

## **Pakistan-Afghan Relations: A Critical Assessment**

**Sundas Malik**<sup>1</sup>, **Ambreen Naz**<sup>2</sup>, **Farhat Asghar**<sup>3</sup>, **Abdul Haq**<sup>4</sup>, **Hani Fatima**<sup>5</sup>,  
**Zain Ul Abiden Malik**<sup>6</sup>,

<sup>1,2</sup>.Visiting Lecturer in Pakistan Studies, PMAS Arid Agricultural University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup>. Research Associate CGSS Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan.

<sup>4</sup>.Lecturer at National Skills University , Islamabad ,Pakistan.

<sup>5</sup>.Ph.D Scholar,Center of Experimental Economics in Education, Shaanxi Normal University , Xia'n China.

<sup>6</sup> Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, North West University, Xia'n China.

Corresponding Author Email:zainulabidenmalik786@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

In terms of geography, race, faith, religion, tradition, and culture, Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighbors. Despite their shared interests, Pakistan and Afghanistan have never had particularly warm relations. The Durand Line issue, refugees, cross-border terrorism, and Indo-Afghan relationships are all examples of areas where Pak-Afghan relations disagree. The Afghan government, on the other hand, undertook a media war against Pakistan with the backing of the Soviet Union and India in order to strengthen anti-Pakistan groups in the nation. Pakistani-Afghan relations evolved dramatically after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, and the country declared war on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for harboring terrorists. Pakistan, on the other hand, remained hopeful that Pak-Afghan relations would improve. For example, Pakistan's political leadership's efforts to reconcile led to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and the promotion of bilateral trade. Because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, it recognizes Pakistan's importance in its economic development.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, US, Economic, Taliban Government, Refugees, Terrorism.

### **Introduction:**

In terms of geography, race, faith, religion, tradition, and culture, Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighbors. Despite their shared interests, Pakistan and Afghanistan have never had particularly warm relations. The Durand Line issue, refugees, cross-border terrorism, and Indo-Afghan relationships are all examples of areas where Pak-Afghan relations disagree(Aneke, Akif, Yousaf, & Jian, 2013; Z. U. abiden Malik et al., 2021). Afghanistan was the only country that protested to Pakistan's admission to the United Nations after it earned independence in August 1947, and refused to recognize Pakistan as a legitimate entity for a period of time. Pakistan's admittance to the United Nations in September 1947 was met with similar opposition in Afghanistan. The seeds of discontent and strife between two

Muslim neighbors were visible in the early stages of Pak-Afghan ties (Durani & Khan, 2002; Yousaf, 2019). In the context of strengthening Pak-Afghan relations, Pakistan, on the other hand, remained upbeat. For example, Pakistan's political leadership's efforts to reconcile resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and the promotion of bilateral trade. Because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, it recognizes Pakistan's importance in its economic development. As a result, any conflict with Pakistan could have financial ramifications for Afghanistan (Mushtaq, 2018; Schricker, 2017). Since the 1950s, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have had several ups and downs due to the region's internal and external dynamics, as well as global politics. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, relations between the two countries deteriorated due to a bloodless coup led by Daud, then the Afghan Prime Minister, against King Zahir Shah, the Saur Revolution in 1978, and the Soviet-US conflict in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan supported the US against Soviet forces (Borthakur, 2017; Riffat, 2015; Usman & Khan, 2017). Furthermore, in 1989, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan after a ten-year battle between Soviet and American soldiers. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, on the other hand, did not bring peace to the country; instead, the situation worsened as the civil war between Mujahideen factions waged on. Meanwhile, Pakistan wished to maintain regional stability by securing the Mujahideen's return to Afghanistan. As a result, Pakistan recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (Amin Tarzi, 2009; Omrani, 2009; Qarabaghi, 2005). Significant countries around the world reacted when the United States declared war on terror with the help of an international coalition. For the sake of world peace, Pakistan elected to support US-led international coalition forces in the war on terror, noting analogies between international law and world politics. Pakistan was recognised as a frontline state in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan due to its strategic depth, and it aided the international coalition greatly by providing logistic and transportation facilities. Despite Pakistan's serious efforts to eradicate terrorism in the region, Afghanistan has long suspected Pakistan (Javaid & Mushtaq, 2014; Z. ul A. Malik, Fatima, & Zhilong, 2018; Qayyum, 2016). Furthermore, Afghanistan was quickly seen forming an alliance with India and Iran in order to thwart Pakistan's ambitions, which has proven to be Afghanistan's biggest blunder to date. The proximity of India to Afghanistan allowed it to continue its ill-conceived clandestine operations against Pakistan on Afghan soil (Baloch & Niazi, 2008; Mazhar & Goraya, 2010; Pant, 2012).

### **Afghanistan's Taliban Government:**

The sad events of September 11th, 2001, marked the beginning of a rapid transformation in global politics. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan broke connections with the Taliban administration in Afghanistan after the World Trade Center attack. Pakistan initially tried to encourage the Taliban leadership to hand over Osama bin Laden to the US in order to avoid a military invasion of the region. On the other hand, the Taliban administration turned down Pakistan's offer and declared war on the US-led coalition. In keeping with the nature and needs of world politics and for the sake of regional peace, Pakistan has finally declared its support for the global coalition against terrorism. Due to a lack of a timescale, the war on terror in Afghanistan persisted, hurting not just Pak-Afghan relations but also the entire region. As a result of the US military's full-scale assault in Afghanistan, many

individuals were slain.(A. U. Khan, Malik, & Fatima, 2020a; A. U. Khan, Malik, Khan, & Fatima, 2021; Z. U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Ashraf, 2019; Riedel, 2008; Sultana, 2015). Following the Taliban's defeat in Afghanistan, the US selected Hamid Karzai, a pro-American president, to keep the peace and oversee the country's affairs. Despite the fact that Afghanistan has a pro-American government, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been unable to reconcile their political and geographic differences. Despite the fact that the post-9/11 circumstances offered Pakistan and Afghanistan an excellent opportunity to reassess their policies and strengthen their bonds, they were unable to do so. Since 2001, Afghanistan and Pakistan have had generally favorable relations, according to President Hamid Karzai, the leader of the Afghan Interim Government. Some members of the Karzai government, on the other hand, have chastised Pakistan for its engagement in the US-led global war on terror and viewed Pakistan's posture with skepticism. Despite the charges, both parties made goodwill gestures. Afghan President Hamid Karzai conducted an official visit to Pakistan in February 2002. His visit was critical to the development of bilateral ties between Islamabad and Kabul. Afghan President Hamid Karzai visited Pakistan on four occasions(Karamat, Muzaffar, & Shah, 2019; Khalid, 2014; Mahmood Ahmad Muzafar, 2015). Afghan President Hamid Karzai visited Pakistan on four occasions. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf paid a follow-up visit to Afghanistan in April 2002. Pakistan promised \$100 million in aid to Afghanistan during the visit to assist with rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives. Normalization of ties had begun in order to combat terrorism. Kabul promptly phoned Pakistan and asked them to join the fight. Similarly, Pakistan was eager to cooperate with the Afghan government to build mutual understanding in order to offer security, peace, and prosperity to the region(Amin Tarzi, 2009; A. A. Khan, 2008; A. U. Khan, Malik, & Fatima, 2020b; Managhan, 2016).

### **Terrorists in Afghanistan must be eliminated:**

Pakistan was essential in demolishing Taliban and Al-Qaeda training sites and setting the groundwork for the complete annihilation of terrorists in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. Pakistan took significant steps to resist Taliban who retreated to the difficult mountainous terrain near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, regrouping to carry out "hit-and-run" attacks against international coalition forces commanded by the US. The US doubted that Osama bin Laden and other extreme Islamic officials, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri and Taliban commander Mullah Omer, were hiding in the remote parts of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border during this operation. Pakistan has been a key player in the United States' complex efforts to destroy Al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremist organizations in the region. Despite Pakistan's earnest efforts to combat terrorism in Afghanistan, the US pressured Pakistan to "do more," claiming that the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other Islamic terrorists were operating along the Pakistan-Afghan border. Pakistan, on the other hand, was completely cooperative in order to keep terrorists from entering the border(Z. U. A. Malik et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2009; Riedel, 2008).

### **The war on terror had wreaked havoc on Pak-Afghan relations:**

The war on terror has produced a lot of instability and disruption in Pak-Afghan relations. Furthermore, Al Qaeda's terrorist activities posed a huge security danger to the region.

Pakistan played a unique role in the war on terror, but it came at the highest cost to Pakistan in the region. Despite the fact that the US led the war in Afghanistan, Pakistan supported US-led forces for regional peace and unity (Hasan, 2005; Z. U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Fatima, 2020; Tariq & Marwat, 2015). Pakistan's leftists argued that the country didn't need to get involved in the conflict. They should keep in mind, however, that Pakistan's unwillingness to join the US-led alliance risks isolating the country from the rest of the globe, which would have major economic and political ramifications. Despite the fact that this conflict may have moved India closer to Afghanistan, India did not benefit greatly from it. Despite the fact that it was a US-led operation, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups saw Pakistan as a key ally in the war on terror. Pakistan has become entangled in the webs of these terrorist organizations. They carried out subversive attacks against US and NATO troops in Afghanistan from across the border (Iqbal, 2010; Khalid & Roy, 2016; Souza, 2015).

### **The Effects of the Global War on Terrorism on Pakistan-Afghan Relations:**

Despite internal security concerns, Pakistan has always been a positive force in Afghanistan's rehabilitation since the US invasion. In order to engage in regional trade, Pakistan has always sought to keep Afghanistan calm. Pakistan has been well-versed in the implications of a destabilized Afghanistan on the country since terrorists in Afghanistan have been wreaking havoc on its border. Unfortunately, the US-led war on terror has left the region in a state of chaos. Afghanistan has been accused of destabilizing the Afghan peace process by Pakistan. According to the Karzai administration, terrorists roamed and operated freely against Afghanistan, with Pakistani aid from the tribal areas (Ahmad, Bakht, & Hassan, 2016; R. A. Malik, 2003; Z. U. A. Malik et al., 2021; Safdar, 2004). These false assertions not only obstructed the development of cordial relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, but they also paved the way for the establishment of Indo-Afghan connections in Afghanistan. The primary goal of India's presence in Afghanistan was almost definitely to conduct covert operations against Pakistan. As a result, Pak-Afghan relations were tainted by the closeness of Indo-Afghan relations. As a result of the war on terror, several obstacles have arisen in terms of the economy, politics, and security of both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the region (Durani & Khan, 2002; Hameed, 2012). The major purpose of the war on terror after 9/11 was to dismantle terrorist networks in Afghanistan and bring peace and stability to the region; nevertheless, it had unexpected repercussions that threw regional peace and security into disarray. The war on terror has produced a lot of turmoil and insecurity in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite the fact that Pakistan fought in the war for regional stability, it was Pakistan that suffered the most in the region. On the other hand, Afghanistan has become a flashpoint for competing regional and extra regional interests (Adnan, 2010; Siddique, 2010). Anti-Pakistani elements in Afghanistan have been energized by international engagement. Pakistan has had the most serious security problems in the last three decades as a result of international forces' engagement in Afghanistan. Both countries are concerned about potential security threats. Pakistan has been frustrated by India's engagement in Afghanistan since India has always exploited Afghanistan to oppose Pakistan's regional interests. India's relations with Afghanistan have undoubtedly strengthened since 9/11, allowing it to exert greater influence over Pakistan in the region (Imran & Xiaochuan, 2017; Pant, 2012).

### **The Afghan refugee influx:**

Pakistan experienced an evacuee crisis as a result of the influx of refugees in the hundreds. A variety of Afghans were already present in Pakistan during the first and second periods of Afghan migration. Around 100,000 refugees from Afghanistan's eastern regions, including Konar, Paktia, and Nangarhar, were transported to Pakistan as a result of Operation Enduring Freedom. To put it another way, the presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has exacerbated the country's sociopolitical and security issues. According to all political parties, intellectuals, and members of civil society in Pakistan, the return of Afghan refugees will benefit both Pakistan and Afghanistan. It would also pave the way for the long-term restoration of peace in the troubled region (Borthakur, 2017; Hussain & Latif, 2012).

### **Conclusion:**

Due to numerous concerns and challenges, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have deteriorated. Pakistan and Afghanistan, as two Muslim neighboring countries, have never had smooth and cordial relations since Pakistan's independence. Afghanistan and Pakistan share many similarities, including religion, history, culture, and tradition. The Durand Line, on the other hand, is the main source of tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Afghan government conducted a propaganda campaign against Pakistan with the help of the Soviet Union and India, in order to strengthen anti-Pakistan groups in Pakistan. After the 9/11 attacks on the United States, Pakistani-Afghan ties shifted dramatically, and it declared war on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for harboring terrorists.

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