom resorted to airstrikes, Special Forces, CIA agents, and working with local anti-Taliban forces (Kamal, 2021). The Taliban government surrendered by early November 2001. On November 12, 13 and later to other locations, Kabul fall occurred and the Taliban leadership fled in May 2003, the U.S and coalition forces indicated that the biggest battle was taken care (Collins, 2023).

Although the U.S. strategy had impacts on other countries and regional policy, this military action, therefore, marked a major re-alignment as the U.S shifted its regional strategy posture of a primary post-Cold War-era to become a dominant force in combat in South Asia.

Pakistan joining the U.S.-led "War on Terror"

The 9/11 events and American invasion of Afghanistan requested a rapid and radical shift in plan among the neighbouring nation of Pakistan. Pakistan had been closely associated with the Taliban government in 1990s and it had recognized them earlier.

The decision of Pakistan was driven by various factors, among them being; fears of militant spill over, the fear of economic and diplomatic isolation, and the understanding that it would no longer be able to sustain the Taliban once American combat operations commenced, and the access of its bases and intelligence sharing (Kleiner, 2006).

Pakistan played a fragile role, however, as America insisted it cease its support to extremist networks, also, offer intelligence, and grant logistics rights. Pakistan accepted these demands but later questioned the extent to which and in the genuine sense it had complied. Consequently, Islamabad experienced a major strategic realignment as it chose to cooperate with the U.S. led initiative and transform itself into an ally of the U.S. in the frontline fight against terrorism rather than being perceived as a Taliban supporter (Bazai, 2016).

Increased border pressure and refugee influx

The invasion of Afghanistan and the collapse of its government had an unprecedented impact on the population of the area and caused a massive population displacement and rise in security concerns on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Cross board violence, militant spill overs, and influx of refugees began to pose a real menace on the economy and security organs in Pakistan (Gosh, 2018). The revival of the war also increased the violence in the Pakistani tribal and border regions according to academics and terrorist groups, returning insurgents of Afghanistan and retaliatory

strikes were flooding across the western border of Pakistan, which is about 1,500 miles long and shares borders with Afghanistan. Subsequently, the U.S. authorities reached a conclusion that the army and the Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) were incapable of supervising it to prevent the militant sanctuaries. Consequently, the issue of refugee crisis and border instability became an important component of the security burden in Pakistan and how the invasion of Afghanistan by the U.S had broader consequences in the region that directly and disruptingly influenced the neighbouring regimes (Ali, Khan, & Khan, 2025).

Early cooperation and intelligence sharing

Throughout the years, close collaboration between Pakistan and the United States commenced immediately after 9/11. Pakistan opened its airspace to the U.S. troops, provided bases and logistical routes, some intelligence on the movement of the border and militants, and Pakistani military forces were dedicated to the operation against militant's sanctuaries. As part of the same coalition efforts, the country further claimed that it had either detained or killed a significant number of Taliban and Al-Qaeda members in border regions but this still did not stop the U.S. analysts and analysts in the nation raised concerns after reports that Pakistan had adopted a twin strategy that entailed that it would take sides with the U.S. in some of the operations and retain its ties with militants and the Taliban, at the same time, because of geostrategic interests (Raza, 2020). The distrust with the United States due to the previous relationships of Pakistan with the Taliban and its consequent lack of certainty with respect to militant. Cooperation was probably very good and vital to the initial U.S. activities in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2004, particularly on accessibility and transportation corridors. This alliance showed that the War on Terror has shifted the relationship between the United States and Pakistan almost overnight, turning them into foes to be combats in the War on Terror (Rubin, 2013).

Rise of Cross-Border Militancy and Insurgency (2004–2008)

Taliban regrouping in Pakistan's tribal areas

Their fighters who had entered Pakistan semi-autonomous tribal belt, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and especially the agencies of North and South Waziristan began to enter in the wake of American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the subsequent pressure on the Taliban and Al Qaida there. These areas were rugged, the government had little control over them and tribal groups had long been independent, so local militant leaders, such as Baitullah Mehsud of the Mehsud tribe began to bring together power in the South Waziristan region specifically (Kakar & Rehman, 2022). This was done through militant-style justice (most times in the name of Sharia), the levying of taxes or levies, the displacement and killing of tribal elders, and the establishment of parallel governments. Consequently, Waziristan and other tribal states became safe havens to terrorists beginning in 2004 and staging areas of attacks both in Pakistan and the border region of Afghanistan (Peters & Rassler, 2010).

Emergence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Their fighters, in large numbers, moved to the semi-autonomous tribal region of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, and specifically to the North and South Waziristan agencies, since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the subsequent pressure on the Taliban and Al Qaida there. These were areas with poor topography, poor government control, and the tribal networks that had a long history of independence. These became concentrated on the hands of local militant leaders such as Baitullah Mehsud of the Mehsud tribe in South Waziristan especially. This resulted in Waziristan and other tribal areas becoming safe havens to terrorists

beginning in 2004 and staging areas to attack both Pakistan and the other side of the border into Afghanistan. As such, 2007-2008 is the transition between decentralized groups of militants to a continuous insurgency group that is hostile to the Pakistani government (Chesang, 2011).

U.S. drone strikes in FATA

In 2004, the United States began to carry out unmanned aerial strikes in FATA targeting the Taliban, Al-Qa'ida and militant safe havens, with the permission of Pakistan, explicitly or implicitly. The government records that there was at least one drone strike in 2005 that killed someone and there were many others in 2007-2008, but it is difficult to point to the exact number, as the drone attacks were secret (Metz, 2013). Besides the effects of the disruption of networks through the targeting of militants, especially leadership, these drone operations also led to civilian deaths and dissatisfaction, which undermined the support of the state by the community and offered an opportunity to insurgents in terms of propaganda (Scahill, 2016). In a word, drone attacks became one of the main, but rather controversial ones in U.S.-Pakistan efforts to eliminate militants in these border regions.

Weak border control and safe havens for militants

The border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan has always been marked by extremely difficult topography, low level of government and porous borders and cross border tribal/ethnic affiliations especially in the tribal regions. The inability of Pakistan and Afghanistan to completely control the crossings of borders or prevent the flow of militants to and fro created critical vulnerabilities (Alimia, 2019). Some sources also say that the FATA region has become one of the Additionally, cease-fires or peace treaties that the Pakistani government negotiated with militants such as the 2006 Waziristan Accord often backfired as they gave the militants time to reform, develop power in the area and expand to other populated areas. All these combined to create safe land- places where the militants were able to plan cross-border attacks into Afghanistan or launch attacks in Pakistan, gather, train, and evade being targeted by the government. Thus, between 2004 and 2008, this dynamism drove the development of cross-border militancy and insurgency most uncontrollable, inflammable places in the world (Shahzad, 2011).

Tensions in the U.S.–Pakistan–Afghanistan triangle

The interplay of insurgency across the Pakistan Afghanistan border brought triangular tensions between the United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan into sharp focus. U.S. military leaders in Afghanistan on many occasions have identified the sanctuaries in Pakistan tribal belt as a major factor that has been a hindrance to the fight in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile Pakistan also had to contend with an insurgency by the terrorists who now turned their weapons on the Pakistani government even though technically they were on the same side as the US in its War on Terror (Tellis, 2008). Under FATA, the U.S. drone strikes within Pakistan were unpredictable, inconsistent, and sometimes undermined by deals with militant groups which often went hand in hand with cross-border raids and political and popular resentment in Pakistan as an affront to sovereignty. Thus Afghanistan instability, internal security and political constraints of Pakistan and the pressure of the United States to end militant movement made the strategic environment volatile and militant networks exploited the flaw.

Border Governance Crisis and Tribal Area Autonomy Issues (2005–2010)

Limited Pakistani state presence in FATA

Traditionally, the Pakistani state played a very insignificant role in the region that constituted the old Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that was seen on the western border of Pakistan. The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) that existed during the colonial rule also deprived locals of most of their constitutional rights and devolved power to a nationally appointed political agent known as Political Agent. A special status of the region meant that there was no adequate investment in infrastructure, the civil governance structure was not strong, law and order were not controlled, and there was minimal electoral representation. The state did not possess an extensive administrative system; instead, it was represented by security posts to a large extent. In the mid-2000s, when insurgency entered FATA, the Pakistani government was still weak. Regular government gave way to military action, administrative incursions and negotiation with rebels. One such analysis said that since the state only had limited reach, the tribal belt was like an ungoverned area that gave space to the militancy to flourish. Consequently, in 2005-2010, the governance crisis in these tribal territories was mainly occasioned by the fact that the level of official participation was low and consequently left most of the territories of lands beyond the normal scope of provincial or federal control (Shah, 2018).

Parallel governance by tribal leaders and militants

With the minimal state reach, local forms of governance did not disappear but often transformed being governed by traditional tribal elders and jirga councils to be governed by militant groups which offered other forms of order. It was a system that sponsored the tribal autonomy and placed administrative/dispute resolution power in the hands of tribal elders.

The development of militant groups in the period under review however, i.e., the Tehrik i Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and groupings, meant that militants slowly substituted or took over tribal elders and delivered so-called justice by their personal courts, charged tax, ruled the territory and provided rule outside the parameters of the state (Mehmood, 2020).

Breakdown of traditional systems

Other effects of transition to tribal belt governance were the disintegration of many traditional structures of authority and disruption of traditional social structures. The emergence of militancy, counter-insurgency operations, population displacement and the decline of maliks and tribal jirgas undermined local legitimacy. One of the reports argues that approximately thousands of tribal elders died as the war destroyed the entire social structure of FATA (Haroon, 2022).

Consequently, aggressive justice or vacuum governance replaced or overtook the powers of tribal norms (rewaj) and the jirga process that long had been vital to conflict resolution and local peace promotion. Also the attempt to restructure state governance was met with considerable structural difficulties because the old system was not visible under the FCR and it was not fully integrated into mainstream legal-administrative systems (Ullah, 2015).

The Killing of Osama bin Laden and Diplomatic Fallout (2011)

U.S. raid in Abbottabad and its impact on trust

On May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed in what was a secret operation by the United States in a Pakistan garrison town known as Abbottabad. The operation in which the two partners participated undermined their trust considerably because they did not warn about it or even inform the military or government of Pakistan before it happened (Marwan, 2015). Pakistan political leadership openly acknowledged that they had nothing to do with the operation. Besides, the raid exposed what many believed in Pakistan was a blatant intelligence failure and an infringement of

national sovereignty. The top management of Pakistan was facing the diplomatic consequences and the humiliation of people (Rollins, 2011).

Intensified demands on Pakistan to control cross-border militancy

After the raid, the United States and its allies intensified their demands to Pakistan to act conclusively against cross-border insurgency and militant safe havens. The demands that the legitimate control of the territory by Islamabad demonstrated and the freedom of the militants to act freely on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border were supported by the fact that the most wanted terrorist in the world had been residing in Pakistan over the years (Nadiri, 2014). The leadership in Pakistan was on the offensive on both local and international fronts due to the political repercussions of the issue not to mention the damage to its image and its inability to prevent the presence of bin Laden.

Initial Attempts at Border Fencing and Security Policy Shift (2012–2014)

Pakistan starts considering formal fencing of the Durand Line

During the period 2012-2014, the Pakistani government began to alter its security positioning at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border by initiating measures to physically fence and enhance border control. In September 2012, the Pakistani government announced that it had installed hundreds of check posts and fenced entry and exit points including the Pak-Afghan border. In late 2013, an assessment of the idea indicated that Pakistan had revived the fencing of the Durand Line border after years of failed attempts and that the government would, at an appropriate opportune time, use all avenues to fence the border and the tribes agreed on the matter (Anwar & Ikram, 2018). At that time, a local newspaper reported that the fencing project remained virtually impossible due to ongoing opposition by the Afghan side. The Pakistani military had already built trenches, fences, despite the fact that full fence has not been completed as of 2012-14 (Khan, 2017).

Increased military check-posts and surveillance

Pakistan improved its checkpoint network and border surveillance infrastructure in the frontier and tribal areas in addition to the fencing project. To illustrate this, an article was published in September 2012 stating that checkpoints had been established in the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan especially in western parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Khan, 2017). The combination of check points, increased foot patrols, surveillance posts, and fencing designs implied that Pakistan were focused on frontier control at this period; although frontier-long full fencing was still in process.

Afghanistan's rejection of fencing due to border dispute

At once the effort to fence the Durand Line frontier was at once and steadily rejected by Kabul. The Afghan government never accepted the Durand Line as a legal international border. Afghans who view the Durand Line as an artificial boundary between Pashtun groups are the ones who provoke intense resistance to the fence issue according to research done in 2013 and 2014 (Wolf, 2020). In 2013, the Afghans who were furiously opposed to the legitimizing influence of physical infrastructure on the disputed line considered the fencing plan as an occupation of their territory by Pakistan. Consequently, despite the fact that Pakistan moved ahead with its plans to fence its borders (Donaldson, 2013).

Bilateral tension over sovereignty and territorial claims

The fencing and the increased militarization of the borders that took place in 2012-2014 added to bilateral tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The diplomatic wrangles increased in the magnitude and intensity because Afghanistan had claimed that fencing would legalize the disputed border line. "Fencing will stop illegal crossings. but the Afghan government is complaining that it will legitimise the Durand Line, that is by legitimising the Durand Line, it legitimises the Taliban, said one Pakistani commentator (Zulfiqar, 2020). As a matter of fact, the tension was expressed through frequent border closures, confrontations, and accusations of unilateralism and infiltration by either side. The checkpoint network and fencing plan in Kabul was perceived as a battle over sovereignty despite the fact that they were passed as necessary by Islamabad to fight extremism and cross-border infiltration. The security justification behind the fencing initiative was flawed because the long-standing territorial dispute led to an early shift in the border security posture of Pakistan, such as an increase in number of checkpoints, surveillance, and planning of fencing, yet it was spoiled by the presence of the long-term sovereignty conflict between the countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan (Bano, 2019).

Prospects and Challenges

Major Challenges

Escalating Security Confrontations:

In October 2025, armed conflicts erupted in the border, the most serious conflict since the Taliban took the power in 2021. After Pakistan alleged that militant groups hiding in Afghanistan had been responsible of increased attacks in its soil, both the Pakistani and the Afghan troops fought in artillery and small arms. An insecurity lapse that led to limited crossings and extensive militarization of the border caused fears of a wider regional escalation, which was refuted by Afghanistan as allegations of it being a home to terrorists. This bloody act showed that old-time grudges and distrust towards each other are not yet solved, and the border is considered a hazardous location on both sides of the militants and state police.

Border Closures and Economic Disruption:

The fighting led to the suspension of trade and transportation since it compelled the closure of key crossing crossings such as the Torkham and Chaman. Thousands of freight trucks are stranded by the bilateral trade suspension at the border of Torkham, which processes on a daily basis.

Long-term border closures have disrupted:

Trade Flows: The bilateral trade was projected to be between 2 and 3 billion dollars annually, where Afghanistan would export dry fruits and agricultural products and Pakistan would export textiles, cement and pharmaceutical goods.

Market prices: The disruption of the supply chain has seen prices of such essential commodities as tomatoes skyrocket and it will illustrate the economic jolt impact on ordinary consumers.

Employment losses: The shutdown of border trade has already resulted in losses of the revenue of the logistic companies, clearing agents and transport staff.

Prospects for Stability and cooperation

Diplomatic Engagement and Confidence Building:

Even when defeated most of the time, diplomatic communication is essential. The disclosed opening of Torkham that was agreed upon in flag discussions can be viewed as an example of the

way the negotiating process can be organized and help to defuse the tension and restore the economic processes. Sustaining these interactions, perhaps with the help of third parties, might over time help build confidence. Along with helping facilitate official diplomatic mechanisms, civil society and tribal jirgas (societies) can foster inter-communal levels of trust between border territories.

Economic Re-Integration and Diversification:

The incentive structure between the two states is very strong to revive and protect cross border trade. Having stable trade regulations and reopening of key crossings would reduce the economic shocks and lifestyles that rely on bilateral trade. Besides increasing the trade networks in Afghanistan, the concurrent redirection of Afghanistan freight to Iran and Central Asian routes could also help to exert pressure on Pakistan which can be used as leverage to decrease the pressure on Pakistan which is a structural change that would change the economic architecture in the region.

Regional and Multilateral Support Mechanisms:

Some of the examples of regional organizations that can facilitate and promote cooperative outcomes include China, Iran, and Gulf countries. Cooperation in trade and security: The interest of Iran in providing alternative corridors and involvement in the work on regional connectivity such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by China are also examples of different forms of interaction between these countries on a diplomatic level.

Integrated Border Management:

Border management methods that are multidisciplinary are required to deal with the structural drivers of instability. These are synchronized patrol, biometric technologies, increased surveillance and socioeconomic development of the borderlands. Such combinations of technologies, diplomacy and local development schemes may decrease the illegal smuggling and militant infiltration and encourage economic opportunities within the affected regions.

Conclusion

The border security between Pakistan and Afghanistan is one of the major challenges of the South Asian and regional geopolitics. It pointed out that the border is a complex zone characterized by security threats, political mistrust, economic interdependence and humanitarian concerns and not merely a stretch of land. It was also in the introduction that the explanation was given as to why the 2014-2025-time frame was selected and it was observed that there were few major developments during this period including the increased counterterrorism by Pakistan, the political developments in Afghanistan, the exit of foreign troops and the Taliban resurgence. Collectively, all these changes altered the border security situation, so this period of time is particularly relevant to the academic literature. The ongoing insecurity along the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, yet it also showed a major deficiency in the earlier research. Much of the literature did not involve a time-limited analysis which puts into consideration the political, economic and security factors in preference of focusing on historical conflicts or individual security events. This review further found out that the efficacy of border management strategies and diplomatic involvement are less agreed upon despite academics admitting to cross-border militancy and Durand Line dispute as important issues. These gaps identified in the paper were used to indicate that the border security problem is being contributed to by theoretical comprehension and current developments between 2014 and 2025. They used the security dilemma, border management theory, and the regional security complex theory to assist in explaining why the attempt by Pakistan

to enhance border security regularly posed a challenge to the sovereignty of Afghanistan, and that this may include military actions, surveillance, and creation of fences.

Conflict of Interest

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