

PAK-AFGHAN BORDER MANAGEMENT: DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTROVERSIES

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Abstract

Border mismanagement has been a cause of tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan ever since the formation of Pakistan. Contrarily, a well-managed border can lead to improved economic and security situation. The movement across border has become a security concern due to the presence of militants in the area. The data suggests the economic and security costs that Pakistan has incurred due to a mismanaged border. This study analyzes Pakistan's efforts at border management with Afghanistan, with various mechanisms been put to practice as Pakistan vies for regional peace. However, recently Pakistan has constructed gateways and fenced its border with Afghanistan, which has reduced terrorist activities significantly. Given the context, this study endeavors to explore how would the management of Pak-Afghan border bring regional peace? The article also explores challenges in addition to charting a future path for Pak-Afghan relations.

Keywords: *Border Management, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Security, Terrorism, Peace*

Introduction

In order to boost economic development and security of the state, it has become indispensable to secure borderlands. Recent examples of border management are that of the United States' (US) border with Mexico and India's border with Bangladesh. The US has been fencing its border under the *Secure Fence Act* to ensure better control over its border with Mexico.¹ The triggering factor behind the US act was security and

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¹ Morgan Brinlee, "What's The Secure Fence Act of 2006? Here's Why It's Relevant To The Border Wall Debate," *Bustle*, December 31, 2018.

controlling illegal migrants. Likewise, India has also fenced its border with Bangladesh due to security issues and illegal movement of people. Pakistan's case is very close to these instances as it shares almost 7,092 km long border (total) with its neighboring states. Pakistan shares 2,912 km long border with India, while with Afghanistan border length is almost 2,611 km. Pakistan and China share 523 km long border and Iran has almost 909 km long border with Pakistan. Rest of the coastline area is nearly 1,046 km.² Out of the four above mentioned neighbors, the most perilous border of Pakistan is with Afghanistan, which has become a serious security challenge.

Eleven out of thirty-four provinces (wilayats) of Afghanistan are connected with Pakistan's former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA); Balochistan is also linked with the border of Afghanistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) is physically attached with Afghan territory. Overall, twenty-three villages are situated in the Pak-Afghan border area (in Balochistan 17 and in FATA six villages). The local populace has empathy for each other, as they are very much alike and same culture binds them together; however, the border splits Pashtun ethnic groups. These territories of Pakistan are besides a porous border, and the people living on both sides of the border are predominantly Pashtuns.³ The Pashtun tribes have a long history of attachment with these areas where their ancestral background has deep roots.

In this background, villagers were granted permission to move without obstruction and to meet each other freely. However, a prevailing fallacy is that the Durand line agreement had granted such easement rights to the people to move freely. This study will divulge that the easement rights were not given in any document. Yet the misunderstanding still prevails that the Durand Line agreement of 1893 had given such rights enabling the free movement of people.⁴ In reality, there is no mention of these rights which grew as a de-facto norm due to the practices of the people. The substantive misunderstanding led Afghanistan towards a state of denial and engendered its animosity towards Pakistan. It is therefore pertinent to shun such wrong statements and to comprehensively study the matter. The objective of this study is to examine historical decisions related to the Pak-Afghan border and to rectify the misperceptions related to Pakistan's border management efforts.

² Ehsan Mehmood Khan, "Border Management: The Case of Pakistan and Afghanistan Border," *Hilal*, July, 2014.

³ Abubakar Siddique, *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Co, 2014), 11.

⁴ Ahmer Bilal Soofi, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Management: A Legal Perspective," *Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT)*, March 1, 2015, 15.

In 2016, Pakistan started to fence its border to keep criminals and terrorists away from its territory. The effort of Pakistan for border management is being portrayed by Afghanistan as a violation of the agreement of 1893. Moreover, Afghanistan is also blaming Pakistan for creating divide between the families living along the border. In this backdrop, this study highlights that the fencing of Pakistan-Afghanistan border is not meant to segregate people or to curb economic activities. Ongoing border management efforts of Pakistan will not disturb the tribes residing on both sides, rather it will reduce tensions between the two states.

In order to ease mutual tensions and deal with terrorism, bilateral talks of political elites, military leadership and security agencies of both Pakistan and Afghanistan have been conducted several times since 9/11. Moreover, time to time meetings of Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) and both sides' Corps Commanders have become a norm but the movement of people remained an unresolved issue. Thus, it was decided to focus on border management to ensure enhanced security. Pakistan strived to launch an effective mechanism of border management because issues of illegal movement of people and incidents of terrorism can better be addressed through cooperation between the two neighboring states.⁵

Historical Background

History shows that the prevailing friction in Pak-Afghan relations is largely due to the historical mistakes of the empires as the Great Game of 19th century was the hallmark of geopolitical tension. The British Empire wanted to expand into Afghanistan to counter Russia's growing sway in Central Asia. Both empires were expanding their powers by bringing important regions under their control. On the move of Russia towards Central Asian states, the British assumed that its next target would be Afghanistan. The impending Russian dominance was worrying the British and the 19th century was a nightmare for the British as they were fearful of possible Russian invasion of India via Afghanistan. Therefore, they sought to keep Russia away from the subcontinent. Afghanistan's geopolitical position became essential for the British as it was an important route of its trade with Central Asia, yet it was not an easy place to rule.⁶ Later, a proper border was mutually accepted by the British and Russian Tzars and Afghanistan became a buffer between the two empires. Britain signed a border agreement namely the 'Durand line' with local rulers of Afghanistan and the border was amicably demarcated

⁵ Editorial "Pak-Afghan Border Management," *Pakistan Today*, February 20, 2016.

⁶ William Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 25.

in 1895. However, Pak-Afghan tensions started to appear immediately after the independence of Pakistan when Afghan government raised the issue of the legal status of the Pak-Afghan border (namely Durand Line). Afghanistan's constant propaganda over the border also created confusion amongst the people on both sides.

In late 20th century, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan received noticeable regional and international attention due to the geographical proximity of Afghanistan to Middle East and South Asia. In order to maintain pro-communist government in Afghanistan, from 1979 to 1989, the Soviet Union was engaged with Afghanistan. Concurrently, many complications transpired in regional and international politics. The USSR was marching towards South Asia, it was close to Pakistan and Iran⁷ which raised concerns of Middle Eastern states and made the US' allies fear for their future. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) also approved an anti-Soviet resolution proclaiming the Russian intervention despicable.⁸ Even the Muslim world, in an international Islamic conference (1987), called for instant departure of the Soviet armies from Afghanistan.⁹

The bordering states of Afghanistan, therefore, redesigned foreign policies and their defence policies were directly affected by the regional changes. China took Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as a part of Soviet strategy to encircle China. The troubled area of China, Xinjiang province, had become a main concern of China, and Beijing was busy in eliminating linkages of separatists of the region with external supporters. China experienced sour relations with the Soviet Union and India as both were allies. Consequently, Beijing started to help Islamabad and Washington to turn the tide of Soviet influence.¹⁰

Iran was not involved in this developing geopolitical rivalry because of the 1979 Iranian revolution, but it was quietly observing all the events in the region and supporting anti-communist groups economically as well as technically.¹¹ Some Central Asian states (such as Uzbekistan and

⁷ Linda Racioppi, *Soviet Policy Towards South Asia Since 1970* (New York: Cambridge university Press, 1994), 101.

⁸ "Afghanistan & the United Nations," <https://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/un-afghan-history.shtml>

⁹ Marshall Cavendish, *World and Its Peoples* (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 340.

¹⁰ Manzoor Khan Afridi and Musab Yousufi, "Pak-China Joint Strategy against the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, vol. 3, (August, 2014): 67.

¹¹ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Regional Dynamics of the Soviet War in Afghanistan and Its Aftermath," in *The Regional Dimensions to Security, Other Sides of Afghanistan*, ed. Aglay Snetkov and Stephen Aris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 128.

Kyrgyzstan) had been mobilized and they started to work against the communists, while other Central Asian states remained inactive. India and Pakistan had an influential role in the Soviet-Afghan encounter. India was supporting the communist government in Afghanistan because of its strong ties with the USSR. However, due to the fear of uprising by a large population of Indian Muslims, India refrained from openly supporting communists in Afghanistan. As far as Pakistan is concerned, it had apprehensions over the situation in Afghanistan due to religious affinity and sharing of long border. Certainly, intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was affecting the internal and external security of Pakistan. A large portion of Afghanistan's population started to cross the border and enter Pakistan. Consequently, with severe social problems associated with refugee influx, Pakistan also started facing economic pressures.

Owing to the security environment, the region became a hub for illegal migration and arms. This exacerbated regional power politics and all the neighbouring states of Afghanistan began to strengthen their military capability. The subsequent military build-up became a noticeable phenomenon in the region. International power politics overpowered the foreign policies of neighbouring states. The growth of an extremist mind-set was the product of Great Powers to get their short term interests. This led to an endless fiasco of terrorism and extremism in the region, eventually becoming dangerous not only for region but also for the world.

The Soviet withdrawal led to consequences such as proliferation of small arms, smuggling, drug trafficking, illegal border crossing and growth of militants. Drug trafficking became a very serious issue between the Pakistan and Afghanistan. Even today, the Taliban's income is largely dependent on opium cultivation. According to United Nations' office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), poppy cultivation has increased in Afghanistan.¹² Overall, the security situation has deteriorated and even with the long stay of US in Afghanistan, the situation could not be changed.

Porous Border and the Security of Pakistan

The US attack on Afghanistan marked the beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). This war worsened the security situation of Pakistan as it became the front line state and also participated in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Several operations against militants have been conducted successfully along the Pak-Afghan border including the former FATA and the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA). The terrorists managed to hide themselves due to the difficult terrain of the border region. Along with Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the ISIS, there are several other non-state actors present in Afghanistan

¹² UNDOC, "Challenges to Sustainable Development, Peace and Security," *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017, UNDOC Report 2018*, 4.

working to subvert Pakistan's efforts of peace. Moreover, Pakistan-Afghanistan volatile border has been used by India to spread terrorism in the region and defame Pakistan. India has also supported and financed the separatist movement in Balochistan.¹³ Against this backdrop, Pakistan decided to secure its border with Afghanistan; it had no alternative except unilaterally managing its border with Afghanistan. This step is not only in the interest of Pakistan but also in the interest of regional security.¹⁴

The Pak-Afghan borderland is an uneasy landscape comprising of narrow valleys, high mountain ranges, and barren areas as its main features. Due to the difficult topography, the demarcation of border becomes difficult. The Southern area is tropical whereas the Northern part is mountainous. Pamir ranges, the Himalaya, and the Hindu Kush mountains are dangerous due to uneven passages. Notwithstanding geographical complexities, nearly 30 million people still manage to live there.¹⁵

Pakistan and Afghanistan have almost nine formal border crossing points, of which three have international status namely Chaman, Torkham and Spin Boldak. The other six are bilateral namely Angor Adda, Arandu (Chitral), Ghulam Khan (North Waziristan), Kharlachi (Kurram), Gursal (Bajaur), Chaman (Balochistan) and Nawa Pass (Mohmand).¹⁶ For crossing purposes, the areas of Torkham and Chaman are used for entry and exit of people and traffic. Moreover, some local tribes and nomads often use the border for smuggling. Several crossing points made by locals are being used for such illegal activities as smuggling. Therefore, monitoring becomes essential for border security and to quell illegal activities. In this regard; levies, Pakistan Customs Service and Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) are deputed to control the check posts. In order to prevent illegal crossing of border, customs officials, levies and Khassadars monitor crossing points of the border.

Al- Qaeda and Afghan Taliban rekindled jihad in the tribal areas of Pakistan, with the US intervention in Afghanistan. In 2002, the unregulated Pak-Afghan border provided conducive environment to terrorists, such as Mullah Omer and Mullah Dadullah, to establish their connections with tribal elders/religious personalities to establish a wing of Afghan Taliban in FATA.¹⁷ Finances and other support was provided to nascent groups by Al Qaeda and security became the key concern of the region. Several

¹³ Syed Mudassir Ali Shah, "Subtle Policy Shift," *Dawn*, May 1, 2015.

¹⁴ Zamir Akram, "Pak-Afghan International Border and Regional Security," *Hilal*, June 1, 2017.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Pakistan Border Crossings," *Caravanistan: The Silk Road Travel Guide*, August 5th, 2019.

¹⁷ Moeed Yusuf, "Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge," (Washington D.C.; Georgetown University Press, 2014), 28.

foreign NGOs and humanitarian workers were attacked by terrorists groups.¹⁸ Thus, regular forces were deployed in FATA along the Pak-Afghan border. President Musharraf convinced the tribal people that those operations were meant to destroy foreign-funded terrorist groups. The militant groups of FATA and other terrorists active in KPK formed TTP after Lal-Masjid (Red Mosque) incident in 2007. Some other local jihadist movements joined jihadist activities in Afghanistan and TTP declared the state of Pakistan as illegitimate.¹⁹

In April 2007, for the first time the idea was considered in Pakistan to fence its border and consequently, 12 km long border was fenced in North Waziristan which was ripped by Afghan forces, causing tension and exchange of fire between the two states' forces. Another effort at securing the border was by digging a trench in April 2013 along the border in Balochistan (this has been completed in 2016). The width and depth of the ditch is fourteen feet and eleven feet respectively. The plan of fencing started with the most dangerous points, where the infiltration was easy, i.e. Mohmand, Khyber agencies and Bajuar. Fencing of the Pak-Afghan border is meant for restraining criminals, terrorists and ensure internal security of Pakistan. Certainly, the internal and external security situation would get better with this undertaking.

The Calculus of Pakistan's Efforts

Historically, US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and other Middle Eastern states have given birth to non-state actors. Thereafter non-traditional concept of war has become popular. This has increased the importance of managed borders because vulnerable borders are easy to violate. There are some good examples of states using different methods to secure their borders:

1. The integrated border management system is the best example in Schengen states as they all are integrated in the European Union. Thus, successful management of borders was devised by the European Union.
2. Another example of managing borders is coordinated border management which includes public service agencies working in a coordinated manner to achieve a common goal. Hence, efficient and effective role of agencies makes regularized borders and ensures security. Actually coordinated border management makes trade possible and enhances border security.²⁰ There are two

¹⁸ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2004," *US Department of State*, April 2005, 70.

¹⁹ Moeed Yusuf, "Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge," 44.

²⁰ Stefan Aniszewski, "Coordinated Border Management-a Concept Paper," *World Custom Organization*, 2010).

aspects of coordinated border management: first is domestic and the other, international. State agencies' collaboration and cooperation between neighbouring countries makes it successful. Thus, communication is the central part of coordinated border management.

In the light of the above mentioned mechanisms, Pak-Afghan border appears manageable; yet there are certain controversies curbing Pakistan's efforts to manage its border. Keeping in view the physical features of Afghanistan-Pakistan border, it is too difficult to monitor the activities of illegal travelers. Hence, the movement of terrorists, illegal drug trafficking and human trafficking has been almost impossible to control. Military operations managed to eliminate most of the terrorists from the tribal parts of Pakistan. Subsequently, terrorists repositioned their centers and found safe havens in Afghanistan from where terrorist attacks are being launched inside Pakistan. Strong evidences affirm that the terrorists who attacked Army Public School in 2014, were trained in Afghanistan. Similarly, Bacha Khan University in January 2016 became the target of Afghanistan based terrorists.²¹ In 2019, the terrorists who targeted Pearl Continental hotel Gwadar received their training in Afghanistan.

In order to protect its interests, Pakistan has finally started to fence its border as all sovereign nations are allowed to do. Since border management is for the security and betterment of nations, it must not be taken as an offensive step. The purpose is merely to regulate the arrival and departure of people and goods for which various methods have been introduced. Regular police monitoring, immigration departments and demarcated borders have reduced terrorist activities. Pakistan's government has taken several steps to secure its border which are discussed in detail as follows:

Border Security

On 1st June, 2016, Pakistan informed the Afghan government about the border management initiative which was a part of National Action Plan 2015 to root out terrorists from Pakistan.²² In response, a strong opposition came from the Afghan side and exchange of fire from both sides took place on the border causing deaths as well. In Afghanistan protests were held against Pakistan in which the flag of Pakistan was burnt and speeches were made. Reciprocally, emotions ran high in Pakistan too and

²¹ Sabz Ali Tareen and Javed Aziz Khan, "Terrorists hit Bacha Khan University," *The News*, January 21, 2019.

²² Amina Khan, "Issues in Pak-Afghan Border Management," *ISSI Issue Brief*, September 26, 2016 :2.

demand for the eviction of Afghan migrants from Pakistan was raised.²³ Even on 18th August, 2016, Bab-e-Dosti (gateway between Pakistan and Afghanistan) was closed and later reopened upon Afghanistan's apology. Islamabad has been working on different options to make its border secure as it would be helpful for both states in eliminating terrorist outposts. However, the Afghan government showed its discontentment over Pakistan's efforts for peace.

Terrorists' activities can only be barred through coordination and cooperation of neighbouring states. Kabul needs to understand that frequent unregulated border crossings, approximately of 40000 to 50000 people per day,²⁴ is not gainful. For that reason, entry of people without travel documents was banned by the government of Pakistan, which Afghan government called a step to divide families and clans. The issue gets further hype when the Afghan government blames Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism. Even before military operations against the terrorists within Pakistan's borders, Islamabad informed Kabul and other officials of the US about militants escaping to Afghanistan for refuge and it also asked for appropriate action against them. However, the other side did not cooperate and anti- Pakistan terrorists acquired sanctuaries in Afghanistan.²⁵

According to the Pakistan Army, it has completed fencing of 900 km²⁶ border with Afghanistan, while regularizing the movement of people and barring infiltrators from entering. The entire western border with Afghanistan is being fenced, and border posts and forts are under construction too. Moreover, border surveillance has also been accelerated. Reportedly 338 posts and forts are planned, almost 43 have been completed and construction work continues over 63 points.²⁷ Pakistan dug a trench along the Pak-Afghan border in Balochistan in 2013.²⁸ Two controlling agencies are active on Torkham border i.e. Pakistan Frontier Corps (PFC) and Afghan Border Police (ABP). Moreover, a few miles away from Torkham, the US Forward Operating Base located in Nangarhar is also assisting border force of Afghanistan.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Atif khan, "Pakistan to Build more Gates at Pak-Afghan Border," *The Nation*, September 06, 2016.

²⁵ Maryam Nazir, "Border Management," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)*, June 30, 2016.

²⁶ "Work on 900km Pak-Afghan Border Fence Completed: Army," *Dawn*, January 28, 2019.

²⁷ "Border Management: Pakistan Starts Fencing Afghan Border to Curb Infiltration," *The Express Tribune*, June 20, 2017.

²⁸ Qaiser Butt, "Cross-border Movement: Ditch along Pak-Afghan Border to Cost Rs14 billion," *Express Tribune*, January 3, 2015.

Passenger Facilitation Centres

Pakistan has opened a facilitation centre for passengers at Torkham border to check the proper documents of travellers coming or going from either side. The decision was taken on May 01, 2016, to check the luggage and documents of every passenger at the Torkham border. In this regard, modern scanning machines have been installed for which the Supreme Court of Pakistan issued an order. To keep the record of imports and exports, a computerized system has been introduced. WeBOC (web-based online customs) service has been introduced at important points for improvement of border management.²⁹ To make border control effective and ensure the cooperation of Afghanistan, the crossing point at Angoor Adda in South Waziristan, Pakistan, has been handed over to the control of Afghanistan. The idea of giving the management of this crossing to Afghanistan was to maintain brotherly ties between the two states. Moreover, Afghan nationals are allowed to enter in Pakistan with proper travel documents after going through a proper system of checking. National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) centres have also been built on the Friendship Gate to verify identities.³⁰ On January 01, 2017, carrying a valid passport became mandatory as several fake identity cases were reported previously. Shinwari tribesmen are allowed to show the 'Rahdari' (Passage) cards, issued in September 2015 to them and therefore, they are exempted from showing passports at the entry points. These cards can be renewed after six months to maintain transparency.

Merger of FATA with KPK

Besides regularizing people's movement, some internal steps have also been taken to secure the border. The FATA merger with KPK was an important step to ensure peace; however, Afghanistan harshly termed this merger as a violation of the 1921 Rawalpindi treaty between British and Afghanistan. The people of FATA (now part of KPK) were living almost in a lawless environment as they had no access to the apex courts of Pakistan. The people of FATA were not allowed *appeal*, *wakeel* (to consult a lawyer) and *daleel* (evidence) under Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR). This law was implemented by the British in which residents of these areas were subjected to systematic mistreatment.³¹ Some areas of FATA were considered the most difficult parts of Pakistan in terms of establishment of government's writ. Therefore, the idea of reforms in FATA was proposed

²⁹ Ali Hazrat Bacha, "Passenger Facilitation Center Opens at Torkham," *Dawn*, April 27, 2016.

³⁰ Saleem Shahid, "Afghan Border Reopened after 12 Days," *Dawn*, September 02, 2016.

³¹ Salman Bangash, "Areas of Concern: Problems with the FATA Merger," *Herald*, August 09, 2018.

long ago but could not be implemented. Certainly, the US invasion of Afghanistan to fight terrorism increased pressures on Pakistan. In order to wear out the influence of the Taliban, constitutional rights needed to be granted to the local populace; yet, successive governments failed to introduce reforms because of internal political divisions and external pressures.

Although the government of Pakistan has been struggling for FATA reforms since US intervention in Afghanistan, in December 2014 the barbaric attack by terrorists on Army Public School, Peshawar persuaded the government to tackle this complicated issue and National Action Plan was launched to root out terrorism from FATA and the country at large. It took four years to implement the decision of merger and May 24, 2018, was the day when Pakistan's National Assembly passed the thirty-first constitutional amendment for FATA's merger.³² The number of seats in the KPK Assembly increased when the seats from FATA were added to it. The people of FATA will finally be able to exercise their civil rights on an equitable basis and elites would not be able to violate human rights there anymore.

Challenges in Border Management

Although Pakistan has made serious efforts to secure the Pak-Afghan border against militants' movement across the border and drug trafficking, several problem areas still exist which need to be addressed with the cooperation of both the states.

Illegal Cross-Border Activities

One of the challenges is that the Afghan government as well as the Taliban have refused to accept this border as an international border. Rather they regard all statements and actions by Pakistan related to the legal status of the Durand Line as impertinent.³³ In the name of economic activities, illegal cross-border activities such as smuggling have become a matter of routine. Notwithstanding Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), signed in 2010 and becoming effective in 2011,³⁴ smuggling has continued unabated. The Taliban took advantage of the disengagement of the US from Afghanistan in 2014 when the charge of security was given to the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF), principally in Nuristan and Kunar.³⁵ Continuous terrorist attacks inside

³² Amir Wasim, "National Assembly Green-Lights FATA-KP Merger by Passing 'Historic' Bill," *Dawn*, 24 May 2018.

³³ "Durand Line is Border, Says US," *Dawn*, October 25, 2012.

³⁴ "Afghanistan's Transit Trade Patterns Pre & Post APTTA," *The Pakistan Business Council*, 2010.

³⁵ Jon Boone, "Pakistani Taliban Selects Hardliner Mullah Fazlullah as New Leader," *The Guardian*, November 8, 2013.

Pakistan were the main trigger behind the decision to seal the border and install effective mechanisms for border management. In 2007, biometric system was installed at Chaman border crossing point.³⁶ There was a severe backlash over this move from Afghanistan. The challenge of cross border smuggling and militants' movement still persists and can only be eliminated with Afghan cooperation.

The Pashtun Question

The Pashtun identity has become a political, ethnic and geographical issue. Since 1947, Afghanistan has been claiming the Pashtun populated areas of Pakistan. In 1930, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan started Organization for Promoting Reforms among Afghans in North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). The party won the elections in NWFP in 1937 and 1946. Later on, a plebiscite was held there in which more than half the population favoured to join Pakistan.³⁷ Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan gave a vote of allegiance to Pakistan as well but subsequent issues lingered on.

Both, Pakistan and Afghanistan have Pashtun population which is of approximately 43 million. In order to put pressure on Pakistan, Afghanistan has been raising the issue of identity of Pashtuns living in Pakistan. The idea of 'Pakhtunistan' demanding a separate land for the ethnic Pashtuns residing along the border of two states, was supported for a long time by Afghanistan.³⁸ Pakistan was concerned over the emerging Pashtun movement which intended to merge the Pashtun populated areas of Pakistan with Afghanistan.³⁹ The sub-nationalist groups regarded the demarcation of the border as contrary to the interests of the tribes living along both sides of the border and demanded a separate state for Pashtuns which would include Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and some areas of Balochistan.⁴⁰ Therefore, Afghanistan still opposes the fencing of the border on grounds that it would upset lives of the Pashtuns living on both

³⁶ "First Biometrics System Installed at Border Crossing with Afghanistan," *Gulf News*, January 11, 2007.

³⁷ Abubakar Siddiqui, *The Pashtun Question*, 43.

³⁸ Amina Khan, "Pak-Afghan Border: A Case Study of Border Management," *Strategic Studies* 37, no 3 (2017): 24.

³⁹ Amin Saikal, "Afghanistan and Pakistan: the Question of Pashtun Nationalism?" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30 (2010): 6.

⁴⁰ Daniel Pinéu and Andrea Fleschenberg, "Border Crossings: The Politics of Transnationality in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier Region," https://comum.rcaap.pt/bitstream/10400.26/7669/1/NeD131_DanielPineu_AndreaFleschenberg.pdf

sides of the border.⁴¹ The issue is causing rifts between the two neighbouring countries as the root cause lies in history.

External Involvement

Afghanistan sought support of the US and USSR over the issue of Pakhtunistan (separate land for Pashtuns); however, it could not garner the support of the US because of Pak-US alliance during the Cold War. Pakistan and India have historically maintained links with different Afghan governments. As far as neighbouring states are concerned, India developed better relations with Afghanistan because of the latter's tensions with Pakistan. India chose to work with the Soviet installed puppet governments in Afghanistan and also supported Ahmed Shah Masood's Northern Alliance during the course of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.⁴²

In the current scenario, the US is backing India's increased role in Afghanistan.⁴³ India is also investing in Afghanistan and strengthening their mutual ties to encircle Pakistan. The growing nexus of Afghan government with India is therefore the main concern of Pakistan. Undoubtedly, India is involved in tarnishing Pakistan's name at the international level by accusing it of sponsoring cross-border terrorism. Meanwhile India supports Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Baloch separatist movements in Balochistan in order to destabilize Pakistan internally.⁴⁴ The involvement of Indian spy Kulbhushan Yadav with terrorist elements planning attacks within Pakistan and his confession of destabilizing Balochistan is a glaring example of India's bad intentions in Pakistan.

The Attitude of Afghanistan

All the peace efforts of Pakistan for border security are being sabotaged by the Afghan government. The hateful speeches and political provocation by the Afghan leadership has promoted abhorrence against Pakistan in the general populace. Former President of Afghanistan, Mr. Hamid Karzai, adopted a harsh attitude towards Pakistan and refused to recognize the borderline between Pakistan and Afghanistan. By mirroring the anti-Pakistan Indian rhetoric, he blamed Pakistan as a terror-mongering state. While talking to the media, he once stated, "The

⁴¹ Brad L. Brasseur, "Recognizing the Durand Line," *East West Institute* (2011): 8.

⁴² Nicholas Howenstein and Sumit Ganguly, "India- Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs, Columbia*, Mar 25, 2010.

⁴³ "US Wants India to Play a More Active Role in Afghanistan," *The Economic Times*, July 12, 2018.

⁴⁴ Mir Sherbaz Khetrin, "Indian Interference in Balochistan: Analysing the Evidence and Implications for Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 3 (2017): 114.

Government of Pakistan has no legal authority to dictate terms on the Durand line".⁴⁵

After 9/11, Pakistan played a significant role in the War on Terror and it facilitated the US to militarily intervene in Afghanistan. The long duration of fight against terrorism has affected Pakistan because of its shared border with Afghanistan. Owing to the serious threat of terrorist attacks and the Afghan-US allegations on Pakistan for providing safe havens to terrorists,⁴⁶ a barrier was needed on the porous Pak-Afghan border. Former President Musharraf then suggested the fencing of Pak-Afghan border to control terrorist infiltration,⁴⁷ so that unauthorized movement over the border area could be controlled through border management. Initially, the plan was to fence the highly dangerous areas such as points of infiltration, illegal trade and drug trafficking.

Afghanistan considered that under the cover of prevention of terrorism, Pakistan was scheming to convert the unsettled Durand Line into a settled international border. In this way, Pakistan would also gain the support of the US. The former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai was against this fencing and proclaimed that this would split the Pashtun families whereas terrorists would not be deterred.⁴⁸ Still in 2007, 35km border with Afghanistan was fenced by Pakistan.⁴⁹ In the same year, during the Prime Minister of Pakistan's Kabul visit, he asserted that the fence would stop unsought people from crossing over either side but it did not yield a positive Afghan response.⁵⁰ Some Pashtuns of Balochistan and KPK were against the fencing and labelled it a division of Pashtuns.

When Pakistan proceeded with border fencing, clashes took place and exchange of fire was also reported. Pakistan received foreign offers to mitigate tensions and effective border management mechanisms were also offered including the mini-mobile radar system. However, no technology was received from any country. Subsequently, the government of Pakistan decided to start the border fencing again. Pakistan has deployed its troops on the borderland area and special radars are being installed for aerial

⁴⁵ "Ex-Afghan President Says Kabul Won't Recognise Durand Line," *The Nation*, March 5, 2017.

⁴⁶ "Clash Erupts between Afghan, Pakistani Forces over Border Fence," *South Asia News*, April 20, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20130123143833/http://news.monstersandcritics.com/southasia/news/article_1293995.php/Clash_erupts_between_Afghan_Pakistani_forces_over_border_fence_

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Barbs Fly at Kabul Meet: Aziz Agrees to Set up Jirga Commission, Karzai Complains about Aid to Taliban," *Dawn*, January 05, 2007.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Ties Deteriorating, Karzai tells Shaukat," *The News*, January 5, 2007.

surveillance. Around 338 border posts and forts were supposed to be completed till 2019.⁵¹

Afghanistan's Concerns

Pakistan's efforts to manage Pak-Afghan border is being portrayed by the Afghan government as an oppressive tactic and the violation of international law. Their grievances are over the construction of new infrastructure and defence installations. They also contend that before putting up the military installations, Pakistan did not convey the message to Afghan government. Actually, Afghanistan is showing its concerns for some of its provinces and inhabitants of areas such as Kunar, Paktika, Zabul, Nangarhar, Paktia, Helmand etc situated near Pakistan's territory. Afghanistan is considering it as an attempt to cause segregation between families and also strengthen Pakistan's stance regarding the Durand Line.⁵² However, these are illogical objections of Afghanistan because the said border is internationally recognized and Pakistan is allowed to secure its border and can restrict illegal activities. Meanwhile the parliament of Afghanistan has asked their government to convince Pakistan to stop border fencing. In Kabul, some locals organized a grand Jirga to reject the military installations and fencing of the Durand Line. They also tried to approach the UN to stop this initiative of Pakistan.⁵³

Reciprocally, Pakistan has been trying to convince Afghanistan as to the advantages of effective border management on different occasions. On January 26, 2015, Ishaq Dar, Former Finance Minister of Pakistan, made a speech in a ceremony commemorating World Customs Day. He said Pakistan was determined to introduce Custom-Coordinated border management with its neighbour.⁵⁴ However, Afghanistan neither agreed nor complied with Pakistan's suggestions to manage the border. Afghanistan had been slowing up the border coordination mechanisms, which has resulted in rifts between the two states. Repeated incidents of violation of the border and frequent intrusions from the Afghan side into Pakistan's border area have exacerbated the tension. In May 2017, the border police of Afghanistan opened fire on Pakistani forces assisting the census team which was working in the border area of Chaman.

This move of Afghan forces was a glaring example of border violation which claimed the lives of nine people and forty people were

⁵¹ Amina Khan and Faria Pitafi, "Pak- Afghan Border," *Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI)*, July 21, 2017, 4.

⁵² "The Provocation of Pakistan in Durand Line Torkham," *Bakhtar News*, June 18, 2016.

⁵³ "FATA Elders Reject Fencing Durand Line," *Afghanistan Times*, July 09, 2017.

⁵⁴ "Govt Plans Coordinated Border Management," *Dawn*, January 27, 2015.

injured.⁵⁵ At that time there was no coordination mechanism adopted by the two countries. The discussions over border crossing were going on, and Afghanistan's complaints over militant's movements were becoming loud, but it was still not ready for launching border control mechanisms. The then Prime Minister of Pakistan, on the occasion of a meeting with Afghanistan's President Mr. Ashraf Ghani during the Paris Climate Change Summit, indicated that Pakistan was ready to have negotiations on border management to end the cross-border movement of terrorists.⁵⁶ The offer did not receive a reciprocal response from the Afghan side.

Previously, Afghanistan has shown its displeasure over the border management efforts with the closure of its Peshawar consulate (for a day) and stopped Pakistan's cargo service on entry points of Afghanistan.⁵⁷ The step was actually a retaliation to the operationalization of the border management system at Torkham. Afghanistan blamed Pakistan for not informing about the construction of a gate at Torkham, whereas Sartaj Aziz, the then Prime Minister's advisor on Foreign Affairs, informed the National Assembly about the prior mention to the Afghan government about the building of gate. He maintained that these steps were for the security of both states and did not violate international law.⁵⁸ He also added that the construction of a gate would lead to effective border management.⁵⁹ Suffice it to say that border security will remain elusive without mutual coordination. Thus, the border must be respected to assure future stability in the region.

Conclusion

Border security has got paramount importance in the 21st century because the threat of terrorism has a global reach. The post 9/11 Afghanistan has been characterised as the hub of terrorism by the US. The neighbouring countries of Afghanistan have been affected by the War on Terrorism. Due to the long porous border of Pakistan with Afghanistan, Pakistan decided to not only cooperate with the US and Afghanistan but also realized the need to secure Pakistan's borders. Although Afghanistan has opposed all Pakistani efforts at border management, yet fencing and construction of gates are underway, and checking of travelling documents

⁵⁵ Ali Akbar, "9 killed, over 40 Injured after Afghan Forces Open Fire on Border Village in Chaman," *Dawn*, May 05, 2017.

⁵⁶ "Afghanistan Delaying Move for Border Coordination," *Dawn*, December 05, 2015.

⁵⁷ "Pakistan awaits Afghanistan's Response over Border Management, says FO," *Dawn*, June 02, 2016.

⁵⁸ "Effective Border Management Key to Security, Aziz tells NA," *The Nation*, June 17, 2016.

⁵⁹ "Construction of Gate on Torkham is not Violation of Agreement: Aziz," *Dawn*, June 16, 2016.

and ID cards are mandatory for crossing the Pak-Afghan border now. Pakistan faced criticism of Afghan government on these actions; however, security situation in Pakistan is becoming better as a result of these steps and incidents of terrorism have remarkably reduced in Pakistan. As a matter of fact, Pakistan's internal and external security is directly linked to its borders.

Unfortunately, both Afghanistan and Pakistan have suffered due to the brutal attacks of terrorists across the border which pushed Pakistan to take some pragmatic steps. However, Afghanistan was not ready to recognize the Durand Line as an international border. Kabul needs to understand that improvement of ties with Pakistan is in its own interests as well. It will not only get benefits from China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) but the construction of Peshawar-Kabul Motorway would equally be helpful in the promotion of trade. The trend of accusations would certainly be destabilising both the countries' progress and would be fatal for smooth future relations. It is pertinent to understand that Pakistan and Afghanistan have harmony of interests and it would not be possible to cultivate peace in the presence of mutual distrust. Bilateral talks and cooperation are essential for moving forward in the future as new regional alignments are causing shifts in policies of all states in Asia. Unilateral measures of border management (from either side) would be a short term solution. Thus, both sides should exchange information to root out terrorism. It can be envisioned that proper border posts and forts would improve trade and people to people contacts. Bilateral talks should be held through diplomatic means to discuss and settle the differences.

