

**PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS DURING
PTI GOVERNMENT (2018-2022): A CRITICAL
ANALYSIS**



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2024

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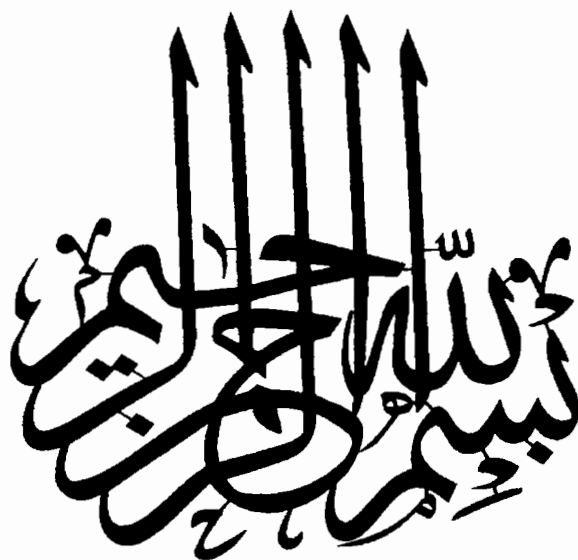
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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & PAKISTAN STUDIES
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
ISLAMABAD**

2024



*In the name of Allah,
the Most Beneficent,
the Most Merciful*

ACCEPTANCE BY THE VIVA-VOCE COMMITTEE

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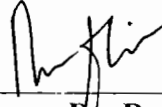
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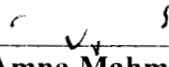
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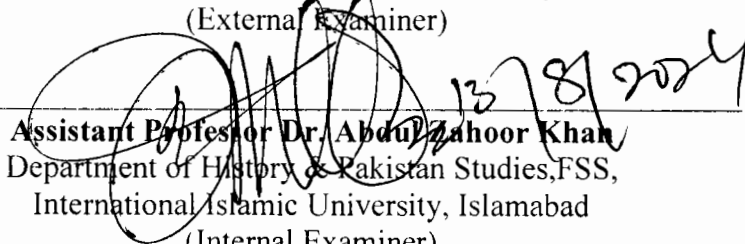
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated

To

The Resilient and Courageous People of Palestine.

DECLARATION

I, Momna Mushtaq hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis, titled as “Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations during PTI Government (2018-2022): A Critical Analysis” is my original work and has not been submitted previously for a degree or any other qualification at this or any other institution. I have conducted the research and written this thesis myself, except where otherwise indicated. I have acknowledged all sources of information and assistance by appropriately citing them in the footnotes and including them in the list of references. I confirm that this work complies with the ethical standards required by and has been approved by the relevant ethical committees where necessary.



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FORWARDING SHEET

The thesis titled as “Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations during PTI Government (2018-2022): A Critical Analysis” submitted by Momna Mushtaq, Regd no.83-FSS/MSPS/F22 in the partial fulfillment of MS Degree in Pakistan Studies has been completed under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied with the quality of student’s research work. She may be awarded MS degree in Pakistan Studies after fulfilling other requirements of the said degree.

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MOMNA MUSHTAQ

ABSTRACT

The basic aim of this study is to understand the relationship of Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2018 to 2022 under the leadership of Pakistan Tehreek -e-Insaf government .This study delves into the key developments, challenges, and shifts in diplomatic, political, economic, and security interactions between the two neighboring nations. However, the relations were also marked by challenges, including border security concerns, cross-border militancy, and the complex issue of refugees during this time frame. The PTI government navigated these challenges through increased security measures and diplomatic engagements. The regional context, including the role of other stakeholders such as the China, India and US also influenced the trajectory of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. This study also highlights the involvement of domestic, regional, and international factors that shaped the bilateral dynamics. It sheds light on the PTI government's strategies, policies, and priorities in its pursuit of a more stable, peaceful, and cooperative relationship with Afghanistan.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
APAPPS	Afghanistan -Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Stability
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
FATA	Federal Administered Tribal Areas
GWOT	Global War on Terror
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq Libya
ISK	Islamic State of Khurasan
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Directorate of Security

OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PICSS	Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies
POR	Proof of Registration
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf
QCG	Quadrilateral Coordination Group
RECCA	Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TAPI	Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan Iran
TTA	Tehreek -e -Taliban Afghanistan
TTP	Tehreek -e -Taliban Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

GLOSSARY

<i>Afghan</i>	Natives of Afghanistan
<i>Amir</i>	Head
<i>Loya Jirga</i>	A traditional Afghan assembly of leaders and elders for major political decision-making and conflict Resolution
<i>Pakhtunistan</i>	Land of Pakhtuns
<i>Quaid-e-Azam</i>	Great Leader
<i>Ulama</i>	Clergy
Tehreek-e-Taliban	Movement of the Taliban
<i>Nizam-e-Adl</i>	System of Justice
<i>Mujahedeen</i>	Holy Warriors
Uti Possidetis Juris	A principle in international law that territory remain with their current possessor at the end of a conflict, agreed by the treaty.

Naya Pakistan

It represents the vision for a reformed, just, and

progressive nation, as envisioned by Imran Khan and

his party, PTI.

Strategic Depth

A controversial concept in Pakistani military strategy

that sought influence in Afghanistan to ensure

Pakistan's Security

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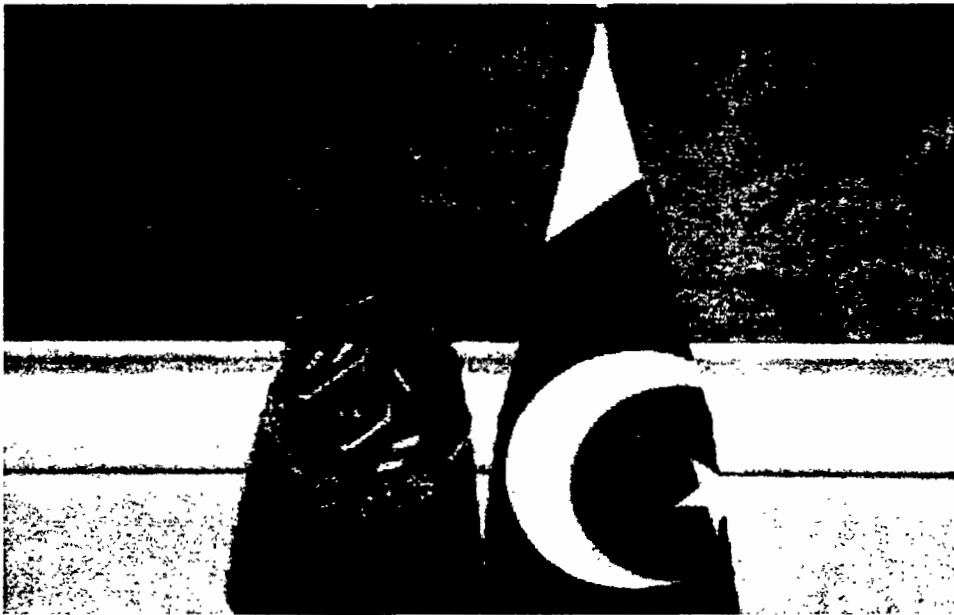
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INTRODUCTION



Foreign policy is the cornerstone of international system under which states interact with one another. In the web of international system states cannot live in isolation. They are dependent upon one another in order to fulfill their objectives. These objectives may be in terms of diplomatic alliances, trade relations, economic relations or security considerations etc. While devising the foreign policy the main thing which comes under consideration is states national interest. National interest is permanent feature of international system but on the other hand its nature is not static which means it changes with the passage of time. Just let take here the example of America .US forces occupied Afghanistan for 20 years but when they thought that now it's not in their national interest to further continue their occupation they decided to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan. Now moving towards Afghanistan, in Afghanistan context after 1747 many super powers ruled Afghanistan for many years but no one prolonged their rule peacefully. Afghanistan

due to its important geographical location remained battle ground for superpowers and for that purpose it is also called as “Graveyard of Empires”. Allama Iqbal also highlighted the importance of Afghanistan in regional stability, predicting that it might face prolonged turmoil. In 1910, he wrote about Afghanistan's unpredictable future, highlighting the difficulty in foreseeing the country's trajectory. Afghanistan was established as a buffer zone by the British between their colonial state and Russian-controlled territories in the late 19th century. Historically, such buffer states have struggled to become significant political entities. Iqbal highlighted Afghanistan's importance by calling it the heart of Asia in one of his poems.¹ According to him if there is harmony in Afghanistan than there will be amity in whole Asia and if there is disturbance in Afghanistan than it will create instability in whole Asian region.

As far as Pakistan and Afghanistan relations are considered it is evident that since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, Pakistan and Afghanistan didn't enjoy cordial relations with one another due to various reasons. In 1947 in United Nations Afghanistan voted against the creation of Pakistan. From onwards Afghanistan and Pakistan alleged one another for interference in internal matters from both sides. As it is said that if there is tilt in base of building than no matter how huge building is constructed, it is a fact that it will remain tilted. Same is the case with Pakistan and Afghanistan relations. It's a reality if Pakistan moves one step forward towards Afghanistan than it takes 3 steps backwards. From historical perspective it is evident that divergence of interest is more than convergence of interest in bilateral relationship between both nations.

Following his appointment as Pakistan's first Governor General, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah outlined the main goals of Pakistan's foreign policy in a broadcast speech

¹ Zaigham Khan, “Pakistan and Afghanistan: National Identity versus Bonds of Blood and Civilization”, *PIPS*, accessed on August 6, 2023, <https://www.pakpips.com/article/7324>

to the American people in February 1948.²

Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed and suppressed people of the world, and in upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter.³

In an interview Fakhr-ul-Islam said that Pakistan's relationship with neighboring Afghanistan is considered as a very permanent feature and it does not change with changes in governments in Pakistan unfortunately. This is a permanent phenomenon. We can say that in case of both countries everything is static and permanent, which does not change with changes in government unfortunately but regardless of all this definitely there are some changes. PTI government and especially Imran Khan is more popular in Afghanistan as compared to other rulers of Pakistan. The reason is that he took some stances before coming into power and made some speeches in favor of Afghans which are in the mind of Afghans and portray his positive image.⁴

This research revolves around the relationship of Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2018 to 2022 under the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. From 2018 to 2022 it was a very critical stage in Pakistan's foreign Policy viz-a-viz Afghanistan. There was not only the transformation of the government system in Afghanistan from democracy to Afghan government what may be called

² Foreign Policy, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Pakistan*. Accessed from <https://mofa.gov.pk/foreign-policy>

³ Foreign Policy, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Pakistan*.

⁴ Fakhrul Islam, interviewed by researcher, 3 January, 2024.

an Islamic democracy or theocratic regime or Taliban government or something like that.⁵

Secondly, at that time, the Doha Peace Agreement represented an important agreement between the United States of America and the Afghan Taliban. The third important thing is after the Taliban came into power in Afghanistan, Pakistan experienced many challenges and hurdles in this regard. In the aftermath of the general elections of 2018 in Pakistan, PTI emerged as a leading power. Before this in 2013, PTI formed the provincial government in KP and after this terrorist activities in KP reduced. While on other hand in Afghanistan from 2018 to 2021 there was government of President Ashraf Ghani later in 2021 Afghan Taliban became successful in government formation in Afghanistan. From the very beginning, Imran Khan was an advocate of friendly relations with neighboring countries.

This period is also very important because the US which is considered as, hegemon of the international system realized the fact that he would not further bear the economic burden of war in Afghanistan. In order to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan American President Donald Trump devised a policy. The Afghan Peace Process is important in this regard. There is no doubt that earlier Pakistani administrations made every effort to contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan. Pakistan's role in the Heart of Asia conference, The Quadrilateral Coordination Group and many other platforms are the best examples of this.⁶ Pakistan from the very beginning is an advocate of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Afghanistan. It is said that history can be change but geography not. In foreign policy, ground realities cannot be ignored. If there is a fire in your neighbor's house, then how you can sit comfortably? The smoke will also come to your

⁵ Manzoor Afridi, interviewed by researcher, 24 March, 2024.

⁶ Amina Khan, "Afghanistan-Pakistan-US-China Quadrilateral Coordination Group", *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*, (January 22, 2016). <https://issi.org.pk/pakistan-united-states-china-quadrilateralcoordination-group-qcg/>

house as well. The same is the case with Pakistan and Afghanistan. If there is instability or disturbance in Afghanistan then definitely it will be problematic for Pakistan as well and vice versa. Pakistan and Afghanistan both are Muslim countries and share the longest border of 2600 kilometers. This research further explains that how both countries interacted with one another during this period. Along with this, it will also explain the policies of the PTI government towards the state of Afghanistan. It further explains the challenges faced by both countries.

As far as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is considered, after coming into power PTI also tried to follow the same foreign policy objectives as given by Pakistan's founder, Jinnah. In this perspective PTI in his party's electoral manifesto clearly stated that after coming into power they make friendly relations with neighboring countries.⁷ Prior to the 2018 election in Pakistan, the PTI under its leader, Imran Khan, had specific views and policies on Afghanistan that were shaped by regional security considerations, economic considerations, and the desire to foster stable bilateral relations. PTI consistently stressed the need for peace in Afghanistan. Imran Khan has frequently underlined the need of a stable Afghanistan for development and peace in the region. The PTI encouraged communication and harmony amongst the various Afghan factions in an attempt to find a political solution to the crisis in that country. Both Imran Khan and the PTI were vocal opponents of military solutions in the Afghanistan conflict, including the US-led intervention. Imran Khan often said that military operations only worsen the situation, and called for a negotiated settlement with all Afghan stakeholders. In addition, the PTI showed humanitarian concern for the thousands of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. While acknowledging the burden on Pakistan's resources, the party's position was to manage the refugees in a kind manner,

⁷ Muhammad Asif Ayub, "Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf: Evolution, Performance and Prospects" (PhD diss., International Islamic University Islamabad, 2021).

protecting their rights and demanding dignified repatriation once conditions allowed. Also, the PTI saw economic cooperation with Afghanistan as a positive development for both countries.

In the realm of trade PTI's vision of economic cooperation with Afghanistan was that it would benefit both countries. The party's leader, Imran Khan, talked about strengthening trade and economic relations with Afghanistan, which would lead to prosperity and regional integration. No doubt it was a right decision and during his government trade between both countries were at its peak. Other than this PTI also emphasized the importance of working together with Afghanistan on counter-terrorism. They believed that working together was necessary to fight terrorism that affected both countries security and economic stability. PTI often criticized previous Pakistani governments for their handling of Afghanistan, accusing them of being too close to US policies and not taking Pakistan's national interests into account. These views formed part of PTI's foreign policy program, which focused on peaceful regional relations and economic development, as well as an independent foreign policy based on Pakistan's sovereignty and longer-term interests.

This research will further explain the role of Pakistan in brokering the Doha Peace Accord that how Pakistan played its role in bringing the Taliban to negotiate. In addition with this it will further shed light on fall of Kabul in 2021 and formation of Taliban interim government in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan. Other than this it will also elaborate the high level diplomatic engagements between both countries. During this time both countries also faced many challenges in their bilateral relationship. Durand line issue, Cross border terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, Water disputes, Resurgence of TTP in Afghanistan, blame game these are some major issues which will be discussed in this research. Indian factor will also be discussed.

Moreover, it was expected that the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan would bring some positive results and prosperity in Pakistan but unfortunately, it did not. The reason is that it

is Afghan psychology that when people became part of the government they became against Pakistan. When they are not part of the government, they are friends of Pakistan. The enemies of Pakistan have sown seeds of hatred in Afghanistan that's why those who sit in Arg in Afghanistan became against Pakistan and started revising the issues which they gained in inheritance just like the Durand Line issue.⁸ Moreover it will also explain that how America which is hegemon of international system failed in Afghanistan and also how America deceived the government of Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan.

Problem Statement

The Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship perceived important challenges and complexities from 2018 to 2022 during the tenure of PTI government. This study basically aims to analyze the policies of PTI government towards Afghanistan along with this major issues that affected the bilateral ties during this period of 2018-2022. This study further try to explore the underlying factors that shaped mutual ties. Over the past few years, Pakistan and Afghanistan have faced significant challenges in their relationship. These challenges include security issues, trade disputes, refugees issue and Pakistan involvement in peace efforts in Afghanistan. However, there has been a lack of in-depth research on these issues and their wider regional implications. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining the dynamics between Pakistan and Afghanistan during this period. It seeks to understand the actions taken by the PTI government, the obstacles they met, and how these factors influenced the region's stability. Through this research, researcher aims to provide insights that can inform better decision-making.

⁸ Fakhr-ul-Islam, interviewed by Researcher, 3 January, 2024.

Scope and Significance of the Study

The study of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations from 2018 to 2022 under the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is important due to its geopolitical importance, security challenges, Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace process, and its impact on regional stability. During this period, both countries faced security issues, including terrorism and insurgency. Pakistan was essential to the peace process in Afghanistan and examining its contributions is crucial. Bilateral challenges, economic cooperation, and diplomatic efforts also shaped this relationship. This study provides valuable lessons for policymakers and researchers, offering insights into complex bilateral relations and security challenges with implications beyond territorial borders of both nations. A detailed study on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations during PTI government from 2018 to 2022 holds immense importance for students, academician's, researchers and policy makers. By investigating the geopolitical dynamics, regional security concerns, conflict resolution efforts, economic cooperation, refugee crises, and policy implications during this period, scholars can gain valuable insights into the complex relationship between the two countries. Such a study can contribute to the academic literature, enhance understanding of regional dynamics, and provide a foundation for informed policy recommendations, ultimately promoting stability, peace, and cooperation in the entire region.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the policies of PTI government regarding Afghanistan during 2018 to 2022.
2. To analyze the effects of Afghan peace process and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan on the Pak-Afghan relationship.

3. To examine the consequences of the U.S departure from Afghanistan on the regional security dynamics, with a particular emphasis on Pakistan.
4. To identify the main challenges that strained the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship from 2018 to 2022.

Research Questions

1. How PTI government did shape its policies towards Afghanistan during its tenure?
2. How did the Afghan peace process and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan affect the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship?
3. What were the security implications of the United States forces departure from Afghanistan on Pakistan and its regional stability?
4. What were the major challenges faced by Pakistan and Afghanistan in their bilateral relationship from 2018 to 2022?

Delimitation of the Study

Mostly Pakistani officials have been interviewed because of hard access to Afghan foreign officials and by taking into consideration sensitivity of the topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship has been a topic of extensive scholarly research and analysis in recent years, with researchers exploring various aspects of the bilateral dynamics. This literature review aims to provide a detailed examination of the key findings and insights from academic studies, journal articles, reports, and books on the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship. The historical context and deep-rooted mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan have played a significant role in shaping their relationship. Several books have delved into the historical complexities and conflicts between the two nations. However, a detailed analysis is needed to understand the policies of PTI government from 2018 to 2022 regarding Afghanistan.

Review of Related Literature

Ahmed Rashid in his book titled as *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan* gave an insightful analysis of the complex relationships between the U.S, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. He begins by examining the American attack in Pakistan that resulted in Osama bin Laden's death, highlighting deep mistrust between the U.S. and Pakistan, particularly regarding ISI's involvement. He portrays Pakistan as facing a severe socioeconomic crisis, with a political leadership unable to implement necessary reforms and an expanding nuclear arsenal. Rashid critiques both Pakistani and American policies, detailing how the Pakistani military and ISI have fostered a network of jihadist groups, including Lashkar-i-Taiba, which have become destabilizing forces. He examines U.S. strategies under President Obama, pointing out ambiguities such as drone strikes that violate Pakistani sovereignty and contribute to anti-American sentiment. Internal discord within the Obama administration and inconsistent policies are identified as factors that have worsened U.S.-Pakistan relations. Rashid explores the interconnected conflicts in

Afghanistan and Pakistan, arguing that Afghan stability is linked to Pakistan's internal dynamics and U.S. geopolitical strategies. Rashid concludes by emphasizing the need for major reforms within Pakistan to curb military and ISI influence. He suggests that without a fundamental shift in approach from both Pakistani and American policymakers, the region will continue to face instability. Rashid's book offers deep insights into South Asian geopolitics and the challenges of counter-terrorism, making it essential reading for understanding this volatile region.⁹

- Riaz Muhammad Khan in *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity* explores the complex history and current issues facing Afghanistan and Pakistan. Khan explains how past events, like colonial rule and the Cold War, have shaped the politics and society of these countries. He looks at why extremism and conflict have grown, focusing on the roles of religion, outside influences, and local problems. The book also discusses how traditional beliefs and social norms in these countries often clash with modern ideas and reforms. Additionally, Khan reviews the impact of U.S. and NATO policies after 9/11, pointing out what worked and what didn't. Using a mix of history and political analysis, Khan gives a detailed picture of the region. His background as a diplomat helps him provide local perspectives, making his insights more authentic. While the book is detailed and sometimes complex, making it a tough read for those not familiar with the region, it offers important lessons for anyone interested in South Asia. Despite some biases due to his diplomatic experience, Khan's work is crucial for understanding the challenges Afghanistan and Pakistan face today, making it a valuable resource for scholars and policymakers alike.¹⁰

⁹ Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan* (New York: Viking, 2012).

¹⁰ Riaz Mohammad Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011).

Abdul Sattar in his book titled as *Pakistan's Foreign Policy-2019 A Concise History* covers the time period from 2001 to 2018 and analyze that how both countries shaped their foreign policy towards each other. The author describes the Karzai era from 2001 to 2014 .Later on Afghan President Ashraf Ghani came into power in Afghanistan. He visited Pakistan many times and he wanted to build good relation with neighboring Pakistan. Heart of Asia conference was also organized in Islamabad in which 22 countries participated and urged to bring peace in Afghanistan. The author further argued that Pakistan sacrificed a lot in war of terror but Afghanistan and USA didn't realized this fact and alleged Pakistan for supporting terrorism. Another important element is of border fencing .Neither Kabul nor did US help Pakistan to fence the long Pak Afghan border. Pakistan in 2018 unilaterally at its own cost decided to fence the border.⁹This book did not discuss the policies of governments regarding border management and security of both states.

Anatol Lieven in *Pakistan A Hard Country* offers a thorough examination of Pakistan's history, politics, and security challenges, shedding light on the historical background that underlies the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship. His work also addresses the impact of external factors on Pakistan's development. Lieven discusses the role of Western governments, particularly the United States, in pressing and persuading the Pakistani military into extensive wars against their own citizens. He highlights the devastating effects of the "war on terror" in terms of human lives lost and the displacement of people in Afghanistan. Lieven argues that the West's flawed perception of Pakistan as a failed state has real-world consequences, such as the stigmatization of the "Af Pak" region and the harmful effects of drone strikes on innocent civilians.¹¹This book contains all necessary information regarding Pak Afghan relations and helpful for students and researchers

¹¹ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan a Hard Country*(Penguin Books,2012),accessed on August8,2023,
<https://www.sanipanhwar.com/Pakistan%20A%20Hard%20Country%20by%20Anatol%20Lieven%20.pdf>

working in this area.

Elizabeth Threlkeld and Grace Easterly's report, *Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan* published by United States Institute of Peace. This report speculated that there are three outcomes in case of Afghanistan which are possible as a result of the US military withdrawal: a negotiated solution, civil war, or Taliban takeover. Afghanistan's future will be shaped by the Taliban and the support they receive from the US and its allies. There have always been issues with sovereignty, security, geopolitics, cross-border connections, connectivity, and trade that have strained relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Negotiated agreements may be hindered by the rising violence. Afghanistan and Pakistan may strengthen their cross-border ties for regional peace and the welfare of their citizens by addressing security and sovereignty concerns through discussion.¹² This report used balanced approach in explaining the events.

A report *Pakistan's Hard Policy Choices in Afghanistan* provides information about the Pakistan foreign policy towards Afghanistan after US departure from Afghanistan. Beside, report also discusses that Pakistan is facing many challenges in shaping its strategy towards Afghanistan now under new Taliban rulers. Despite Pakistan's continued support for its Afghan partner, Islamabad may find the country's new administration to be more of a burden than an asset as a result of the Taliban's military coup and resultant economic and diplomatic isolation. It went on to say that increasing economic problems and political turmoil could force poor Afghans to flee to Pakistan. Pakistan's relations with the United States and other Western countries may possibly worsen as a result of the Taliban's connection with Islamabad. Most critically, Pakistan's domestic

¹² Elizabeth Threlkeld and Grace Easterly, "Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan", *United States Institute of Peace*, 2021, accessed on August 8, 2023, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/202108/pw_175afghanistan_pakistan_ties_and_future_stability_in_afghanistan.pdf

security may be at risk if the Taliban do not act against Pakistani extremists operating from Afghan territory. Islamabad should refrain from approving the Taliban's brutal rule, especially its harsh treatment of women, in order to prevent empowering hardliners at home.¹³ This report is full of information regarding the current scenario in context of Pakistan and Afghanistan after US forces withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Tughrul Yameen in his article "Afghan Peace Process and Security Implications for Pakistan" published in *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research* discussed that the Mujahideen have always used the isolated border region between Pakistan's tribal regions and Afghanistan as a heaven. Author further argued that following the exit of the Soviet Union, these factions split up or joined rival factions, causing a spillover into Pakistan. He analyzed guerrilla actions against foreign forces and government authority were made easier logistically thanks to the porous Pak Afghan border. The author recommended that work must be done to remove suspicion and hostility between Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to stop future instability. For peace and stability in the area, close cooperation and cooperation founded on goodwill are essential.¹⁴ This article explains the facts very clearly and can be easily understandable.

In an article "Imran Khan's Foreign Policy Approach" written by Daud Khattak, he expressed his views on how the public opinion is shaped in Pakistan and outside that the nation's foreign policy has stayed loyal to its powerful military establishment because of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's willingness to cross boundaries with Afghanistan, India, and the US. Furthermore,

¹³ *Pakistan's Hard Policy Choices in Afghanistan*, International Crisis Group, 2022, accessed on August 8, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/pakistans-hard-policy-choices-afghanistan>

¹⁴ Tughrul Yamin, "Afghan Peace Process and its Implications for Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research*, accessed on August 8, 2023, <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Afghan-Peace-Process-and-Security.pdf>

since Imran Khan took over as prime minister, Pakistan has to deal with a number of serious challenges related to its foreign policy. The country's ties with the United States were at an all-time low, and Pakistan's western neighbor, India, was intensifying its efforts to further isolate it on the international front. In addition, Pakistan's aid from the United States had been suspended due to Pakistan's apparent failure to take effective action against terrorism and extremism.¹⁵

According to research, Pakistan is the country that has seen a major impact from terrorism, according to research paper titled "Terrorism: The Biggest Challenge to the Integrity of Pakistan" authored by Zain Ul Abiden Malik, He Zilong, and Imran Ashraf. Moreover, Pakistan is the main front-line country in the "war on terror," hence the country's economy would undoubtedly suffer as a result. The increased terrorist activity has caused international investors to cease foreign direct investment and has also reduced their trust. The authors further argued that in all economic areas, the impact of terrorism was felt to varying degrees. The most well-known areas are those related to tourism, hotels, manufacturing, and trade. These sectors are connected to one another. Several elements are responsible for this, such as the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border, flood of Afghan immigrants, and particularly the Taliban. After September 11, extremism and terrorism in Pakistan grew steadily, and the security situation deteriorated dramatically. Terrorist assaults resulted in the deaths of thousands of people and the injuries of countless more. Although the situation was concerning throughout the nation, it was particularly bad in FATA and KPK. Pakistan required internal collaboration and unity in this dire scenario. Action must be taken to solve these problems

¹⁵ Daud Khattak, "Imran Khan's Foreign Policy Approach", *The Diplomat*, August 21, 2018, accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/imran-khans-foreign-policy-approach/>

as Pakistan's security situation is generally deteriorating.¹⁶

The article "Irritants and Prospects of Cooperation: Pakistan-Afghan Relations after 9/11" was authored by Muhammad Umar, Amir Jan, Abdul Rab, and Muhammad Ramzan. According to this article, Pakistan and Afghanistan are two South Asian countries that share similar religious views, a common historical background, and close societal relations. Given its proximity to warm water, Pakistan is the ideal state for Afghanistan to develop and expand its national economy. Sadly, Afghanistan has never trusted Pakistan, which has made it vulnerable to exploitation by the US or India. Afghanistan has to understand that peace and prosperity may not come to the country without Pakistan's cooperation on the political, geographic, logical, and economic fronts. Instead of accepting US, Iranian, and Indian anti-Pakistan policies on its territory, Afghanistan should work with Pakistan to establish a bilateral mechanism to end terrorism in the region. There are several recommendations that might help to strengthen bonds.¹⁷ In this article author gave general overview whereas detailed discussion is absent about the issues.

Article written by Syed Fazl e Haider titled as "Revival of TAPI pipeline Project Bring Serious Geopolitical Implications for Russia" published in The James Foundation Global Research and Analysis stated that the (TAPI) pipeline is presently under discussion between Turkmenistan and Pakistan. Its goal is to transport 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year from Turkmenistan's Galkynysh Gas Field to the Indian city of Fazilka via Afghanistan and Pakistan. The project was

¹⁶ Zain UL Abiden Malik, He Zilong and Dr Imran Ashraf, "Terrorism The Biggest Challenge to the Integrity of Pakistan", *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences* 14, no.1 (June, 2019), accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://www.gcwus.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/7.-Terrorism-The-Biggest-Security-Challenge-to-the-Integrity-of-Pakistan.pdf>

¹⁷ Muhammad Umar, Amir Jan, Abdul Rab, Muhammad Ramzan, "Pak Afghan Relations after 9/11 Irritants and Prospects for Cooperation" 8, no.1, (2022).

first envisioned in the early 1990s, but it was not officially disclosed until 2014, when it was estimated to cost \$10 billion. Construction on the pipeline started in 2018 but was quickly halted for security reasons after employees cleaning the area were assassinated. Recently, there has been discussion among officials in 3 countries about resuming the project which gained attention when American soldiers withdrew and the Taliban seized control.¹⁸ This article did not cover aspects of foreign policy of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Research Gap

The literature on the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship from 2018 to 2022, includes information from books, articles and reports. It provides understanding of the difficulties, challenges, and prospects of their bilateral interactions. The above mentioned literature gave information about the events occurred during 2018 to 2022 in very precise manner. The researcher has taken the recent period from 2018-2022 so there is no detailed research done on this topic yet. Few Studies explores the US forces withdrawal from Afghanistan whereas in depth research is required to study its implications on Pakistan Afghanistan bilateral relations in addition with this further research is needed to identify the cross border security concerns and terrorism. In addition with this detailed analysis is required to analyze the policies of PTI government towards Afghanistan.

¹⁸ Syed Fazl-e-Haider, "Revival of TAPI Pipeline Project Brings Serious Geopolitical Implications for Russia", *The James Foundation* 20, no. 91, (June 2023), accessed on August 10, 2023, <https://jamestown.org/program/revival-of-tapipeline-project-brings-serious-geopolitical-implications-for-russia/>

Theoretical Framework

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations during PTI Government from 2018-2022 can best be explained through the lens of regional complex theory. Regional Complex theory is a concept in international relations that examines how regions function as interconnected political, economic, and security units. Originally developed as "Regional Security Complex Theory" by scholars Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, it emphasizes the idea that the security of states within a particular region is interdependent.¹⁹ This means that the stability or conflict in one state can directly impact its neighbors, leading to a complex web of regional relationships.²⁰ The theory also highlights the unique dynamics of regions, where states are interconnected through security, economic, and political ties that often differ from global trends. Regionalism, or the process by which states within a region come together to cooperate, plays a significant role in shaping these dynamics, leading to varying degrees of regional integration, as seen in entities like the European Union or ASEAN. The distribution of power within a region is also crucial, with regional hegemons, such as India in South Asia or Brazil in South America, having a significant influence on the region's stability and interactions. Additionally, the theory takes into account the impact of external powers and global events on regional dynamics, recognizing that regions are not isolated from the broader international system. Regional complex theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the unique characteristics and challenges of different regions in the world, offering insights into conflict, cooperation, and the role of regional powers in shaping global affairs.

¹⁹ Mariam Tahir, "Regional Security Complex Theory and Soft Power: Mapping China's Engagement in Afghanistan", *Margalla Papers* 26,no.2 ,(2022):39,accessed on August11,2023,
<https://margallapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/120>

²⁰ Dennis Senam Amable, "Theorizing the Emergence of Security Regions: An Adaptation for the Regional Security Complex Theory", *Global Studies Quarterly*(2022),accessed from
<https://watermark.silverchair.com/ksac065.pdf?token>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research implies qualitative method. The approach of the research is mainly exploratory and explanatory in nature. Both primary and secondary sources have been used in this research. Primary sources includes data from official websites, reports of research institutions, and interviews of concerned persons. In-depth and structured interviews are conducted. Secondary sources such as books, articles, news reports are used which facilitates a complete understanding of the whole scenario of this particular time period.

Population

It includes Pakistani officials, retired military personnel's, academicians and afghan students. Only relevant people take part in this study.

Sampling

Convenience sampling technique is used for conducting interviews.

Instruments

Structured interviews are conducted from officials, military personals, and experts from defense and Strategic Studies academicians as well as from Afghan students.

Data Collection

Primary data has been gathered from interviews as well as from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PM office website parliamentary discussions, public hearings, and proceedings.

On the other hand, secondary data has been collected from various research organizations, including Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in addition with this Central Libraries of Quaid e Azam University and International Islamic University Islamabad.

Data Analysis

This study is exploratory and explanatory in nature. Primary data has been generated through interviews and reports whereas, secondary data is analyzed through a detailed analysis of available literature. Based on this, a conclusion has been drawn and findings and recommendations are generated.

Writeup and Findings

Following the gathering and analysis of the data, the research is prepared with the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions in mind. The topic matter is organized into chapters based on the chronological and thematic sequence. Finally, a thorough conclusion based on the research findings is provided at the end.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher gave keen importance to ethical standards in her study on Pakistan Afghanistan relations, prioritizing informed consent, and ensured privacy. This research aims to minimize harm and maximize benefit, collaborating with local experts and institution to gain information. Researcher gave priority to reliability and validity.

Organization of the Study

This research includes introduction, 4 chapters and conclusion.

Chapter #1, *Short Glimpse of Historical Background*, This chapter has been divided into two parts. First part of this chapter includes historical background of Pak afghan relations from 1947 onwards till PTI came into power in Pakistan in 2018 in very precise manner. In addition with this in second part theoretical framework has been applied in detail.

Chapter #2, *PTI Policies towards Afghanistan From 2018 To 2022*, this chapter covers the policies of PTI government towards Afghanistan from 2018 to 2022. It also explains convergence of interest between two states during this time period. In addition with this it highlights the negotiations between the top leadership of two states.

Chapter #3, *Afghan Peace Process and US Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, This chapter covers the initiation of Afghan peace process till its completion. It further shed light on the withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan. This chapter also explained Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace process and how it helped to facilitate the Doha Agreement. The departure of US forces from Afghanistan after twenty years also came under discussion in this chapter. It further discusses its regional implications in more detail, with particular emphasis on Pakistan.

Chapter#4, *Challenges Faced by Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2018-2022*, this chapter covers all the major challenges faced by both countries during 2018-2022. It explores the historical context, examining the roots of territorial disputes and the significance of the Durand Line. Security challenges, including cross-border terrorism and insurgent activities, are analyzed, shedding light on their impact on regional stability. Furthermore, economic cooperation and trade

barriers have been explored, highlighting the obstacles hindering mutually beneficial collaboration. Through a thorough analysis of these obstacles, the chapter seeks to provide light on the nuances of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and suggest possible avenues for promoting mutual understanding and collaboration between the two nations.

All what has been discussed in chapters is summarized in conclusion, findings are generated and recommendations are given at the end.

CHAPTER-1

SHORT GLIMPSE OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1-Geographical Location of Pakistan and Afghanistan

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two nations in South-Central Asia whose shared strategic position has greatly influenced their political, cultural, and historical developments. Pakistan is located in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent and is surrounded by China to the northeast, India to the east, Afghanistan and Iran to the west, and the Arabian Sea to the south. Pakistan's geographic location allows it to serve as a bridge between the Indian Ocean and the Caspian Sea, the Middle East and East Asia, and South and Central Asia. Conversely, Afghanistan is a landlocked nation in the center of South and Central Asia.²¹ China borders it to the northeast, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north, Iran to the west, and Pakistan to the east and south. Due to its strategic location, Afghanistan serves as a crossroads for trade and cultural exchange between the Middle East and South Asia, Central Asia, Indian subcontinent, and the Silk Road, an ancient trading route that connected East Asia with the Mediterranean.²²

The shared border between Pakistan and Afghanistan stretches over 2,400 kilometers, with Durand Line separating the two countries. The border region is home to several ethnic groups, including the Pashtuns, Baloch, and Tajiks. The location of both countries has made them

²¹ Pashmina Mughal, Sadia Sultan, "Global Geopolitical Dynamics and Prospects for Afghanistan's Regional Connectivity", *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability* 4. no.2 (2021): 17, accessed on November 18, 2023, <https://njips.nust.edu.pk/index.php/njips/article/view/93/82>

²² Zohair Solahi, "Afghanistan: A Junction of Asia's Connectivity," *National Bureau of Asian Research*, May 28, 2022, accessed on November 18, 2023: <https://www.nbr.org/publication/afghanistan-a-junction-of-asias-connectivity/>

important for trade, commerce, and cultural exchange throughout history. They have been invaded and ruled by various empires, including the Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, and British.²³ Currently, both nations are major actors in the South-Central Asian region, and their location continues to be vital in both regional and global affairs. The strategic location of Pakistan and Afghanistan has also made them vulnerable to external influences and conflicts. However, it also presents opportunities for regional cooperation, trade, and economic growth. China with the Arabian Sea through Pakistan, further increased the region's strategic importance.

- Afghanistan has been a battleground for several conflicts and power struggles throughout history, becoming a pivot for major powers and empires seeking dominance and control. A crucial phase in the Cold War era was characterized by the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.²⁴ The Soviets aimed to support a communist government, triggering a prolonged and devastating conflict. The United States and its allies saw this as an opportunity to counter Soviet expansionism by supporting Afghan resistance fighters, known as the Mujahedeen.²⁵

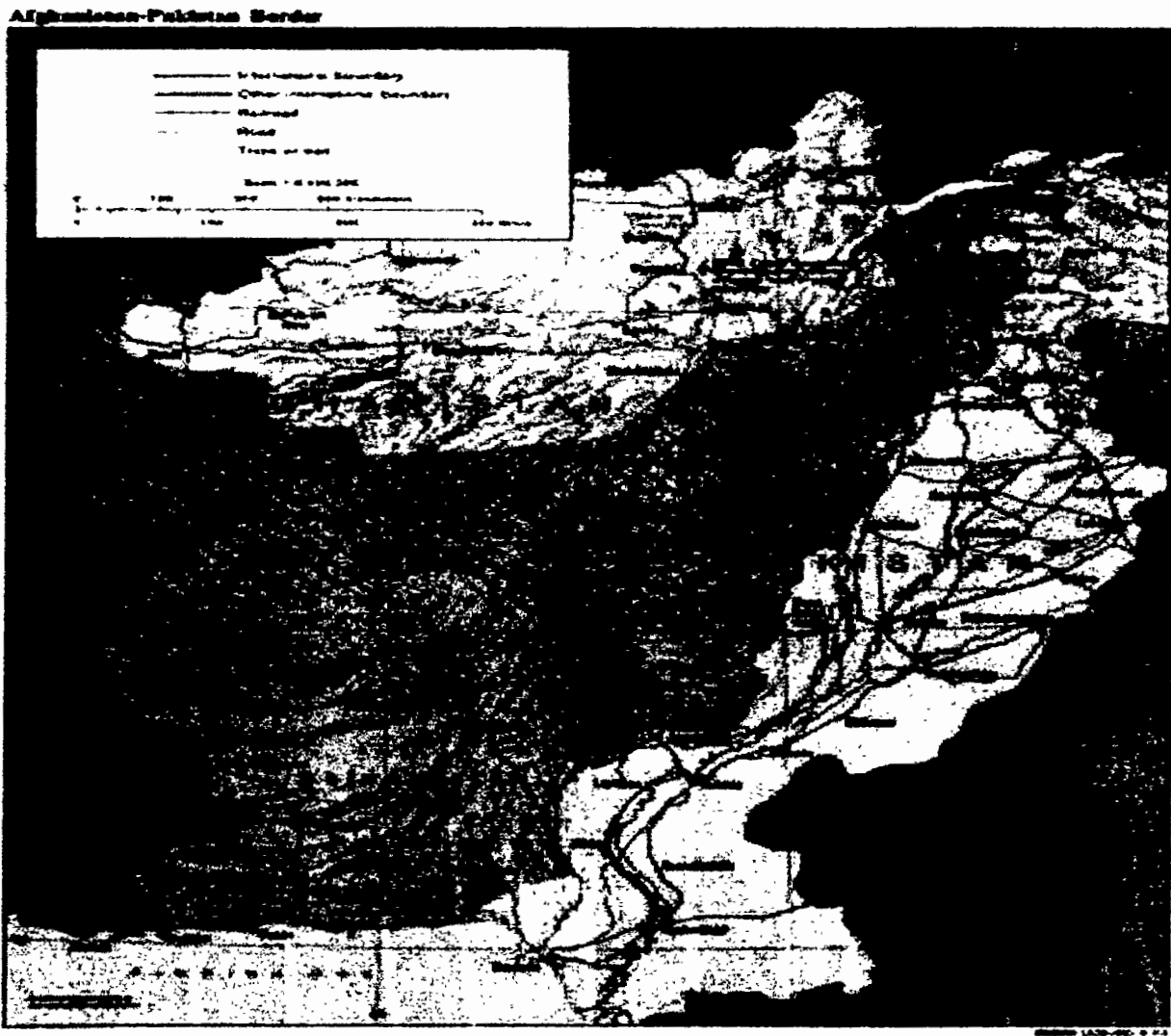
After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, internal conflicts and power struggles persisted, leading to a period of civil war. Amidst the chaos, the Taliban emerged, seizing control of most of the country by the e mid-1990s. Their oppressive rule and support for terrorist groups led to international isolation. Afghanistan faced this oppression for many years. Afghani people suffered a lot which led them to take refuge in neighboring countries.

²³ Syeda Faiza Fayyaz, "A Critical Analysis of Pakistan's Policy towards Taliban (1994-2008)", (MS thesis, International Islamic University, Islamabad, 2021), 13.

²⁴ Joseph J. Collins, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Methods, Motives, and Ramifications." *Naval War College Review* 33, no. 6 (1980): 53, accessed on November 21, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44642132>

²⁵ Alexander C. Cooper, "The Afghan-Soviet War: The U.S. and its Covert Cold War", 2012, accessed on November 21, 2023, <https://digitalworks.union.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1832&context=theses>

1.2- Map of Pakistan and Afghanistan



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Source: Accessed from <https://lcn.lgov/2009575509>

The 21st century saw continued external involvement, primarily led by both the US and its allies, in an effort to stabilize the nation, eradicate terrorism, and promote democracy. However, despite extensive efforts and resources poured into the conflict, achieving lasting stability proved challenging. In 2021, the departure of U.S. and NATO proved as a turning point, leading to the rapid collapse of Afghan government and resurgence of Afghan Taliban once again. The Taliban's comeback has sparked concerns regarding human rights, regional stability, and the resurgence of terrorism. It has prompted neighboring countries and global powers to reassess their strategies concerning Afghanistan. China eyes economic opportunities, Pakistan fears security implications, and Russia approaches carefully, highlighting the complex web of interests and challenges in the region. Afghanistan's history as a battleground for major powers highlights the complexity of geopolitics and the lasting struggle for influence in a volatile region. Its strategic importance, coupled with its resilient yet tumultuous history, continues to draw global attention.

Every conflict has its roots in history. In order to understand the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2018 to 2022 under PTI government, it is very important to know about the history and relationship of both countries in past. As Pakistan came into existence on 14th August 1947, from onwards there exists a relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This relationship saw many ups and downs. Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan has been of significant importance due to the latter's strategic location between South and Central Asia. Throughout history, Afghanistan's position at the crossroads of global powers, intensified its relevance. However, this geopolitical competition negatively affected the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship. Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan faced a challenging security landscape, contending with hostility from India while also dealing with an unfriendly western neighbor Afghanistan. Despite these security challenges, Pakistan recognized Afghanistan's importance and

sought to cultivate a regional partnership due to shared cultural and religious ties, as well as Afghanistan's economic reliance on Pakistan as a landlocked nation. However, despite these shared aspects, over the past 70 years, ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have remained tense.²⁶

Pakistan was established in 1947, from onwards it has dealt with many problems inside and outside its borders. Pakistan is made up of four provinces, each with its own unique culture and language. These differences have led to struggles for rights and recognition, causing political issues, fighting among different groups, and conflicts over resources and borders. One of the biggest problems Pakistan faces is extremism linked to religion. Inside Pakistan, there are problems like unstable institutions, weak governance, the presence of extremist groups, and a constant fight against terrorism. These issues make the country feel unsafe and unstable. On top of these internal problems, Pakistan also deals with threats from other countries like the United States and India, as well as issues related to what happens in Afghanistan. So, the main worry for Pakistan is its security. To protect its interests and stay safe from potential risks, Pakistan has often gotten involved in Afghanistan's internal matters.²⁷

Afghanistan has a history marked by rivalry, civil conflicts, and interventions by outside countries. In the last forty years, the country has faced numerous threats that have led to chaos. The internal situation in Afghanistan poses many risks, especially regarding ethnic differences. The various ethnic groups in Afghanistan often fight due to discrimination and power struggles. For centuries, the Pashtun group has held control over the country, leading to tensions with other ethnic groups. This power imbalance causes disputes among ethnic groups like Pashtuns, Tajiks,

²⁶ Zarmina Baloch, "Pakistan's Post 9/11 Afghan Policy: Challenges and Prospects (2001-2014)", (PhD diss, University of Peshawar, 2018), 57.

²⁷ Ahmed Khalid Azizi, "Afghanistan Pakistan Relation and its implication on Regional Geopolitics", (July 13, 2019), accessed on November 23, 2023, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3419449

Hazaras, and Uzbeks, influencing the country's internal politics significantly.

The relationship between the British colonial authorities and Afghanistan's monarchical regime remained calm until the partition of the subcontinent. Despite Afghanistan being strategically used by the British government in South Asia as a buffer against larger geopolitical powers, the aftermath of the partition sparked tensions. The primary point of contention revolved around the Durand Line. The partition gave rise to escalating animosity in Afghanistan, primarily concerning the issue of the Durand Line.²⁸ The fundamental arguments that disputed the permanence of this border were not received amicably in Pakistan. This stemmed from Pakistan's assertion of inheriting all pre-1947 British agreements with neighboring countries, which clashed with Afghanistan's stance on the matter. The conflicting claims over geographical boundaries resulted in different explanations on two sides. Afghanistan's history began in 1747, and the Durand Line has been upheld as permanent by Afghan rulers since then. Pakistan's establishment was therefore not welcomed in Afghanistan's political elite. The Pashtoonistan issue amplified tensions, with the Afghan government laying claim to the entire North-West Frontier Province (presently Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). This compelled Afghanistan to cast the sole dissenting vote against Pakistan in the UN. According to the Afghan government, the Pashtuns' ethnic identity, rather than their provincial status within Pakistan, should have been given priority when demarcating the international border. In the historical narrative of the Pashtun nation, Pashtunistan represents a shared homeland, which they believe was unjustly split to fulfill the covert objectives of the British administration.²⁹

²⁸ Hanif-ur-Rehman, "Pakistan –Afghan Relations during Z.A Bhutto Era: The Dynamics of Cold war", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 33, No. 2 (2012):25.

²⁹ Umbreen Javaid, "Analyzing the Dynamics of Pakistan –Afghanistan Relations: Past and Present", *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 31, no.1 (June 2016):138.

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It was thought that Indian meddling and the ruling Afghan elite's attempt to deflect attention from their nation's economic underdevelopment were the two main causes of the complaints. The main goal of Afghanistan's propaganda effort was to get Pakistan to accept their claim to Pashtoonistan. Pakistan shown a willingness to promote amicable relations despite their dissatisfaction with Afghanistan's behavior. Following the appointment of Mr. I.I. Chundrigar as Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan, Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar headed a delegation that represented Pakistan at the country's Jashin-e-Azadi event. In a significant shift, Pakistan withdrew its troops from the Pashtun tribal areas, altering the longstanding British policy of stationed troops there, aiming to create favorable conditions, gain tribal allegiance, and build mutual trust. Pakistan showed trust and respect for tribal traditions, and in return, the Loya Jirga of Pakistan's tribal areas pledged their loyalty to Pakistan instead of India.³⁰

But this tone of hostility between the two nations continued until 1979, when Daud Khan and Bhutto was set to mediate the difficult problems of Durand Line and Pashtoonistan. Both nations experienced quick transformations. On July 5, 1977, General Zia imposed martial law in Pakistan. A year later, Sardar Daud's government was overthrown in a violent coup known as Saur.³¹ In April 1978, Sardar Daud was overthrown by a coup supported by the army. With the backing of PDPA, Noor Muhammad Tarakai was sworn in as the new head of state. The process of reconciliation that Bhutto had begun between Afghanistan and Pakistan was halted by this coup. Agha Shahi, Pakistan's foreign minister, was really getting ready to travel to Kabul and reach some type of deal on the Durand line, but the coup halted the entire process. Another coup headed

³⁰ Mohibullah Durrani and Ashraf Khan, "Pakistan Afghan Relations. Historic Mirror" *The Dialogue* 4, no.1, accessed on November 26, 2023, https://qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/4_1/02_ashraf.pdf

³¹ Habib-ur-Rehman, "Pak-Afghan Relations during Z.A Bhutto Era: The Dynamics of Cold War", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 33, no.2 (2012):27.

by Hafizullah Amin overthrew Tarakai in September 1979. The Soviet Union made a significant military invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The Soviets assassinated Hafizullah Ameen and replaced him with Babrak Karmal.³²

1.3- Pak Afghan Relations from 1979 -1992

This time period was very important in history of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's security was seriously threatened by the direct Soviet military intervention in neighboring Afghanistan. General public and decision-makers in Pakistan began to feel that the nation's continued existence as a sovereign territory was in danger.³³ The invasion of Afghanistan was seen as a counter move against the USA's containment strategy by the USSR.³⁴ From 1979 to 1992, Pakistan and Afghanistan had a close yet complicated relationship largely influenced by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.³⁵

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan with the objective of supporting the communist government against rebel groups known as the Mujahideen. Pakistan became crucial during this time because it supported these Afghan rebel fighters. They did this by providing them with training, safe places to stay, and weapons.³⁶ The intelligence service of Pakistan, known as the ISI, assisted in facilitating communication between the US and different Afghan Mujahideen

³² Safdar Mehmood, *Pakistan Political Roots and Development 1947-1999*, (Oxford University Press. 2000), 238.

³³ Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui, "Pakistan's Afghan Policy (1979-1992), *National Institute of History and Cultural Research*.

³⁴ Adem Cakir, "Understanding Afghanistan Pakistan Relations in Multipolar World" no.1 (May 2023), accessed on November 28, 2023, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/2802006>

³⁵ Ahmad Shayyaa Qasim, *Afghanistan 's Political Stability A Dream Un Realized*, (AshGate, 2009):78, accessed on November 29, 2023, https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=t_On9PZMU4wC&pg=PA78&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

³⁶ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan: The Pakistani Role", *Middle East Journal* 45, no.1 (1991):71, accessed on November 29, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328240>

organizations.³⁷ The U.S. and other Western countries gave money and weapons to Pakistan to help the Afghan fighters. Due to the war, many Afghan people fled their country and sought refuge in Pakistan, causing a big problem because it strained Pakistan's resources and affected the communities living near the border. In April 1988, the United Nations helped negotiate the Geneva Accords.³⁸ These agreements led to the Soviet Union withdraw its forces from Afghanistan by 1989.³⁹ However, after the Soviet troops left, Afghanistan fell into a civil war.

Different groups among the Mujahideen started fighting for power, which caused the Afghan government to fall in 1992. This chaotic situation made the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan even more complex. Afghanistan was in turmoil, and Pakistan continued to have a significant role in the region, but the instability in Afghanistan during the 1990s made things uncertain and difficult for both countries. The Pashtun-centric policies of Pakistan, which included supporting the Mujahidin and then the Taliban to put an end to Pashtun nationalism, worsened the enmity between the two nations. Mirza Aslam Baig, the former chief of the Pakistani army, stated that Pakistan wants peace and stability in Kabul as well as a legitimate role for the majority Pashtuns in Afghan government.⁴⁰ The Taliban's revelation did not happen overnight. The regional and international politics of the 1980s and 1990s had a significant role in their ascent. Their demise also depended on a significant shift in global politics.⁴¹

After the Taliban overran Kabul in September 1996, the Northern Alliance forces, led by

³⁷ Muhammad Ahad Yar Khan, Fateh Muhammad Burfat, Tansif-ur-Rehman, "Soviet Afghan War and Pakistan's Role," *Journal of Asia Pacific* 38,(2020):261, accessed on December 1, 2023. <https://sujo.usindh.edu.pk/index.php/ASIA-PACIFIC/article/view/3131/2339>

³⁸ Agha Shahi, "The Geneva Accords", *Pakistan Horizon* 61,no.1/2(2008):143, accessed on December 1, 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23726021>

³⁹ Rossane Klasse, "Afghanistan :The Accords" ,*Foreign Affairs*,(1988), accessed on December 3, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1988-06-01/afghanistan-accords>

⁴⁰ Aparna Pande, *Explaining Pakistan Foreign Policy: Escaping India* (Routledge: 2011).

⁴¹ Neamatullah Nojumi, "The Rise and fall of Taliban," *In The Taliban and Crisis of Afghanistan*, edited by Robert D Crews and Amin Tarzi (Harvard University Press: 2008).

Tajik warlord Ahmed Shah Masoud, withdrew, and heavy combat broke out in the country's north in the Panjshir Valley.⁴² The army of General Abdul Rashid Dostum's, the warlord of Uzbekistan engaged the advancing Taliban forces in western Afghanistan. With the exception of small areas of resistance in the north and west, the Taliban had declared their sovereignty by the late 1990s and established an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan thanks to significant financial, military, and political support from Pakistan. When the Taliban began its military campaign in the middle of the 1990s and tried to enter Afghanistan, Along with the support it received from the Pakistani government, it was pleased to have the active cooperation of Arab and other international volunteers. For the first time in the relationship's history, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Kabul extended a cordial greeting to Islamabad. Pakistan has a far greater level of dominance than India. But since the Taliban refused to acknowledge the long-standing Durand Line dispute, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan deteriorated once again. It was a major blow to Pakistan.⁴³

1.4- Pak Afghan Relations after 9/11

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, global politics underwent a transformation. Pakistan tried to convince the Taliban government to hand up Osama bin Laden to the United States, but the Taliban refused, and thus the war on terrorism started. In the end, Pakistan said it was with the international coalition against terrorism. The conflict went on, damaging relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and upsetting the whole regional scenario.⁴⁴ Following the fall of the Taliban, Hamid Karzai, a pro-American, was chosen

⁴² Dr Muhammad Ali and Malik Safdar, "Pakistan Afghan Relation: History Conflict and Challenges", *Pak.Journal of Int'l Affairs*3, no.2 (2020): 409.

⁴³ Ali, Safdar, "Pakistan Afghanistan Relations,"409.

⁴⁴ Muhammad Umer, Amir Jan, Abdul Rab and Muhammad Ramzan, "Pakistan Afghanistan Relation after 9/11.Irritants and Prospects for Cooperation", *Journal of Multicultural Education*8,no.1,(2022):206, accessed on December 3,2023,<http://ijedri.com/me/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/26.pdf>

by the US to head the state of Afghanistan to maintain peace. Pakistan and Afghanistan, however, found it difficult to resolve their political and geographic divides. President Karzai of Afghanistan made a bilateral relationship announcement while in Pakistan in 2002, along with the announcement of US \$100 million in help for Afghanistan's rehabilitation and reconstruction. Pakistan played a major role in Operation Enduring Freedom, the campaign to destroy terrorism in Afghanistan by taking on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Pakistan collaborated to keep a check on terrorist movements and carried out seven significant military operations in Pakistan. After assuming office, President Ashraf Ghani sought to reset relations with Pakistan, departing from his predecessor Hamid Karzai's approach. To foster a connection, Ghani put on hold the strategic partnership deal with India and engaged with Pakistan's security apparatus. He also introduced measures to improve Pakistan's concerns regarding cross-border terrorism. In response, Pakistan helped bring Taliban representatives to the talks in Murree on July 7, 2015, and later hosted the Heart of Asia Conference in Islamabad on December 6, 2015. However, the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban stalled after it was revealed that Mullah Omar had died. The brief period of cordiality gave way to a breakdown in relations, with President Ghani accusing Pakistan of perpetrating terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, further straining the already delicate relationship and exemplifying the challenges.⁴⁵

Barack Obama's administration significantly reduced the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, but did not completely withdraw them. When Obama took office in 2009, the war in Afghanistan was intensifying, so he initially sent more troops to stabilize the country and combat the Taliban and al-Qaeda. By 2011, he announced plans to start bringing troops home, reducing

⁴⁵ Tehseena Usman, Minhas Majeed Khan, "Pak Afghan Relations (2001-2017): A Prisoners Dilemma Analysis," *ISSI*, accessed on December 6, 2023, https://www.issi.org.pk/wpcontent/uploads/2017/04/1Tehseena_Minhas_SS_Vol_37_No.1_2017.pdf

their number in stages. The combat mission officially ended in 2014, transitioning to a support role where U.S. forces trained and assisted Afghan security forces. Despite the drawdown, by the end of his presidency in 2017, about 8,400 U.S. troops remained in Afghanistan due to ongoing security challenges and the need to support Afghan forces.⁴⁶

Obama's strategy was influenced by several key factors. Ensuring Afghanistan did not become a haven for terrorists again was a top priority, and a complete, rapid withdrawal risked destabilizing the region. Maintaining a coordinated effort with NATO allies and responding to domestic pressure to end the long war were also important. The U.S. presence in Afghanistan had broader regional implications, affecting relations with neighboring countries like Pakistan and India. Thus, while Obama aimed to reduce the U.S. military footprint, he balanced this with the need to support Afghan stability and safeguard broader security interests. After Barack Obama, U.S. involvement in Afghanistan continued under President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden, each of whom approached the situation with their own strategies and goals.

1.5- American President Donald Trump's Administration

After assuming office in January 2017, Donald Trump first raised the number of American soldiers stationed in Afghanistan. His administration implemented a strategy that aimed at pressuring the Taliban through military means to bring them to the negotiating table. This approach included airstrikes and special operations to weaken the Taliban's position. In 2018, the administration of President Trump began formal negotiations for peace with the Taliban, which

⁴⁶ Mathew Rosenberg and Michael D. Shear, "In Reversal, Obama Says U.S. Soldiers Will Stay in Afghanistan to 2017", *The New York Times*, October 15, 2015, accessed on December 6, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html>

resulted in the ratification of the Doha Agreement in February 2020. The agreement outlined a withdrawal of U.S. troops, reliant on the Taliban's commitment to reducing violence and engaging in intra-Afghan dialogue. By the end of Trump's presidency in January 2021, U.S. troop numbers had been reduced to around 2,500, reflecting a significant drawdown in line with the Doha Agreement.

1.6- American President Joe Biden's Administration

President Joe Biden, who assumed office in January 2021, inherited the peace process and the commitment to withdraw the remaining U.S. forces. After a review of the situation, In April 2021, President Biden announced that all U.S. troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021.⁴⁷ This timeline was later adjusted to August 31, 2021. This decision signified the conclusion of America's longest-ever war. The withdrawal process faced many difficulties, including a quick Taliban advance that led to their capture of Kabul in August 2021. The chaotic evacuation of U.S. personnel and Afghan allies underscored the complexities of the withdrawal. Despite these difficulties, Biden maintained that ending the U.S. military presence was necessary to refocus on other strategic priorities and acknowledge the limits of prolonged military interventions in achieving lasting peace.⁴⁸ The final withdrawal on August 31, 2021, marked the conclusion of two decades of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan.

Many people think that when it comes to making big decisions about how a country interacts with others, intelligence agencies have a lot of say. These agencies provide not just

⁴⁷ "U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *The White House*, accessed on December 23, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/US-Withdrawal-from-Afghanistan.pdf>

⁴⁸ "U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan," 2023.

information but also ideas and plans, and sometimes they focus too much on military stuff and not enough on other important things for keeping the country safe.⁴⁹ This isn't just a thing in Pakistan it happens in other places too. Let take the example of USA, in the United States, even though the President usually listens to the Secretary of State for foreign policy advice, there have been times when the head of the CIA had a big role in making decisions. For instance, during the time when the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan, the CIA was calling a lot of the shots in what America did there. They were so involved that they sometimes took over negotiations with Pakistan instead of letting the State Department handle it.⁵⁰

1.7-Application of Regional Security Complex Theory on Pak Afghan Relations from 2018-2022

Applying the theory of Regional Security Complex (RSC) to the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship from 2018 to 2022, particularly under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, offers a nuanced understanding of how security interdependence, regional dynamics, and external influences shaped bilateral relations during this particular time period from 2018-2022.

1.7.1-Overview of the Regional Security Complex Theory

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, suggests that regions are clusters of states whose primary security concerns are interlinked, making them highly interdependent upon each other.⁵¹ In a regional security complex, the security of each state is tied to that of its neighbors, and any instability in one state can have substantial implications

⁴⁹ Najmuddin A Sheikh, "Foreign Policy Definition Formulation and Implementation Theory and Practice in Pakistan", *Strategic Thought*, 3(2023): 169. Accessed from <https://strategicthought.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/32>

⁵⁰ Sheikh, "Foreign Policy Definition Formulation and Implementation Theory."

⁵¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge University Press:2003), accessed from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/regions-and-powers/9E0B611D4C01CECD704651B273646E1D>

for the entire region.

1.7.2-Security Interdependence and Cross-Border Tensions

Pakistan and Afghanistan have historically had a strained relationship, primarily due to border disputes, cross-border militancy, and differing views on regional security. Under the leadership of PTI government, Pakistan's approach to Afghanistan was framed within the broader context of seeking regional stability, especially in light of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan's security concerns were deeply intertwined with developments in Afghanistan, as instability in Afghanistan directly affected Pakistan's internal security, particularly in its western border regions. The PTI government sought to manage these interdependencies by engaging with Afghan leaders and, later, with the Taliban to ensure that Afghan soil would not be used for cross-border attacks by groups like the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Despite these efforts, cross-border tensions remained an important issue, with frequent accusations from both sides regarding support for militant groups, highlighting the deep security interdependence within the region. Since the NATO forces drawdown was nearing according to the given time frame, the terrorist activities were predominantly increased in Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁵² Pakistani officials raised this issue many times but Afghan government denied this and they did not take this issue seriously which ultimately raised tensions between both countries.

1.7.3-Pakistan's Role as a Regional Hegemon

In the context of RSCT, Pakistan can be seen as a regional power attempting to influence outcomes in Afghanistan to secure its own strategic interests. Under the PTI government, Pakistan played a

⁵² Maliha Zeba Khan, "Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan since Operation Freedom Sentinel: An Overview", *Margalla Papers* 2017.

crucial role in facilitating peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban, which eventually led to the Doha Agreement in 2020.⁵³ Pakistan's involvement in these negotiations underscored its role as a key player in the Afghan conflict and its desire to shape the post-U.S. withdrawal scenario in a way that would ensure a friendly or at least neutral government in Kabul.

1.7.4-External Influences and Regional Dynamics

The Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship from 2018 to 2022 was also shaped by external influences, particularly from the United States, China, and Russia. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan was a pivotal event that reshaped the regional security complex, leading to significant shifts in the security dynamics of the region. Pakistan's role in facilitating the U.S.-Taliban negotiations positioned it as a crucial intermediary, but it also brought new challenges as the Taliban's return to power in 2021 raised concerns about potential instability spilling over into Pakistan. China's growing influence in the region, particularly through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its close ties with Pakistan, also impacted the bilateral relationship. China viewed stability in Afghanistan as essential for the success of its economic projects in Pakistan and the broader region, leading to increased cooperation between Pakistan and China on Afghan-related issues. Russia's renewed interest in the region, driven by concerns about the spread of extremism and drug trafficking, further complicated the regional security landscape. Pakistan's engagement with both China and Russia on Afghan issues reflected its broader strategy of balancing relationships with multiple powers to secure its interests in the evolving regional complex.

⁵³ Sadia Kazmi, "Afghan Peace Process: Prospects and Challenges for Pakistan", *Afghan Peace Process* 2, no. 1, accessed from <https://thesvi.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Afghan-Peace-Process-Prospects-and-Challenges-for-119-143.pdf>

1.7.5-Impact of Taliban's Return to Power

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 marked a significant shift in the regional security complex. For Pakistan, the Taliban's victory was both an opportunity and a challenge.⁵⁴ While it eliminated the perceived threat of a pro-India government in Kabul, it also raised concerns about the resurgence of militant groups within Pakistan, particularly the TTP. Pakistan's efforts to engage with the Taliban government were driven by the need to manage these security concerns, but the relationship remained fraught with challenges. Issues such as the Taliban's reluctance to crack down on the TTP and border management disputes continued to strain bilateral relations, illustrating the complexities of security interdependence in the region.

Applying the Regional Security Complex Theory to Pakistan-Afghanistan relations from 2018 to 2022 under the PTI government highlights the deep interdependence of security concerns in the region. The bilateral relationship was shaped by cross-border tensions, Pakistan's role as a regional power, and the influence of external actors like the United States, China, and Russia. The Taliban's return to power in 2021 further complicated the security dynamics, underscoring the challenges of managing a complex and interdependent regional security environment. This period illustrates how the security of Pakistan and Afghanistan is inextricably linked, with developments in one country having profound implications for the other, consistent with the principles of Regional Security Complex Theory.

⁵⁴ Abdul Sayed, "The Evolution and Future of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan", accessed from <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/12/the-evolution-and-future-of-tehrik-e-taliban-pakistan?lang=en>

CHAPTER-2

PTI GOVERNMENT POLICIES TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN FROM 2018 -2022

2.1- Introduction

Following the 2018 general elections, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf took control of the country. In its electoral manifesto of 2018, PTI clearly stated that they want friendly relations with neighboring countries. The goal of PTI is to create a Naya Pakistan that is self-assured and at peace with its neighbors via reciprocity. A Pakistan that aspires to cordial ties with every state based on openness, interest-sharing, and respect for national autonomy. Naya Pakistan would aim to resolve conflicts while maintaining a strong strategic deterrence. A Naya Pakistan that refuses to take up arms in other people's conflicts or stand in for any strength.⁵⁵ After PTI victory in general elections of 2018, Imran Khan gave his speech after winning, talking about the War on Terror and the Afghan conflict. He said the Afghan people have suffered the most and now they need peace. He promised that Pakistan will try hard to solve the problem. Additionally, he expressed his desire for Afghanistan to have open borders, like the European Union.⁵⁶ According to Constitution of

Pakistan, Article 40 states that

The State will strive to maintain and enhance brotherly ties among Muslim republics, founded on the principles of Islamic unity, and support the shared interests of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It will also promote international peace and security, foster goodwill and friendly relations among nations, and encourage the peaceful resolution

⁵⁵ "The Road to Naya Pakistan", *PTI Manifesto 2018*:7, accessed on December 10, 2023, <https://www.pmo.gov.pk/documents/manifesto-PTI.pdf>

⁵⁶ Alysa Ayres, "A Glimpse of Pakistan's Foreign Policy Under Imran Khan?", *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed on December 10, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/glimpse-pakistans-foreign-policy-under-imran-khan>

of international disputes.⁵⁷

A key component of PTI's foreign policy was its steadfast dedication to diplomatic solutions, especially with regard to Afghanistan. This commitment was based on the belief that diplomatic efforts, as opposed to military action, were the only ways to bring about long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Imran Khan's diplomatic strategy towards Afghanistan during his tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan was characterized by pragmatism and a focus on fostering peace and stability in the region. He underscored the importance of a negotiated settlement to the Afghan conflict and aimed to enhance bilateral relations through dialogue and cooperation. Khan championed the idea of a peace process led and owned by Afghans, encouraging all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue to seek a political resolution to the conflict. He supported the intra-Afghan peace talks and offered Pakistan's facilitation to bridge the gaps between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Following the change in government, Pakistan encouraged the Taliban to engage with various factions in Afghanistan to achieve lasting peace. Additionally, Pakistan extended economic cooperation to the new regime.⁵⁸

2.2- PM Imran Khan Wrote a Letter to President Ashraf Ghani

In August 2018, on Afghanistan's 99th Independence Day, Prime Minister Imran Khan extended his congratulations to the country's leadership and people. The Prime Minister had conveyed warm wishes and prayers from the people of Pakistan to their Afghan counterparts. In a

⁵⁷ The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, *National Assembly of Pakistan* :20, accessed on December 10, 2023, https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1549886415_632.pdf

⁵⁸ Guldad, Interviewed by researcher, 9May, 2024.

letter, the Prime Minister expressed hopes for this significant moment to mark the commencement of a new era, guiding Afghanistan towards lasting peace and stability under his visionary leadership through a process led and owned by the Afghan people. He further emphasized that Pakistan stands resolutely with Afghanistan in all efforts to crush the prolonged instability and violence affecting the region. The Prime Minister eagerly anticipates high-level engagement with the Afghan government, aiming not only to promote peace and stability but also to create a favorable environment for the long-term economic development and prosperity of both nations.⁵⁹

2.3- Imran Khan Rejects Providing Bases to the United States for Operations in Afghanistan

Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, took a firm stand against allowing the United States to use Pakistani bases for conducting operations in Afghanistan.⁶⁰ This firm decision highlighted Pakistan's commitment to an independent foreign policy and signaled a shift in regional dynamics. Imran Khan's stance highlighted Pakistan's determination to maintain sovereignty and independence in its foreign affairs. The nation had a history of carefully navigating its relationships with global powers to safeguard its national interests. He said that about 360 strikes had been carried out over the previous eight years, with over 300 of those occurring during the Obama administration. He claims that according to an estimate the number of casualties was close to 4,000 with a significant number of women, children, and non-combatants among them. These figures describe the tragedies that the people of FATA have experienced as well as the reasons behind the

⁵⁹ PM Imran Khan has facilitated the Government and people of Afghanistan on their 99th Independence, Prime Minister's Office, August 19, 20218, accessed on December 12, 2023, https://www.pmo.gov.pk/press_release_details.php?pr_id=2393

⁶⁰ Aoun Sahi, Saad Hassan. "Why Pakistan's Imran Khan said no to American Drones?" , *TRT World*, accessed on December 12, 2023, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-pakistan-s-imran-khan-said-no-to-american-drones-47581>

sharp rise in militancy.⁶¹

This decision came at an important stage as Afghanistan underwent major political changes, more importantly the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Neighboring countries, including Pakistan, reevaluated their positions in response to the evolving regional landscape. Public sentiment within Pakistan played a crucial role in shaping the government's decision. Imran Khan's devotion to the will of the people highlighted the significance of democratic principles in the country's decision-making process. Pakistan has always carefully managed its relationships with the US and other nearby countries. Imran Khan's decision may have been viewed as a strategic move to maintain equilibrium and avoid becoming tangled in conflicts that did not align with Pakistan's interests. The refusal to allow U.S. bases on Pakistani soil for Afghan operations had broader implications for regional stability. It might have affected Pakistan's relationship with the US and the Afghan peace talks.

The former Pakistani foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, also stated that following the evacuation of foreign soldiers from Kabul, his nation refused to grant the US any military post for the purpose of monitoring Afghanistan.⁶² However, Imran Khan's rejection did not signify a disengagement from the Afghan situation. Pakistan remained committed to a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, and the government explored alternative diplomatic avenues to contribute to the region's peace and security. Moreover, Imran Khan's firm refusal to grant U.S. bases for operations in Afghanistan marked a significant moment in Pakistan's foreign policy. The decision reflected a commitment to sovereignty, a response to changing regional dynamics, and a recognition of the

⁶¹ "Imran Criticizes US Drone Policy", *Dawn*, January 22, 2013, accessed on December 12, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/780563/imran-criticises-us-drone-policy>

⁶² Islamnudin Sajid, "Pakistan refuses to allow US forces to use its forces" *Asia Pacific*, June 8, 2021. accessed on December 15, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-refuses-to-allow-us-military-to-use-its-bases/2267066>

sentiments of the Pakistani people. As events unfolded, the global community closely watched how this decision shaped the future of regional relations and the ongoing efforts for stability in Afghanistan. On the other hand critiques argued that PTI was the party who did dialogue with TTP. Along with this they (PTI) want to resettle and politicize TTP in Pakistan.

2.4- Pakistan's Foreign Minister Visit to Afghanistan in 2018

During his inaugural foreign visit to Kabul on September 15, 2018, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, engaged with Afghan President and Chief Executive. He emphasized the significance of Pakistan's ties with Afghanistan, expressing a commitment to enhance collaboration in trade development and connectivity. He reiterated Pakistan's backing for the Government's pursuit of lasting peace in Afghanistan, emphasizing cooperation in counter-terrorism and security. Qureshi extended an invitation to President Ghani to visit Pakistan and disclosed an 18% surge in Afghan exports to Pakistan in 2018. The Minister also highlighted the necessity for a respectful and sustainable repatriation of Afghan refugees. This diplomatic visit set the foundation for the new government's upcoming engagement with Afghanistan.⁶³

2.5- PTI Policies towards Afghan Refugees

Pakistan has historically welcomed many Afghan refugees for many years, mainly after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. The policy of Pakistan for Afghan refugees have changed throughout time in response to regional security events. The UN reports that Pakistan is

⁶³ "Foreign Minister's Visit to Kabul", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan*, September 15, 2018, accessed on December 15, 2023, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-releases/foreign-ministers-visit-to-kabul-15-september-2018>

home to the world's biggest number of refugees, with 2.7 million of them coming from Afghanistan.⁶⁴ Ahmedullah Sharifi, Afghan PHD IR Scholar at IIUI said that Imran Khan's government was just like a golden opportunity for Afghans. During PTI government Afghans did not feel any type of discrimination. He further added that we feel free during his government and we feel that Pakistan is our second home. After that many bad things happened between Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁶⁵

On September 17, 2018 ruling Prime Minister Imran Khan made a significant policy announcement, signaling a major shift. He assured to award nationality to almost 1.5M Afghan refugees and, in the same address, declared intentions to issue passports to the parents of children born in Pakistan.⁶⁶ The regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) remained the main framework in 2019 for determining and implementing long-term solutions for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. During the 30th Tripartite Commission meeting on June 18, 2019, the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan reiterated their support for the policy. According to an estimate 6,220 Afghan refugees were assisted by UNHCR in their return from Pakistan in 2019 via the two Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs) one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one in Baluchistan. Of these, 6,035 people qualified for financial aid. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accounted for 45% of the total returns, followed by Baluchistan (45%), Punjab (5%), Sindh (4%), and Islamabad (1%). Out of them, the VRC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa processed 827 households (3,037 persons), while the VRC in Baluchistan handled 771 families (3,183 individuals). UNHCR ensured

⁶⁴ Memphis Barker, "Pakistan's Imran Khan Pledges Citizenship for 1.5m Afghan Refugees", *The Guardian*, September 17, 2018, accessed on December 15, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/17/pakistan-imran-khan-citizenship-pledge-afghan-refugees>

⁶⁵ Ahmed Ullah Sharifi PhD Scholar, interviewed by researcher, April 23, 2024.

⁶⁶ Soraya Parwani, "Imran Khan Citizenship Offer to Afghan Refugees: A Promise or Topic for Debate", *The Diplomat*, September 22, 2018, accessed on December 15, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/imran-khans-citizenship-offer-to-afghan-refugees-a-promise-or-a-topic-for-debate/>

that the refugee's decision to return was well-informed and free of coercion by verifying the voluntary nature of their repatriation.⁶⁷ Pakistani PM in 2018 affirmed that he had given the approval for Afghan refugees who are registered living in state of Pakistan to open their accounts in banks. "They can now take part in the formal economy of the nation," in reference to officially recognized Afghan refugees. Khan said, "This ought to have been done a long time ago."⁶⁸ The statement represents a significant shift from the previous government's approach, and the prime minister may have to deal with the nation's military, which has frequently held Afghan refugees accountable for acts of violence in Pakistan.⁶⁹ According to the Saffron Ministry's annual book, 10,792 accounts had been opened as of June 30, 2022, with PKRs 1809,465 million deposited.⁷⁰

Abdul Nasar an Afghan MS IR Scholar at IIUI is of the view that Imran Khan wanted Islamic countries on the same page. He wanted peace with the Taliban .He added that during the PTI government he came without passport there was not too much strictness during the PTI government on Afghans. But now there is a Strict Visa Policy. Border Management is strict during the current government if we compare it with the PTI government. He told his story that he wanted to come to Pakistan after PTI government but had no passport. Security forces present on border sent him back. Then he decided to illegally cross the border. He said that he was emotionally very disturbed by this because his mother was ill. He showed strong resentment and grievances on PDM government attitude towards afghan refugees. He further added that from 2018 to 2022 under the

⁶⁷ Voluntary Return, UNHCR, Accessed on December 16, 2023, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/voluntary-return-5>

⁶⁸ Zeeshan Ahmed, "PM Khan allows registered Afghan refugees to open bank accounts in Pakistan", *SHARP*, February 25, 2019, accessed on December 15, 2023, <https://sharp-pakistan.org/pm-khan-allows-registered-afghan-refugees-to-open-bank-accounts-in-pakistan/>

⁶⁹ Asad Hashim, "Imran Khan Pledges Citizenship to Afghan and Bangladeshi Refugees" *Aljazeera*, September 17, 2018, accessed on December 15, 2023 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/9/17/imran-khan-pledges-citizenship-to-afghan-and-bangladeshi-refugees>

⁷⁰ *Year Book 2021-2022*, Ministry of States and Frontier Regions Islamabad, August 11, 2021, accessed on December 17, 2023 <https://safron.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/Year%20Book%202021-22.pdf>

PTI government behavior was good with Pashtuns especially with Afghans. He further stressed that it was said by the PTI government that Afghans who married Pakistani women, government of Pakistan will give them nationality. However, Imran Khan's government provided facilities to Afghans. That's why Afghans are happy with the government of PTI in Pakistan.⁷¹ No doubt Imran Khan's policies were better for refugees but question here is what about security issues related to them. Proper mechanism was needed to implement policies properly. This was not as easy as it seems.

2.6 Pakistan's Offer to Kabul to Train Afghan Military

Pakistan has made repeated offers to train one brigade of the Afghan National Army, but no one has accepted in Kabul. Furthermore, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Afghanistan and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Pakistan signed a memorandum of understanding for intelligence sharing, but it was never put into effect because of disagreements within the Afghan government and opposition to President Ghani at home.⁷² On the other hand Afghanistan accepted Indian offer to train soldiers of Kabul which is in fact not good for Pakistan.

2.7 Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS)

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), created in 2018, aims to promote peace and unity, brought the two nations together to discuss and ultimately resolve a wide range of concerns. For each of these five major categories politico-diplomatic, military, Commerce and economy, intelligence, and refugee issues a separate working group was

⁷¹ Abdul Nasser, Afghan MS Scholar, Interviewed by researcher, 23 April, 2024.

⁷² Rahimullah Yousafzai, "Pakistan and Afghanistan in PTI Era." *Geo News*, October 2, 2018, accessed on December 18, 2023, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/213144-pakistan-and-afghanistan-in-the-PTI-era>

established.⁷³

2.7.1- First Review Session of Peace Plan

The inaugural review session of the Peace Plan took place on June 10, 2019 in capital of Pakistan. Leading their respective delegations, Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Idrees Zaman led the meeting, restating their commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan through the APAPPS, established in May 2018. This initiative, which includes five Working Groups addressing diverse areas such as Politico-Diplomatic, Military-to-Military Coordination, Intelligence Cooperation, Economy, and Refugee Issues, is designed to enhance institutional engagement. During the session, the Foreign Secretary emphasized Pakistan's firm dedication to this cause. Pakistan emphasized its commitment to a peaceful, stable, united, and prosperous Afghanistan, highlighting the importance of an inclusive, Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. Recognizing the need to maximize the potential of institutional mechanisms like APTTCA and JEC, both sides agreed on closer cooperation to advance economic development and long-term prosperity. It was decided that APAPPS Working Groups would convene meetings in the future, with the next review meeting scheduled for Kabul in December 2019.⁷⁴

2.8- Afghan President Visit to Pakistan in 2019

The last time President Ashraf Ghani travelled to Pakistan was in June 2019. Prior to this, in May 2019, the two presidents held a bilateral meeting in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, during the 14th

⁷³ "Pakistan Afghanistan Relations: Exploring the Way Forward", *Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)*, October, 2018, accessed on December 19, 2023, <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wpcontent/uploads/2018/10/PB-Pak-Afghan-Seminar.pdf>

⁷⁴ First Review Session of Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APA).

OIC Summit.⁷⁵ Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had carry out a visit to Islamabad to strengthen political, security, and economic cooperation with Pakistan, marking an important shift after years of strained relations. This marked Ghani's second bilateral visit, a departure from his previous approach in 2014 and 2015, where he had consistently ignored repeated invitations. Despite renewed hope, Ghani approached the visit with optimism, considering Pakistan's historical behavior in dealing with various Afghan governments and its persistent efforts to undermine the Afghan state. Pakistan's apprehensions about India continued to shape its strategic decisions in Afghanistan, posing a fundamental question for Afghanistan in its dealings with Pakistan. While the Afghan government had implemented important measures to address Pakistan's concerns. Another critical question revolved around Pakistan's increased level of influence over the Afghan Taliban. The Taliban's sanctuaries were located in Pakistan, raising uncertainties about whether their relationship represented a mere "marriage of convenience" or a more profound strategic alliance. If Pakistan had exaggerated its leverage over the Taliban, it could have been a myopic decision to accord undue significance to Pakistan's role and allow it more space than warranted.⁷⁶ In a seminar conducted in Islamabad Afghan President stated that "Pakistan plays a crucial role, and there are interdependencies between the Taliban and Pakistan. We must acknowledge this and develop pragmatic approaches to transition from conflict to cooperation."

President Ghani words were seen by analysts as a dramatic change in Kabul's attitude towards Pakistan. Islamabad rejected the accusations made by Afghan officials on a regular basis that the neighboring nation helps and harbors Taliban fighters in order to incite unrest in

⁷⁵ "Curtain Raiser: Prime Minister's Visit to Kabul", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Government of Pakistan, November 19, 2020, accessed on December 19, 2023, <https://mofa.gov.pk/curtain-raiser-prime-minister-to-visit-afghanistan>

⁷⁶ Halimullah Kousary, "Ghani's visit to Pakistan: Questions to Answer", *The Diplomat*, June 27, 2019, accessed on December 19, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/ghanis-visit-to-pakistan-questions-to-answer/>

Afghanistan.⁷⁷ During his visit to Pakistan Afghan President also visited Pakistan based think tank (ISSI). President Ghani talked about how stability and prosperity go hand in hand for both countries to have control over their own affairs. He stressed the need to learn from the past and make positive history.⁷⁸ The president pointed out that improving relations with Pakistan and finding a political based solution to the Afghan conflict in Afghanistan is crucial for Afghan government. He also mentioned the importance of working together with Pakistan to reduce poverty and tackle institutional challenges in the region. President Ghani discussed the (TAPI), describing it as an important project that has secured funding, and Afghanistan will soon commence work on it. He highlighted the potential of the Gwadar and Karachi ports to be preferred by Central Asian businesses. Additionally, he noted that the current railway infrastructure is adequate for facilitating these developments.⁷⁹

2.9- Second Pakistan Afghanistan and China Foreign Ministers Dialogue

Foreign Ministers from three countries Pakistan, China and Afghanistan convened the 2nd Foreign Ministers Dialogue in Afghan capital on 15th of December, 2018.⁸⁰ China and Pakistan complimented Afghanistan on the successful conclusion of its parliamentary elections at the meeting and stated their support for the 2019 presidential election. The three sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening relationships, promoting collaboration, and developing connectivity

⁷⁷ Ayaz Gul, "Ghani Seeks Pakistan's Support for Afghan Peace Talks With Taliban," *Voice of America*, June 28, 2019, accessed on December 20, 2023, https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_ghani-seeks-pakistans-support-afghan-peace-talks-taliban/6170804.html

⁷⁸ "Public Talk by Mr. Muhammad Ashraf Ghani President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan", June 27, 2019, accessed on December 20, 2023, https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2019/Annual_Report_2019.pdf

⁷⁹ Malik Qasim Mustafa, "Public Talk by Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan" *Annual Report 2019/ISSI*, accessed on December 22, 2023, https://issi.org.pk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/Annual_Report_2019.pdf

⁸⁰ "Wang Yi Attended the 2nd Trilateral Foreign Minister Dialogue and Met with Afghan Leaders," December 18, 2018, accessed on December 22, 2023, http://af.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sgxw/201812/t20181218_1180140.htm

projects like the (RECCA), the (BRI), and other regional business ventures.⁸¹ They also agreed to promote trilateral cooperation under the BRI framework. Furthermore, they repeated their commitment to combat terrorism, while emphasizing mutual trust building, reconciliation support, development cooperation, and security collaboration as key areas of collaboration. They also urged an end to violence in Afghanistan Cooperation in economic development within mutually beneficial areas was emphasized.

China offered support for specific projects including immigration reception centers and drinking water supply schemes, as well as exploring cold storage options.⁸² Enhanced coordination on major energy and connectivity projects was encouraged, including railway construction. The parties affirmed their determination to prevent their territories from being used for terrorist activities and pledged to strengthen counter-terrorism coordination, capacity building, and deny terrorist access to resources. To bolster their cooperation in counter-terrorism, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Implementation of the agreements reached in the dialogue will be carried out through various mechanisms, including strategic dialogues and practical cooperation channels.

2.10- Advancing Trilateral Cooperation

The 3rd Session of the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue took place in Islamabad on September 7, 2019, attended by Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani of Afghanistan, and State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi of

⁸¹ "Joint Statement of 2nd Afghanistan-China Pakistan Foreign Ministers Dialogue" *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan* December 15, 2018, accessed on December 22, 2023, <https://mofa.gov.pk/joint-statement-of-the-2nd-afghanistan-china-pakistan-foreign-ministers-dialogue>

⁸² Ayaz Gul, "China Tries to Bring Pakistan Afghanistan Closer", *Voice of America*, May 15, 2018, accessed on December 25, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-tries-to-bring-pakistan-afghanistan-closer-/4395419.html>

China.⁸³ The progress achieved since the previous dialogue in Kabul was acknowledged with satisfaction. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing trilateral cooperation across various domains. They pledged to continue building political trust, supporting reconciliation efforts, and addressing regional peace, development, security, and counter-terrorism challenges. Recent terrorist attacks in Afghanistan were strongly condemned, emphasizing the need for a politically negotiated settlement to the conflict. The dialogue participants expressed hope for intra-Afghan negotiations leading to a violence-free peace. They stressed the importance of an inclusive, Afghan-led peace process.⁸⁴

China and Pakistan reiterated their support for Afghanistan's peace efforts and reconstruction initiatives. Strengthening relations and advancing connectivity under initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and RECCA were highlighted. Additionally, the concept of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan plus cooperation was introduced, focusing on trade and connectivity projects such as the Kabul-Peshawar Motorway. Progress on projects agreed under the Cooperation Dialogue was welcomed, with a commitment to further cooperation in economic development, capacity building, and people-to-people exchanges.⁸⁵ China offered support for infrastructure projects at border crossings. Plans for trilateral sporting events and diplomatic exchanges were endorsed. The commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms, including the ETIM, and to prevent terrorist activities on their soils remained strong. Cooperation in counter-terrorism measures was emphasized, with agreements on specific projects. The trilateral mechanisms for cooperation were

⁸³ "Joint Statement of 3rd China Afghanistan, Pakistan Foreign Ministers Dialogue", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 7, 2019, December 25, 2023, <https://mofa.gov.pk/joint-statement-of-the-3rd-china-afghanistan-pakistan-foreign-ministers-dialogue>

⁸⁴ Naveed Siddiqui, "Trilateral Dialogue: Pakistan, China and Afghanistan Agree on Enhancing Counter Terrorism Cooperation, *Dawn*, September 7, 2019.

⁸⁵ "Foreign Ministers of China, Afghanistan and Pakistan Hold the Third Dialogue", *CIDCA*, September 8, 2019, accessed on December 25, 2023, http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2019-09/08/c_407236.htm

reiterated, with gratitude expressed for Pakistan's hosting of the dialogue.

2.11- Imran Khan Unveils Historic 24/7 Border Crossing at Torkham

On 18th September 2019 PM Imran Khan with Afghan representatives initiated border crossing at Torkham in order to improve strained relations with neighboring Afghanistan. In the past the border crossing was only open for 12 hours at a time, which caused problems for truck drivers on both sides and made it impossible for patients who couldn't stay over the night to pass. During his June 2019 visit to Pakistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani requested PM Imran Khan to facilitate trade between the two nations. Afghanistan mostly uses Pakistani land routes and seaports for foreign trade because it is a landlocked nation. ⁸⁶Muhammad Sadiq Imran Khan's special representative to Afghanistan said that

The Torkham crossing, linking Pakistan and Afghanistan, has been made open to pedestrians six days a week. This move is set to significantly reduce travel wait times at the border. Additionally, facilities are being enhanced to make travel between the two countries more convenient and easy.⁸⁷

Chief Minister of KP Mehmood Khan in a video message said that PM Khan has ordered the opening of the Pak Afghan border at Torkham for a full day. He further argued that border openings will increase trade with Central Asia. CM stated that every preparation in this respect has been completed. He thought that this initiative would result in more job related opportunities in Afghanistan. Mehmood Khan declared that this action would put an end to misunderstandings on both ends of the border. Situated along the 2,500 km international border dividing Pakistan and

⁸⁶ "Pakistan Afghanistan inaugurate 24/7 Torkham border Crossing", *AlJazeera*, September 18, 2019, December 25, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/9/18/pakistan-afghanistan-inaugurate-24-7-torkham-border>

⁸⁷ "Pakistan Permits Pedestrian Movement on Torkham Border Six Days a Week", *Arab News*, February 15, 2021, December 25, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1809636/pakistan>

Afghanistan, Torkham is an important transport and shipping hub and one of the busiest ports of entry between the two states.⁸⁸

According to Amina Khan, Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in a world that is rapidly changing and shifting from geopolitics to geo-economics, regional economic integration and connectivity have become more and more important. She continued by saying that the benefits of bilateral and transit commerce for both parties trade and economic prospects are what make Afghanistan and Pakistan enjoy a unique connection. Since August 2021, trade between the two has grown; Afghan exports to Pakistan have raised from \$550 million to \$700 million. This growth can be attributed to bilateral cooperation, the organization of an operationalized Integrated Transit Trade Management System (ITTMS) Torkham, and increasing purchases of Afghan coal by Pakistan. She stated that although Pakistani exports to Afghanistan have declined, over the last 11 months, exports through Afghanistan have increased significantly by 70%, from \$118 million to \$202 million, with a remarkable growth in shipments to Central Asian countries. .⁸⁹

2.12- Army Chief Visit to Afghanistan in June 2020

On June 9, 2020, head of Pakistan army accompanied by Pakistan's Special Envoy on Afghanistan, Muhammad Sadiq, and Director General of (ISI) General Faiz, embarked on an unexpected trip to Kabul. The primary objective of this visit was to engage in discussions with Afghan leaders, including President Ashraf Ghani and Chairman of the High Council for National

⁸⁸ PM Imran to inaugurate Torkham border on September 14 ,December 25,2023. <https://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/508819-PM-Imran-to-inaugurate-TorKham-border-on-September-14>

⁸⁹ Sarah Akram, "Pak Afghan Economic Ties: Opening New Vistas", *ISSI*, December 20, 2022.

Reconciliation, Dr. Abdullah, on strategies to further progress the peace process in Afghanistan.⁹⁰

2.13- Imran Khan Visit to Kabul in 2020

Imran Khan visited Kabul on 19 November 2020 after he was invited by President Ashraf Ghani. The Prime Minister's visit to Afghanistan is the first since his appointment into office. Among those who had go along with the Prime Minister were the Foreign Affairs Minister, Commerce, Investments Adviser and a number of other senior officials. It was also marked by having a private meeting with President Ashraf Ghani, talks at delegation level followed by joint press appearance as outlined in its agenda. Consequently, this primarily focused on enhancing brotherly bilateral ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan; deliberating upon peace process in Afghanistan; regional economic development and connectivity. In addition, the prime minister's visit formed part of routine high-level visits between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This was preceded by a phone call between PM Imran Khan and President Ashraf Ghani in September 2020. A continuation of increased cooperation between two countries that have been going on for months now is what characterized this visit. On 31 August 2020, there was another Review Session of the Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) in Kabul. The adviser visited Kabul to discuss bilateral trade and investment ties before the PM went there; he had a two-day stay from November 16th to 18th, 2020 where he discussed these issues just as much as he did the transit trade. In the face of history, faith, norms and customs culture and family values are very important. Pakistan is related to Afghanistan in many ways than one could imagine. The Prime Minister's visit played a pivotal role in fostering a stronger relationship between the two brotherly

⁹⁰ Tajammul Altaf, "The Conduct of Pakistan's Foreign Policy Structure, Strength and Issues (2018-2022)", *Institute of Policy Studies*, February 2, 2022.

countries.⁹¹

2.14- Chairman (HCNR) of Afghanistan Visited Pakistan in 2020

Chairman (HCNR) Abdullah met with Pakistan's military and civil society officials, spoke with think tanks, the Council of Islamic Ideology of Pakistan, and other members of the public during his tour.⁹² As he wrapped up his three days in Pakistan, Abdullah said, "I am grateful to the Pakistani leadership and nation for their warm welcome, hospitality, and a new path in ties."⁹³ Abdullah made a number of significant observations on the relationship and the area during his stay. Speaking at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad, he admitted that there are ongoing tensions on the relationship between the two nations and that exaggerated mistrust, and conspiracy theories have been hurting such ties. He did, however, emphasized that the moment had come for both states to address unresolved issues, identify their shared interests, and come out with a new vision and strategy for their partnership.⁹⁴

2.15 -Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Bordering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces on the Pakistani side, the 2,640 km boundary also crosses the provinces of Badakhshan, Nurestan, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Khost, Paktika, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand, and Nimruz on the Afghan side. The border used to be porous in many places, making it impossible to monitor cross-border movement of persons and

⁹¹ Curtain Raiser: Prime Minister's Visit to Kabul", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Government of Pakistan*, November 18, 2020, December 25, 2023 <https://mofa.gov.pk/curtain-raiser-prime-ministers-visit-to-kabul-19-november-2020>

⁹² Accessed on December 27, 2023, <https://twitter.com/Dr.abdullahCE/status/1310455963200237573>

⁹³ Accessed on December 27, 2023, <https://twitter.com/Dr.abdullahCE/status/1311373854011543560>

⁹⁴ Amina Khan, "Abdullah's Visit to Pakistan: A New Path to Pak Afghan Ties", *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*, 17 October, 2020.

products. On the other hand, new information indicates that 85% of the border has been fenced. There are three recognized border crossing locations: Chaman, Torkham, and Ghulam Khan. Each of these points have all the necessary facilities, including immigration, customs, and security checkpoints.⁹⁵ The Chaman-Spin Boldak border, which links Quetta with the Afghan province of Kandahar, is situated in the Baluchistan province. With regard to formal bilateral and transit commerce, it is the second busiest border with Afghanistan. The busiest and oldest border crossing point is Torkham. It links Jalalabad, the capital of Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, with Peshawar. Through the Torkham border, a sizable amount of official bilateral commerce as well as transit trade is carried out. The Torkham border crossing point has a long history. Prior to partition, it was the site of cross-border trade between the British administration of India and Afghanistan. On the other hand, the customs operation office was founded at the border crossing point at Torkham in 1954. The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Miran Shah North Waziristan area is home to Ghulam Khan, the third official border crossing point. It links the Afghan province of Khost's Gurbaz district with Miran Shah. The Ghulam Khan Border is a new boundary that was just declared to be official. The Ghulam Khan border was used for cross-border trade in the early 2000s, but because to the significant military operation "Zarb-e-Azab," the border was closed for cross-border business later in 2014. After being halted for four years, cross-border commerce via Ghulam Khan was reopened for restricted trade in 2018. It was fully reopened in 2019 for both cross-border travel and trade. Ahmed Ullah Sharifi, Afghan PHD Scholar in IIUI explained in an interview that during Imran Khan Government trade relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan were at its peak.

⁹⁵ Kaizar Malik, "Exploring the Issues and Prospects of Pakistan's Cross-Border Trade with Afghanistan: A Case Study of Ghulam Khan" (M.Phil. thesis *Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. Islamabad*, 2022), 2.

2.16- Intra Afghan Negotiations and Imran Khan Stance on it

In his statement, Imran Khan said that he was very happy to announce that intra-Afghan negotiations would start on September 12th, 2020. This is a considerable milestone that the Afghans have been waiting for years. After over four decades of war and violence, Afghans are at last moving towards peace. Pakistan has also suffered immensely from this conflict with terrorism, loss of human lives as well as huge economic costs. I have always held the view that there cannot be any military solution to this problem and that only a political agreement arrived at through dialogue can normalize the situation. Pakistan has played a vital role in facilitating the Afghan peace process, and we are proud to have fulfilled our responsibility. It is now up to the Afghanistan leaders to take advantage of this opportunity by working together constructively so as to secure an inclusive political settlement acceptable to all Afghans.⁹⁶

A successful Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process is crucial for Afghanistan's future as well as regional harmony and prosperity. We assume all parties will honor their pledges, persevere through challenges and continue working towards peace diligently. As they embark on this critical journey towards peace, Pakistan will continue to support its neighbor across international border in solidarity with the Afghan people.⁹⁷

2.17- From Withdrawal to Chaos: Assessing Pakistan's Stance in the Aftermath of fall of Kabul

Pakistan has achieved a strategic win with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, since a

⁹⁶ "Statement of Prime Minister Imran Khan on Intra Afghan Negotiations", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 11, 2020, December 27, 2023, <https://mofa.gov.pk/statement-of-prime-minister-imran-khan-on-intra-afghan-negotiations>

⁹⁷ "Statement of Prime Minister Imran Khan on Intra Afghan Negotiations".

friendly administration has been established in Kabul for the first time in almost two decades. However, Pakistan might soon discover that its alliance with the Taliban is not going to be as simple.⁹⁸ Lt-Gen Faiz, the chief of Pakistan's top spy agency, made his first visit to Kabul in 2021. This was the first time a senior Pakistani official had been there since the Taliban took over the Afghan capital and the US-led foreign forces chaotically left the war-torn nation. Normally, the director general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) keeps his travels to Afghanistan under concealment, but this time it was exceptional. Pictures of Gen. Faiz having a cup of tea in Kabul's Serena Hotel with Pakistan's ambassador Mansoor Ali Khan were making the rounds on social media. The DG ISI stated in answer to an inquiry from a foreign journalist that he was in Afghanistan in search of "peace and stability." In order to acquire a firsthand assessment of the situation, he said, he came here to meet with the Pakistani envoy. But it's speculated that in order to have a conversation about the current state of affairs, the DG ISI met with the highest authorities in Afghanistan. It has been claimed that he also met in Kabul with certain foreign envoys. Talking about the plans and procedures for the safe evacuation of foreign nationals who are still stuck in Afghanistan was one of his visit's goals, albeit no formal information was made public.⁹⁹

Critiques argued that General Faiz visit to Kabul was ill-timed and unwarranted. Either the ISI chief should have not visited Kabul or kept the visit secret. His visit to Kabul gave further credence to the allegations that Pakistan was supporting Afghan Taliban. Similarly, the visit also did not go well among the Afghan public and hence Taliban had to opt for more nationalist policies to win support of Afghan people at the cost relations with Pakistan. Pakistan was expecting

⁹⁸ Michael Kugelman, "Pakistan's Friendship with the Taliban is Changing", September 13, 2021, *Foreign Policy*, December 27, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/13/pakistan-taliban-ties-afghanistan/>

⁹⁹ Kamran Yousaf, "ISI Chiefs visits Kabul to meet Taliban Leadership", *The Express Tribune*, September 5, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2318701/isi-chief-visits-kabul-to-meet-taliban-leadership>

cooperation from the Taliban in neutralizing the TTP's threat and hence ISI chief visited Kabul. However, Pakistan could not achieve this objective. In a nutshell, the visit caused more damage than providing any advantage.¹⁰⁰

In an interview Abdullah Khan said that ISI Chief visit might had some official requirement. Spy masters do make such visits. However, his photograph could have been avoided. It may be a gesture for India in the context of Operation Swift Retort in 2019 when Pakistan had captured an Indian pilot who was served with tea and his words 'The tea is fantastic' became very famous. Since Indian presence was washed out completely from Afghanistan along with the US withdrawal, general Faiz may had gestured to India that 'The tea is still fantastic'. He further added that at that time Pakistan's prime focus was to secure safe exit of western troops as they were stranded and Taliban had captured Kabul well before the foreign forces could leave Afghanistan. Perhaps General Faiz negotiated with the top Taliban commanders who were leading the operations to facilitate the secure exit.¹⁰¹

2.18- Sardar Muhammad Shokaib, Charge De Affairs Embassy of Afghanistan in Pakistan

In a seminar Conducted by Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services, Sardar Muhammad Shokaib from Afghan side stated his hope that Pakistan will assist Afghanistan in convincing the international world to support the new regime's attempts to establish institutions, rebuild the Afghan economy, and preserve peace. He told that the last three months of the Taliban government have brought peace and tranquility, where life has returned to normalcy with the start of livelihoods, agriculture, and trade, in contrast to the constant killing of roughly 20 to 30 people

¹⁰⁰ Guldad, interviewed by researcher, May9, 2024.

¹⁰¹ Abdullah Khan, interviewed by researcher, May14, 2024.

every day during the presence of occupied forces in the previous 20 years. He underlined that all of the main tribes are fairly represented in the current Kabul government, making it inclusive. Under the current arrangement, political prisoners are completely absent from Afghanistan. The current administration is making an effort to abide by the demands of the global community. He emphasized that in order to abolish the sanctions imposed following UN Resolution 1267 in October 1999, Pakistan must collaborate with the US and other western nations. He further argued that that Taliban did not permit any anti-Pakistan elements to flourish on its land.¹⁰²

In an interview to Jonathan Swan American Journalist, Imran Khan said that I think America has devastated the situation in Afghanistan. First, they want a military solution in Afghanistan which is not correct. People like me who know about the history of Afghanistan again and again said that there is no military solution for this. For this, I was criticized as an American opponent and also coined as Taliban Khan. I don't know what the purpose of these people in Afghanistan either they wanted the restoration of democracy in Afghanistan or the freedom of women. The way they did in Afghanistan was not the right way. Finally when they decided that there was no military solution to the situation in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the game was out of the hands of America and NATO forces. When NATO forces were present in large numbers this was the time to extract a political solution but when they restricted NATO forces to 10,000 and also given the date of forces withdrawal than Taliban thought that they became victorious and at that time it was impossible to persuade the Taliban for an agreement. Because they think they

¹⁰² "Parliamentary Seminar on Geo Political Situation and Afghanistan: Prospects and Challenges, "November 18,2021, December 27,2023, https://www.pips.gov.pk/capacity_building/parliamentary-seminar-on-geo-political-situation-and-afghanistan-prospects-challenges/

won.¹⁰³

It is good for Afghanistan to make an inclusive government that includes all factions in addition to the Taliban. It would be worse for Afghanistan if the civil war started. From Pakistan's perspective, this is a bad condition because we have to face two situations. It is of Refugees Problem. Pakistan has already hosting Afghan Refugees for a very long. Due to the civil war amount of refugees will be increased. Our economic condition is not good and we are not in a position to host more refugees. The second problem is that civil war spread in Pakistan because the Taliban are Pashtuns. Because on our side of the border, Pashtuns are also in large numbers. In an answer to the question on allegations of the US on Pakistan on supporting Taliban in Afghanistan Prime Minister Imran Khan replied that it seems very unethical. If we talk about 9/11 Pakistan has nothing to do with it. At that time Pakistan joined hands with the USA against the war on terror. Due to this, our country has been devastated. 70,000 people lost their lives. It also affected our economy. Why America do not provide evidence of such allegations? When America said about the safe heavens of the Taliban's in Pakistan where these safe heavens are? Now we don't want to become part of any war by giving bases to America in Pakistan against Afghanistan. Now we only want to become partners in peace.¹⁰⁴

On November 11, 2021, Mawlawi Muttaqi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the (IEA) delivered a speech in Islamabad, Pakistan, expressing gratitude to Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, for the invitation and hospitality. Muttaqi thanked Pakistan for its recent humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, highlighting the longstanding support for Afghan refugees over the past forty

¹⁰³ Jonathan Sawan, "Prime Minister Imran Khan's Complete Interview on HBO Max". June 21, 2021, December 27, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8sU90kIG0U&t=24s>

¹⁰⁴ Sawan, "Prime Minister Imran Khan's Complete Interview."

years .During the visit, discussions were held on bilateral relations, security, trade, and movement between the two countries. Muttaqi emphasized the religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan, proposing to leverage these commonalities for mutual economic benefit. He highlighted positive developments in Afghanistan, including the creation of a united government and the withdrawal of foreign forces based on the Doha Agreement. Muttaqi assured neighboring countries of Afghanistan's commitment to non-interference and called for mutual security cooperation. Muttaqi stressed the importance of trade between both countries noting the potential for economic growth and regional connectivity. He emphasized Afghanistan's role in facilitating trade routes between South and Central Asia, mentioning recent progress in commercial convoys and regional projects like TAPI and CASA-1000.Regarding transit agreements, Muttaqi called for negotiations to address issues such as delays and charges on Afghan goods at Pakistani ports. He also highlighted challenges faced by travelers at border gates and proposed solutions to improve the movement of people between the two countries. Muttaqi expressed gratitude for Pakistan's hospitality towards Afghan refugees and called for continued support, especially in education and scholarships for Afghan youth. In conclusion, Muttaqi thanked the attendees and expressed hope for strengthened bilateral ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁰⁵

2.19- Afghan Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi at Pakistani Based Think Tank

Pakistan and Afghanistan's ties go beyond shared religious and cultural values; economic issues are also crucial. Afghanistan's Amir Khan Muttaqi, stressed their unique and unbreakable

¹⁰⁵ "Speech By Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Afghanistan*, November 11, 2021. December 28, 2023, <https://mfa.gov.af/en/5653>

bonds. He praised Pakistan's support, including humanitarian aid, economic assistance, and trade facilitation. Muttaqi highlighted Afghanistan's focus on regional connectivity and energy cooperation through projects like TAPI and CASA-1000. He emphasized the need to separate economic ties from politics and to improve infrastructure and trade. Muttaqi also reaffirmed Afghanistan's commitment to women's rights and preventing its territory from being used against any country, including Pakistan. He mentioned the recent Trilateral Foreign Ministers' dialogue where they agreed to prevent terrorist activities in the region.¹⁰⁶

2.20- Pakistan's Economic Assistance to Afghanistan

Since the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan, Pakistan has allocated over \$2 billion towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in its neighboring country. Despite facing economic challenges domestically, Pakistan has shown a sincere commitment to aiding Afghanistan's development. This assistance includes the construction of essential infrastructure such as clinics, schools, and roads, underscoring Pakistan's dedication to fostering a prosperous Afghanistan and rejecting any assertions of exploitation. From September 2021 to October 2022, Islamabad has dispatched more than 15,565 tons of aid valued at nearly Rs 2.735 billion to support its Afghan counterparts. Despite limited resources, Pakistan has contributed \$500 million towards enhancing various sectors in Afghanistan. Notably, Pakistan advocates for the expansion of the CPEC to encompass Afghanistan, aiming to encourage mutual benefits for both nations' citizens. These humanitarian efforts underscore the enduring bond between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistan plays a pivotal role in advancing education for Afghan youth, with several

¹⁰⁶ "Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi Addressed The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Afghanistan*, November 15, 2021, December 28, 2023, <https://mfa.gov.af/en/5659>

Pakistani universities organizing academic programs for Afghan professors and students, serving the broader interests of Afghanistan's future.¹⁰⁷

2.21- Pakistan's Diplomatic Efforts and OIC Conference

The Conference of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Islamabad on December 19, 2021,¹⁰⁸ was a landmark gathering of Islamic nations to address the escalating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Convened by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the conference brought together foreign ministers and representatives from over 50 member states, as well as international organizations and partners, to discuss the dire situation in Afghanistan and explore ways to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.¹⁰⁹ The situation in Afghanistan was grave, with widespread food insecurity, malnutrition, and a severe economic crisis. The conference recognized that the humanitarian crisis was a result of decades of conflict, political instability, and economic underdevelopment, and that a comprehensive and sustainable solution is required to sort out problems.

To address the immediate humanitarian needs of the Afghan people, the conference established a Humanitarian Trust Fund to channel assistance to Afghanistan. The fund aimed to provide emergency relief, including food, shelter, medicine, and other essential supplies, to the most vulnerable segments of the population. Saudi Arabia pledged significant financial support to the OIC fund for Afghanistan, while Pakistan announced a package of medical, food, and other

¹⁰⁷“Pakistan Afghanistan Trade :Connectivity and Development”, Institute of Policy Research Islamabad, December 28,2023,<https://ipripak.org/pakistan-afghanistan-trade-connectivity-and-development-oped/>

¹⁰⁸ “Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the Humanitarian Situation in Afghanistan”, Organization of Islamic Conference, December 19, 2021, <https://www.oicoci.org/docdown/?docID=8653&refID=4260>

¹⁰⁹ “Curtain Raiser: Pakistan to Host Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers”, MOFA, December 17, 2021, December 29, 2023, <https://mofa.gov.pk/curtain-raiser-pakistan-to-host-extraordinary-session-of-the-oic-council-of-foreign-ministers>

humanitarian assistance for its landlocked neighbor. The conference also appointed a special envoy to coordinate the OIC's efforts in Afghanistan and work closely with the United Nations and other international partners to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the crisis. In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, the conference emphasized the need for a political solution to the crisis in Afghanistan. The foreign ministers recognized that a lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan required a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement that involved all Afghan parties and stakeholders. The conference also acknowledged the importance of regional cooperation and coordination in addressing the crisis in Afghanistan. The foreign ministers recognized that the situation in Afghanistan had regional and global implications and required a collective response from the international community. Through this conference, the OIC demonstrated its commitment to addressing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and promoting peace and stability in the region. The establishment of the Humanitarian Trust Fund, the appointment of a special envoy, and the pledge of financial assistance marked a significant step towards alleviating the suffering of the Afghan people and promoting a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Moreover, the Ukraine crisis drawing global attention away from Afghanistan's plight, Pakistan extended a helping hand to the Afghan government to avert an economic collapse with potentially dire regional consequences.¹¹⁰ Regular shipments of relief supplies, encompassing food, winter attire, and other essentials, were dispatched to Afghan authorities through the Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum. Additionally, Pakistan established hospitals along the Afghanistan border to cater to critical patients, particularly women and children. To improve trade relations, Pakistan permitted barter trade to assist its neighboring nation. To streamline Afghan trade,

¹¹⁰ Safdar Sial, "Pakistan's Afghan Perspective and Policy Options", *PIPS*, July, 2021.

Pakistan, in January 2022, eliminated 45% of the regulatory duty on Chilgoza (pine nut) imports from Afghanistan and temporarily waived the Electronic Import Form (EIF) requirement, thus facilitating trade operations.¹¹¹

Furthermore, PTI government's policies towards Afghanistan from 2018 to 2022 aimed to improve relations through peaceful means and economic cooperation. However, their approach was inconsistent, with both efforts to talk peace and clashes along the border. While they supported talks for Afghan peace and trade initiatives, security concerns and the Taliban's takeover overshadowed these efforts. Overall, the PTI's policies failed to bring lasting stability and significant progress in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite some positive steps, the outcome was mixed and fell short of expectations.

¹¹¹ Sial, "Pakistan's Afghan Perspective", 2021.

CHAPTER-3

AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS AND US FORCES WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

3.1- Introduction

This chapter looks at why Afghanistan is trying to make peace and why US soldiers are leaving. In Afghanistan, efforts to negotiate peace and the departure of US forces are important developments in a long-standing conflict. The roots of this conflict has its roots in US-led invasion in 2001, which basically aimed at eradicating the Taliban regime and fighting terrorism. However, despite years of military intervention, the conflict persisted, encouraging a shift towards diplomatic solutions. Afghanistan's socio-political landscape is complex, characterized by ethnic diversity, tribal dynamics, and historical grievances. These factors have influenced the trajectory of the conflict and pose challenges to achieving sustainable peace.

Multiple stakeholders are involved in the peace negotiations, each with their own objectives and interests. The Afghan government seeks to maintain its authority and legitimacy, while the Taliban aims to regain power or secure significant influence. Additionally, neighboring countries and global powers like the United States play important roles, with varying degrees of influence and interests in Afghanistan's stability. Assessing the effectiveness of peace building efforts requires analyzing factors such as ceasefire agreements, reconciliation processes, and efforts to address underlying grievances and socio-economic disparities. Achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan depends on addressing root causes of the conflict, including governance issues, economic disparities, and ideological differences.

The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan carries important implications for the

country's security landscape and the broader regional balance of power. It raises questions about the capabilities of Afghan security forces, the sustainability of peace efforts, and the potential for increased instability in the region. Overall, understanding the complexities, challenges, and opportunities inherent in the Afghan peace process and the withdrawal of US forces is essential for assessing the prospects for sustainable peace in Afghanistan and its broader implications for regional stability. In 2001, Hamid Karzai, the country's caretaker leader, announced an amnesty for common Taliban fighters, marking the beginning of reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan.¹¹² He did so in spite of strong criticism from many political and ethnic groups, and he persisted in doing so to warriors who abstained from terrorism, disarmed, and separated from al-Qaeda in 2003 and 2004. President Karzai launched the Takhim-e-Solh (PTS) in February 2004 in an additional effort to fortify the peace initiative and encourage reconciliation.¹¹³

3.2- US Invasion of Afghanistan in 2001

With the help of NATO and more than 40 nations, the US in 2001 invaded Afghanistan in fulfillment of its War on Terror.¹¹⁴ On September 11, a series of terrorist attacks spread-out as hijacked passenger planes crashed. These attacks, orchestrated by Al Qaeda, resulted in the tragic loss of 2,763 lives. A fourth hijacked plane, projected for another target in Washington crashed into a field in area of Pennsylvania after travelers bravely tried to reclaim control.¹¹⁵ The events of 9/11 prompted the George W. Bush administration to seek authorization for military action against

¹¹² Nicholas Watt and Julian Borger, "Taliban Promise to Surrender Kandahar", *The Guardian*, December 7, 2001, December 29, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/07/afghanistan.julianborger>

¹¹³ Patricia Gossman and Sari Kuovo, "Tell Us how This Ends," *Afghan Analyst Network*, February 2013, December 29, 2023, https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IP_Amina_Khan_No_47_2020.pdf

¹¹⁴ Leoni Connah, "US Intervention in Afghanistan: Justifying the Unjustifiable?", *SAGE Journal* 41, no.1 (2021): 70, accessed on January 5, 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0262728020964609>

¹¹⁵ Carter Malkasian, *The American War in Afghanistan: A History*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2021).

the perpetrators. The "Authorization for Use of Military Force against Terrorists" gave the U.S. military the power to seek justice for the attacks and stop future terrorist threats. This marked the onset of the United States global campaign against terrorism. The conflict got worse on October 7, 2001, when the U.S. and U.K. started a war in Afghanistan. This action was prompted by the refusal of the Afghan Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind Al Qaeda's operations.¹¹⁶

President Bush said that:

Although the incident happened on American territory, it was an attack on the very essence of civilization. The globe has united to combat a novel and distinct conflict - the first, and hopefully the last, of the twenty-first century. A battle against all individuals who attempt to export terror, as well as a war against the governments that give them sanctuary or assistance.¹¹⁷

3.3- Overthrow of Taliban Government

The United States larger military campaign in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks included the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban, an extremist group that controlled much of Afghanistan and harbored Al Qaeda, was the target of the U.S.-led invasion.¹¹⁸ After the attacks, the U.S. demanded that the Taliban regime hand over Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, and dismantle terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. When the Taliban refused to comply, the United States, along with coalition partners, initiated military

¹¹⁶ Daniel Alm, "The US Invasion of Afghanistan: A Justified War", (Bachelor Thesis., Uppsala University, 2021), 27, accessed on January 5, 2024, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1575088/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

¹¹⁷ "Global War on Terror", February 5, 2024 <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/global-war-terror>

¹¹⁸ IWM, Afghanistan War: How did 9/11 lead to 20-Year War? accessed on January 5, 2024, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/afghanistan-war-how-did-911-lead-to-a-20-year-war>

action.¹¹⁹ Operation Enduring Freedom began on October 7, 2001, with airstrikes targeting Taliban and Al Qaeda positions. Ground forces, including U.S. Special Forces and Afghan opposition groups known as the Northern Alliance, swiftly followed. Over the following weeks and months, coalition forces, supported by local allies, advanced across Afghanistan, engaging in battles with Taliban fighters and gradually seizing control of territory. The Taliban government collapsed relatively quickly, with its leaders either fleeing or being captured. By December 2001, the Taliban had been removed from power in Kabul, and a new interim government, supported by the international community, was established. However, despite the initial success in overthrowing the Taliban, the conflict in Afghanistan would evolve into a protracted insurgency, with the Taliban regrouping and launching an insurgency against the U.S.-backed Afghan government and coalition forces.

3.4- President Obama Administration and Its Policies

There is always a window of opportunity to reevaluate connections with each new government. President Obama was expected to bring about significant change, and the challenges were equally great. However, there was not a clear shift in the U.S. strategy. Obama's U.S. strategy was not any less compromising in the quest of U.S. objectives, especially with regard to Pakistan and the Afghanistan War.¹²⁰ Obama from 2009 to 2017, faced the challenge of managing America's involvement in Afghanistan. His approach evolved over time as he dealt with the complexities of the situation. When President Obama took office, Afghanistan was in a dangerous state with the Taliban regaining strength. He initiated a surge of troops to counter the insurgency

¹¹⁹ "Instability in Afghanistan", *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 17, 2023, accessed on January 5, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan>

¹²⁰ Anina Khan, "President Barack Obama's Policies on Afghanistan," *Reflections*.no.1,(2009), accessed on January 10, 2024, https://www.issf.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/1299222067_23470247.pdf

and boost Afghan security forces. This surge aimed to stabilize the country and prevent it from becoming a safe haven for terrorists like Al-Qaeda.

However, recognizing the need to shift responsibility to the Afghan government, Obama began a gradual drawdown of U.S. troops. He believed it was essential for Afghanistan to take charge of its own security while also addressing domestic pressures to reduce America's military footprint abroad. Despite reducing troop levels, Obama maintained a commitment to Afghanistan by leaving behind a force to support Afghan security forces and conduct counterterrorism operations. He also pursued diplomatic efforts to encourage reconciliation between the Taliban and Afghan government, recognizing that a political solution was crucial for lasting stability. Yet, Afghanistan continued to face significant challenges, including internal conflicts, corruption, and weak governance. Obama's tenure highlighted the difficulty of finding workable solutions in a complex and volatile region. Throughout his presidency, Obama sought to strike a balance between advancing U.S. national security interests and promoting stability in Afghanistan.

3.5-President Trumps Commitment to Withdraw US Troops

One of the basic component of Trump's Afghanistan strategy was his commitment to withdrawing U.S. troops from the country. He believed that America's involvement in Afghanistan had become unsustainable and that it was time to bring soldiers back home. However, Trump also emphasized that any withdrawal would be based on conditions on the ground to guarantee the protection and safety of American recruits and prevent a power vacuum that could be exploited by terrorist groups. Trump announced a new plan for Afghanistan in 2017, which involved sending additional troops to the region to support Afghan security forces. At the same time, he made it clear that the ultimate goal was to bring American soldiers back home. Trump's approach sought

to strike a balance between maintaining pressure on terrorist groups and working towards a responsible exit strategy.

3.5.1- President Trump Supported Peace Negotiations

Despite his commitment to withdrawing troops, Trump faced pushback from within his own administration, military leaders, and foreign allies. Critics argued that a rapid withdrawal could destabilize Afghanistan and undermine gains in security and governance. They warned of the potential for a resurgence of terrorist organizations if the U.S. were to disengage too quickly. In addition to his efforts to withdraw troops, Trump supported peace negotiations between the government and the Taliban. He thought that in order to bring about long-lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, a diplomatic settlement was necessary. Direct negotiations between the two parties were made possible in part by Trump's administration, and in February 2020, a historic agreement was signed. In return for the Taliban's pledge to stop terrorist organizations from using Afghan territory as a base of operations, the agreement set out a timeline for the withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghanistan. However, the deal was not without controversy, as some critics questioned whether the Taliban could be trusted to maintain their promise. Throughout his presidency, Trump remained attentive in addressing security threats emanating from Afghanistan. He maintained a strong counterterrorism strategy that included targeted airstrikes and other operations against terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS-K. Trump stressed the significance of keeping terrorists away from using Afghanistan as a shelter and a potential threat to the United States and its allies.

3.5.2-Criticism on Trumps Policy towards Afghanistan

However, Trump's policy towards Afghanistan faced criticism and controversy. Some

argued that his focus on troop withdrawal and peace negotiations overlooked the complex realities on the ground. They raised concerns about the risks of a premature withdrawal, including the potential for increased violence and human rights abuses, particularly against women and girls. Others criticized Trump's decision-making process regarding Afghanistan, citing his unpredictability and inconsistency. His abrupt announcements of troop withdrawals and changes in strategy often caught allies and adversaries by surprise, raising questions about the effectiveness of his approach. Furthermore, Donald Trump's policy towards Afghanistan reflected his broader agenda of reducing America's military involvement overseas and prioritizing domestic interests. His efforts to withdraw troops, support peace negotiations, and address security concerns were driven by a desire to fulfill promises and shift away from longstanding military engagements. However, his approach faced challenges and criticism, highlighting the complexities of the situation in Afghanistan and the difficulty of achieving a lasting peace in the region.

3.6 -Afghanistan Peace Process and Pakistan's Role

In addition to their shared long border, Pakistan and Afghanistan are related geographically and ethnically. Another crucial aspect is the history of relations between the Taliban and the Pakistani military establishment. Another important thing is Pakistan's strong connections with the Taliban's position it as a major participant in the Afghan Peace Plan. The government of Pakistan has tried its best to restore peace in Afghanistan.¹²¹ Afghanistan, a country marred by decades of conflict and instability, has long been in pursuit of peace. Among the various attempts to negotiate an end to the violence, the Murree Talks of 2015 stand out as an important effort. Held in the

¹²¹ Ahmad, Manzoor, Naveeda Yousaf and Zahir Shah. "Dynamics of Pakistan Involvement in the Afghan Reconciliation Process". *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 37, no.2 (December 31, 2017), accessed on January 12, 2024, <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/544>

serene surroundings of Murree, near Islamabad, Pakistan, these talks aimed to bring together agents of the Afghan government and the Taliban insurgency to discuss a pathway towards peace. The Murree Talks were initiated with the objective of promoting direct dialogue between the Afghan administration and the Taliban, two principal stakeholders in the conflict. Organized with the facilitation of Pakistan, these talks provided a neutral ground away from the battleground for the opposing factions to engage in peaceful negotiations. They sought to explore possibilities for a political settlement that could end the fight and pave the way for a stability.

The participants in the Murree Talks represented diverse interests and perspectives crucial to the peace process. On one side stood the Afghan government, led by President Ashraf Ghani, which sought to assert its authority and legitimacy while safeguarding the security and well-being of its citizens. On the other side were the Taliban insurgents, who had been engaged in armed resistance against the government and aimed to secure a share of power and influence in post-war Afghanistan. Pakistan played a pivotal role as the host and mediator, leveraging its influence to facilitate dialogue and build trust among the conflicting parties.

The road to peace in Afghanistan is tangled with numerous challenges, and the Murree Talks were no exception. Deep-seated mistrust between the Afghan administration and the Taliban, stemming from centuries of conflict and ideological differences, posed an important obstacle to progress. Moreover, the involvement of various external actors with competing interests in Afghanistan further complicated the negotiation process. Additionally, divergent goals and strategies among the stakeholders hindered consensus on key issues, prolonging the deadlock in certain areas of discussion.

While the Murree Talks did not produce a complete peace agreement, they achieved notable milestones in the Afghan peace process. One significant outcome was the establishment

of a framework for future negotiations, which provided a basis for dialogue between the Afghan administration and the Taliban. Direct engagement between the conflicting parties also helped build channels of communication and confidence-building measures, raising a favorable environment for peace talks. However, hindrances such as the escalation of violence on the ground and disagreements on fundamental issues hampered the momentum generated by the talks.

The Murree Talks offer valuable lessons for advancing the Afghan peace process and resolving conflicts in similar contexts. They underscore the importance of sustained diplomatic efforts, inclusive dialogue, and regional cooperation in achieving lasting peace. Furthermore, the experience highlights the need for realistic expectations and incremental progress, recognizing the complexities of reconciliation in a deeply divided society.

Furthermore, The Murree Talks represent an important chapter in the Afghan peace representing both the challenges and opportunities essential in resolving the longstanding conflict. While they did not lead to an immediate breakthrough, they laid the groundwork for continued dialogue and engagement among the conflicting parties. As Afghanistan strives towards peace and stability, the lessons learned from the Murree Talks remain pertinent in shaping future initiatives and shaping a durable peace settlement. By learning from past experiences, there is optimism for a brighter and more peaceful prospect for Afghanistan and its people. Organized with the facilitation of Pakistan, these talks provided a neutral ground away from the battleground for the opposing factions to engage in peaceful negotiations. They sought to explore possibilities for a political settlement that could bring an end to the long conflict and pave the way for stability in Afghanistan.

In an interview Ahmed Ullah Sharifi Afghan Student at IIUI said that Pakistan was major stakeholder in Afghan peace process and especially in Doha Peace Accord because Pakistan has

good influence over Taliban. Most people think that majority of Taliban leaders lived in Pakistan and they use to live in Pakistan. When peace question arise in Afghanistan the first country our neighbors like asking it was Pakistan. It means that Pakistan played a vital role in peace process in Afghanistan from start till end. Every country has its own national interest. Being as a neighbor Pakistan pursued its national interest in Afghanistan. When Taliban came into power in Afghanistan in 2021 the relationship between Pakistan and Taliban were good. Pakistan's ISI head General Faiz Hameed also visited Kabul. Most people in Afghanistan they raised the slogan that it is the 5th province of Pakistan. Some people also said that now we are officially part of Pakistan. When Imran Khan Government was collapsed in 2022, everything has changed and now situation is different for Afghanistan.¹²²

According to Fawad Chaudhry, Pakistan's information minister, Head of USA, Trump wrote PM Imran Khan a letter requesting for assistance in the peace negotiations in Afghanistan. Trump seeks to put an end to long conflict between the insurgent Afghan Taliban and Afghan security forces, which is about the latter group's attempt to expel foreign forces and impose strict Islamic law.¹²³ A day later, according to Pakistani authorities, Khalilzad travelled to Islamabad and met with Khan and General Bajwa, his military chief, to discuss Trump's request. Speaking in the northwest city of Peshawar, Imran Khan claimed that, contrary to what U.S. officials had previously insisted, the U.S. has altered its tune and is now asking for assistance rather than accusing Islamabad of not doing enough.¹²⁴ The US is following multiple lines of effort to promote Afghan peace, according to Lisa Curtis. Lisa Curtis further stated that "In addition to asking

¹²² Ahmed Ullah Sharifi, interviewed by researcher, 23 April, 2024.

¹²³ Charlie Buckle, "Why has Donald Trump Just Written a Personal Letter to Imran Khan"? *Express*, December 3, 2018.

¹²⁴ Ayaz Gul, "U.S Hails Pakistan's Work for Peace Talks with Taliban." *Voice of America*, December 16, 2018, accessed on January 14, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-hails-pakistans-work-for-peace-talks-with-afghan-taliban/4702695.html>

Pakistan to help facilitate a peace process, we have made an effort to comprehend Pakistan's fundamental security concerns and make sure that its interests are taken into consideration in any peace process.”¹²⁵

After reviewing the shortcomings in Doha peace talks, in a seminar Mr. Nadery member of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's peace negotiation team identified four reasons for the continued chaos in Afghanistan: the US policy of leaving the country was flawed; the talks were merely a publicity stunt with no real goal of reaching a settlement; the failure of the Ghani government to establish institutions; and Pakistan's focus on countering Indian policies in the neighboring country rather than serving the interests of Afghans.¹²⁶

In an interview conducted by Nancy Lindborg President United States Institute for Peace and Security the American journalist asked Prime Minister Imran Khan for government approach towards facilitating the Afghan Peace dialogue .In answer of her question Imran Khan said that, It's only to help folks. It was always the fair opinion of the Pakistani military establishment that there would be two fronts: the Eastern front, which is India, and the Pakistani military establishment would be caught in the middle if Afghanistan was also under Indian influence. For this reason, the Pakistani military establishment desired what is known as the "Strategic Depth." However, this has changed today, as Pakistan no longer believes in the concept of strategic depth because we believe that by meddling in Afghanistan to gain strategic depth, we have actually caused significant harm to our nation and have unintentionally turned partisan in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. He went on to say that the Pakistani army is an independent organization over

¹²⁵ “US asks Pakistan to Facilitate Afghan-Taliban peace Talks.” *The Nation*, June9, 2018,accessed on January 17,2024, <https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Jun-2018/us-asks-pakistan-to-facilitate-afghan-taliban-peace-talks>

¹²⁶ Ahsan Raza, “Supporting Afghan Taliban May Be Counter Productive,” *Dawn*, November21, 2021 accessed on January 17,2024,<https://www.dawn.com/news/1659303>

which governments have no authority. As I sit here and speak, the Pakistan Army is fully in support of the government's programme. Regardless of our initial strategy, we have always favored peace with India; they were behind. The army was right there with me when I made the decision to free the pilot who had been shot down in Pakistan. The democratic government of Pakistan and the security forces of Pakistan have the same policies. We think it is never appropriate for us to meddle in Afghanistan's domestic issues. Allow the Afghans to make their own decisions. What kind of governance do they desire? We ought to assist the Peace Process. That's a significant change now. We're all on the same page.¹²⁷

Guldad stated in an interview that Pakistan was crucial in helping to advance the peace process in Afghanistan at this time. Pakistan helped to arrange negotiations between the United States and the Taliban, which contributed to the 2020 signing of the Doha Agreement., which ended almost two decades of the US initiated war in Afghanistan. At the request of the US, Pakistan released many of Afghan Taliban leaders from its custody including Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar who later become the head of the Taliban negotiation team. Pakistan provided logistical support and facilitated travel for Afghan officials and Taliban representatives to participate in peace talks and meetings. Pakistan also encouraged intra-Afghan dialogue as well.¹²⁸

3.7-Speech by Imran Khan to the UN General Assembly

PM said that he want to address the situation in Afghanistan, particularly the unfair blame placed on Pakistan by some politicians in the US and Europe. It's important to recognize the

¹²⁷ Prime Minister Imran Khan on the Afghan Peace Process. *United States Institute for Peace and Security*, accessed on January 19, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGNDwwcXCjA>

¹²⁸ Guldad, interviewed by researcher, May9, 2024.

immense suffering Pakistan endured after joining the US War on Terror post-9/11. We lost 80,000 lives and suffered a \$150 billion economic setback, with 3.5 million internally displaced citizens. This is a result of our previous engagement in the war in Afghanistan. In the 1980s, Pakistan, alongside the US, supported various Mujahideen groups, including Al-Qaida, to resist the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. These groups were once hailed as heroes, even honored by President Reagan at the White House. However, when the Soviets withdrew in 1989, followed by the US, Pakistan was left to deal with the fallout, including millions of Afghan refugees and the rise of sectarian militant groups. Moreover, Pakistan faced sanctions from the US, feeling abandoned and used. Fast forward to 9/11, Pakistan was again called upon by the US for support in the invasion of Afghanistan. However, the very Mujahideen groups we once aided turned against us, labeling us collaborators and declaring jihad. This led to attacks within Pakistan, particularly in the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan, where sympathy for the Afghan Taliban ran deep due to Pashtun nationalism and the presence of Afghan refugees. The influx of drone strikes, totaling 480, further exacerbated the situation, causing significant collateral damage and breeding resentment among the populace. Thus, Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict has been complex and fraught with consequences, often overlooked by those quick to assign blame.¹²⁹

Between 2004 and 2014, Pakistan faced attacks from 50 different militant groups. It was a scary time with bombs everywhere, even in our capital. Without our strong army and smart intelligence, Pakistan could have been in big trouble. But now, people are worried about helping those who helped the US in Afghanistan, and they forget about us. The reason we suffered so much

¹²⁹ "Pakistan PM Imran Khan Addresses UNGA on Afghanistan," *TRT World*, September 24, 2021, accessed on January 17, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZJvxQibiYE>

was because we helped the US in the war in Afghanistan. We were attacked from Afghanistan, yet there's no appreciation for our sacrifices. It hurts to be blamed for what's happening in Afghanistan now.

After 2006, it became evident to those knowledgeable about Afghanistan's history that military force would not solve the country's problems. I visited the US, spoke with think tanks, and met with Senators Biden, John Kerry, and Harry Reid, explaining that a military approach was not the answer, and that a political resolution was necessary. Unfortunately, no one understood at the time. The US made a mistake by pushing for a military solution. To understand why the Taliban regained power, a thorough examination of why a well-equipped Afghan army of 300,000, known for their bravery, surrendered without resistance is needed. This analysis would reveal the true reasons for the Taliban's resurgence, which isn't because of Pakistan. Now, the global community must consider the way forward.¹³⁰

Neglecting Afghanistan would lead to a significant humanitarian crisis, with the UN reporting that half of the country's population is already vulnerable, and nearly 90% are at risk of falling below the poverty line next year. This crisis would have far-reaching consequences, impacting not only Afghanistan's neighbors but also the wider world. A destabilized Afghanistan could once again become a safe haven for terrorists, which is why the US intervened there initially. Therefore, it's crucial to strengthen and stabilize the current government for the well-being of the Afghan people. The Taliban have made promises to respect human rights, establish an inclusive government, prevent terrorist activities, and offer amnesty. If the international community

130“Statement by the PM of Pakistan H.E Imran Khan to the Seventy-Sixth Session of the UN General Assembly, September 24, 2021, accessed on January 20, 2024, https://estatemnts.unmeetings.org/estatemnts/10.0010/20210924/ajcn3uMeQSDH/XOqp891AVee9_cn.pdf

encourages and supports the Taliban in fulfilling these commitments, it will benefit everyone involved. This aligns with the objectives of the US-Taliban talks in Doha, focusing on ensuring Afghanistan doesn't become a terrorist hotspot again. Urgent action is needed to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, as emphasized by the UN Secretary General's initiatives. It's essential to mobilize global support to address the critical situation in Afghanistan effectively.¹³¹

The head of the Afghan Hezb-e-Wahadat-e Islami, Ustad Karim Khalili, addressed the audience on January 13, 2021, at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI). There were academics, members of civil society, diplomats from both the past and present administrations, Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, senators and members of parliament from Afghanistan. Khalili stressed the value of peace in human civilizations and social life, noting that it is a multifaceted phenomenon that affects many different aspects of life. In addition, he covered topics pertaining to the Afghan Peace Dialogue and emphasized how closely a wide range of international concerns are linked to peace. He emphasized his aim to garner the support of the Pakistani government for a peace initiative that effectively tackles regional issues and yields benefits for all relevant international stakeholders.¹³² Imran Khan's statement regarding the war on terror, specifically his assertion that "it is not our war," can be criticized in light of UN Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1378, considering Pakistan's role in combating terrorism and its international obligations.¹³³

¹³¹ "At UN Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Urges Bold Steps to prevent humanitarian Crisis Afghanistan", *United Nations*, September 2021, accessed on January 17, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1101222#:~:text=Help%20Afghanistan&text=We%20must%20strengthen%20and%20stabilize,%2Dwin%20situation%20for%20everyone%E2%80%9D>.

¹³² Amina Khan, 'Peace Talk by "Ustad Karim Khalili, Leader of Hezb-e-Wahadat-e Islami, Afghanistan"', *Institute of Strategic Studies*, January 13, 2021, accessed on January 20, 2024, https://issi.org.pk/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/Report_PT_Jan_13_2021.pdf

¹³³ Asif Durrani, interviewed by researcher, April 30, 2024.

3.8- UNSC Resolution 1368 under Chapter 7

The UN Security Council Resolution 1368, which passed on September 12, 2001, reaffirms the core values and aims of the UN Charter and declares a firm commitment to fight against terrorist threats to global peace and security. It strongly denounces the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, acknowledging them as a grave threat to worldwide peace and security, similar to any other act of international terrorism. The resolution offers its deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims, their loved ones, and the government of the United States. Moreover, the resolution urges all nations to work together in a timely manner to prosecute the individuals responsible for the attacks, as well as those who support, organize, or provide shelter to them. It highlights that those who assist, endorse, or conceal the individuals guilty of the attacks will face consequences. The global community is encouraged to step up its efforts to prevent and counter terrorist activities through enhanced collaboration and strict adherence to pertinent anti-terrorism agreements and Security Council decisions, especially Resolution 1269 (1999). Decision 1368 shows a willingness to undertake all required actions to react to the September 11 attacks and fight against every type of terrorism in accordance with the UN Charter's duties. Moreover, it decides to continue overseeing the issue, demonstrating the Security Council's continuous dedication to tackling terrorist dangers to global peace and security.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ “Resolution 1368(2001),” *United Nations Security Council*, September 12, 2001. accessed on January 22, 2024, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1368>

3.9-UNSC Resolution 1378 under Chapter 7

The UN Security Council Resolution 1378, passed on November 14, 2001, continues the line of previous resolutions regarding Afghanistan and reaffirms its support for global initiatives to fight terrorism, as detailed in UN resolutions 1368 and 1373. This resolution recognizes the critical security and political crisis in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul, and criticizes the Taliban for allowing Afghanistan to become a base for terrorist groups like Al-Qaida and for sheltering Osama bin Laden and his allies. The resolution strongly backs the Afghan people's efforts to form a new transitional government and administration that are inclusive, representative, and dedicated to peace with its neighbors. It highlights the need to respect human rights, meet international commitments, provide humanitarian aid, and support the return of refugees and those displaced within the country. Moreover, the resolution asks Afghan military to avoid retaliatory measures, follow human rights and international humanitarian law, and ensure the protection of UN staff, humanitarian workers, and others associated with them. It stresses the importance of the United Nations in aiding Afghanistan's transition and calls for collaboration with the Secretary-General's Special Representative. The resolution calls on member states to back the transitional government and administration, provide immediate humanitarian aid, and help with the long-term rebuilding and recovery of Afghanistan. It encourages protecting areas that have been freed from Taliban control, particularly Kabul, and to ensure the safety of civilians and humanitarian workers. The resolution reaffirms the Security Council's active involvement in the issue, showing its continuous dedication to tackling the intricate issues Afghanistan faces.¹³⁵

¹³⁵“ Resolution 1378(2001),” *United Nations Security Council*, 14 November, 2021, accessed on January 23, 2024, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/6138.htm>

Both resolutions emphasize the collective responsibility of all nations to fight terrorism. By categorically stating that the war on terror is "not our war," Imran Khan's statement could be seen as a refusal to acknowledge Pakistan's role and responsibility in combating terrorism, especially considering Pakistan's history of being affected by terrorist activities and its commitment to international peace and security. The resolutions call for international cooperation and support in the fight against terrorism. Imran Khan's statement may be perceived as undermining the importance of international collaboration in addressing the global threat of terrorism. Given Pakistan's strategic location and its significant role in the region, such statements could be seen as detrimental to efforts aimed at fostering cooperation with other nations in combating terrorism.

The resolutions recognize terrorism as a threat to international peace and security.¹³⁶ By understanding the significance of the war on terror to Pakistan, Imran Khan's statement may be seen as minimizing the seriousness of the threat posed by terrorism, both domestically and internationally. This could weaken efforts to mobilize resources and implement effective counterterrorism measures within Pakistan. The resolutions emphasize the importance of upholding international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in the fight against terrorism. Imran Khan's statement may be interpreted as a dismissal of Pakistan's international obligations in combating terrorism, including adherence to legal frameworks governing counterterrorism activities and the protection of human rights. However, Imran Khan's statement regarding the war on terror not being Pakistan's war could be critiqued for its potential to undermine Pakistan's role and responsibilities in combating terrorism, as well as its implications for international cooperation and adherence to legal norms in addressing the global threat of terrorism.

¹³⁶ "Resolution 1378(2001)," *United Nations Security Council*.

3.10- Doha Peace Agreement

On February 29, 2020, a historic event took place in Doha, Qatar, where representatives from the United States and the Taliban movement signed the "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan." This moment was significant because the US and its allies had been engaged in a long-standing conflict with the Taliban, who had previously provided a safe haven to Al-Qaeda, the group responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The US signatory, Zalmay Khalilzad, hailed the day as "A Day to Remember." However, just eighteen months later, on August 15, 2021, the Taliban seized control of the capital as President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, leading to chaotic scenes at the airport and reports of Taliban brutality and repression. The "peace" brought about by the agreement was short-lived and similar as of the surrender of Warsaw to Nazi Germany in 1939.¹³⁷ An important question here is according to America Taliban are terrorists, so why there is an agreement between Taliban and USA?

The terms of the deal are essentially the same as those that were reached in September 2019 but were abandoned by President Trump. In essence, this deal promises that the Taliban will not permit terrorist organizations to operate on Afghan territory in exchange for the withdrawal of Coalition and American soldiers from Afghanistan.¹³⁸ The event was important because U.S forces and their allies had been fighting the Taliban for years. Prior to 2001, the Taliban had given refuge to the terrorist organization Al-Qaida, which was in charge of the attacks on the Pentagon in

¹³⁷ William Malley and Ahmed Shuja Jamal, "Diplomacy of Disaster: The Afghanistan Peace Process and the Taliban Occupation of Kabul", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 17, 1 (2022): 32, accessed on January 24, 2024, https://brill.com/view/journals/hjd/17/1/article-p32_2.xml?language=en

¹³⁸ Grant Farr, "The Afghan Peace Agreement and its Problems", *E-International Relations*, June 4, 2020, accessed on February 3, 2024, https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=soc_fac

Washington, DC, and the World Trade Centre in New York.¹³⁹

3.10.1-Features of Doha Peace Agreement

In 2020, the U.S. and the Taliban made a peace deal in Doha capital of Qatar. The U.S. agreed to pull all its soldiers out of Afghanistan by August 31, 2021. The Taliban promised not to let terrorists use Afghanistan to attack the U.S. or its allies. The Taliban and the Afghan government agreed to talk to each other to end the war. The Afghan government would free 5,000 Taliban fighters, and the Taliban would release 1,000 Afghan soldiers. The U.S. and the UN would stop sanctions against Taliban members. Other countries would help support and keep an eye on the peace process. If the Taliban kept their promises, they would work together with the U.S. on other issues in the future.

3.10.2- Zalmay Khalilzad Criticized for Doha Accord

Khalilzad, the US special agent for the peace process in Afghanistan, was always subject to criticism. In addition to keeping the democratically elected Afghan government out of US-Taliban talks, he also made more concessions to the Taliban. Among them was the release of 5,000 Taliban detainees, a decision that former president Ashraf Ghani vehemently opposed. Even yet, he was able to persuade the Taliban to refrain from attacking the United States and its allies. Furthermore, he was unable to persuade the Taliban to agree to a temporary or permanent ceasefire, thereby failing to play a helpful role. Rather, the conflict grew more intense as a result of the release of Taliban captives. As a result, Khalilzad was charged by Afghan officials with

¹³⁹ Antonio Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War 2001-2018*(London:Hurst&Co,2019), accessed on February 3,2024,https://www.google.com.pk/books/edition/The_Taliban_at_War/CB6sDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

disappointing both the ANDSF and the Afghan government. However, Khalilzad repeated attempts to establish an interim government proved unsuccessful since the Afghan leadership rejected his suggestion.¹⁴⁰

The talks between the US and the Taliban in October 2018 concluded in February 2020 with an agreement reflecting the Trump administration's priorities, which drew criticism for marginalizing the elected Afghan government. This criticism came from various quarters, including the Afghan people, government, and several other nations. Among these nations, Pakistan exerted pressure on the US to incorporate the Afghan government into the negotiations.¹⁴¹

According to Zalmay Khalilzad:

The Taliban remain a significant presence in Afghanistan. We failed to overcome them. In reality, they were advancing in combat while we engaged in talks with them. The primary reason for these negotiations was due to the fact that our military efforts were not achieving the desired outcomes. We were losing territory annually.¹⁴²

According to the details given in the agreement, it was decided that America in the first 135 days (about 4 and a half months) in Afghanistan will cut down its force to 7600 soldiers whereas its other allies also cut down the number of their soldiers to the same ratio. During this time frame forces will be withdrawn from 5 army stations. After this, in 9.5 months remaining American forces and its allies will withdraw from Afghanistan. America with other parties will start working on a project according to which the Taliban and Afghan government for mutual understanding on the first day of dialogue which is 10 March will exchange the prisoners. 5000 Taliban prisoners and 1000 from the other side will be released. With this dialogue, America will start to eliminate

¹⁴⁰ Zabihullah, "Zalmay Khalilzad Resignation-The US Blame Game". *Pak Afghan Youth Forum*, October 25, 2021, accessed on February 4, 2024, <https://pkafgyouthforum.com/zalmay-khalizads-resignation-the-us-blame-game/>

¹⁴¹ Zabihullah, "Zalmay Khalilzad Resignation-The US Blame Game".

¹⁴² Zabihullah, "Zalmay Khalilzad Resignation-The US Blame Game".

sanctions from the Afghan Taliban till 16th August 2020. Other than this America with its diplomatic efforts will try to uplift sanctions from the UN imposed on Taliban members. This agreement is solely between America and the Afghan Taliban, and the Afghan government is not involved in this. For the involvement of the Afghan government American defense minister visited Kabul on the same day. After his meeting with Afghan officials' joint statement was given on behalf of both countries. In this joint declaration, everything is the same as mentioned in the Doha Peace Accord except the number of prisoners released from both sides is not mentioned.¹⁴³

However, Doha agreement was welcomed by the whole world but as a result talks between the Taliban and Afghan government faced difficulty at its initial stage. First Afghan President Ashraf Ghani refused to release Taliban prisoners. After this, it was not an easy step to prepare a delegation to initiate talks with the Taliban. Other than this the election of 2019 was also criticized in which Ashraf Ghani declared himself President. Abdullah Abdullah who was an opponent of Ashraf Ghani, refused to accept the election results. Anyhow Ashraf Ghani took oath on 9th March. But matters of both opponents were not solved till 16th May 2020. At last Abdullah Abdullah was appointed as head of the National Reconciliation Committee to hold talks with the Taliban. During this on behalf of America Turkey's government suggested Afghanistan hand over the responsibility of the safety of Kabul airport to Turk forces. Afghan Taliban did not accept this suggestion and warned Turkey to don't do this.¹⁴⁴

3.11-Ashraf Ghani's Government Stance on Doha Peace Agreement

The Afghan government had a nuanced and critical stance on the Doha Peace Deal, shaped

¹⁴³ Syed Ibrar Hussain, *Afghanistan Mullah Umer Say Ashraf Ghani Tak* (IPS Press: 2021) pp214-217.

¹⁴⁴Hussain, *Afghanistan Mullah Umer Say Ashraf Ghani Tak*.

by various factors and concerns that influenced its perspective on the future of Afghanistan and the peace process. A significant point of contention for the Afghan government was its exclusion from the initial negotiations between the United States and the Taliban. These talks, which culminated in the Doha Agreement signed on February 29, 2020, did not involve the Afghan government, leading to a sense of being marginalized. Afghan officials argued that a peace process that did not include the legitimate government of Afghanistan undermined the sovereignty and authority of the Afghan state. This exclusion also fueled fears that the U.S. was making concessions to the Taliban without fully considering the Afghan government's position and the complexities of Afghan society.

The Afghan government harbored deep suspicion about the Taliban's commitment to the peace process. This doubt was rooted in the Taliban's history of violence and their ongoing attacks even during the negotiation period. Afghan officials were concerned that the Taliban viewed the peace talks as a strategic move to facilitate the withdrawal of U.S. troops, after which they might continue their military campaign to overthrow the Afghan government. The government's mistrust was further worsened by the Taliban's refusal to recognize the Afghan government as legitimate, often referring to it as a "puppet regime."

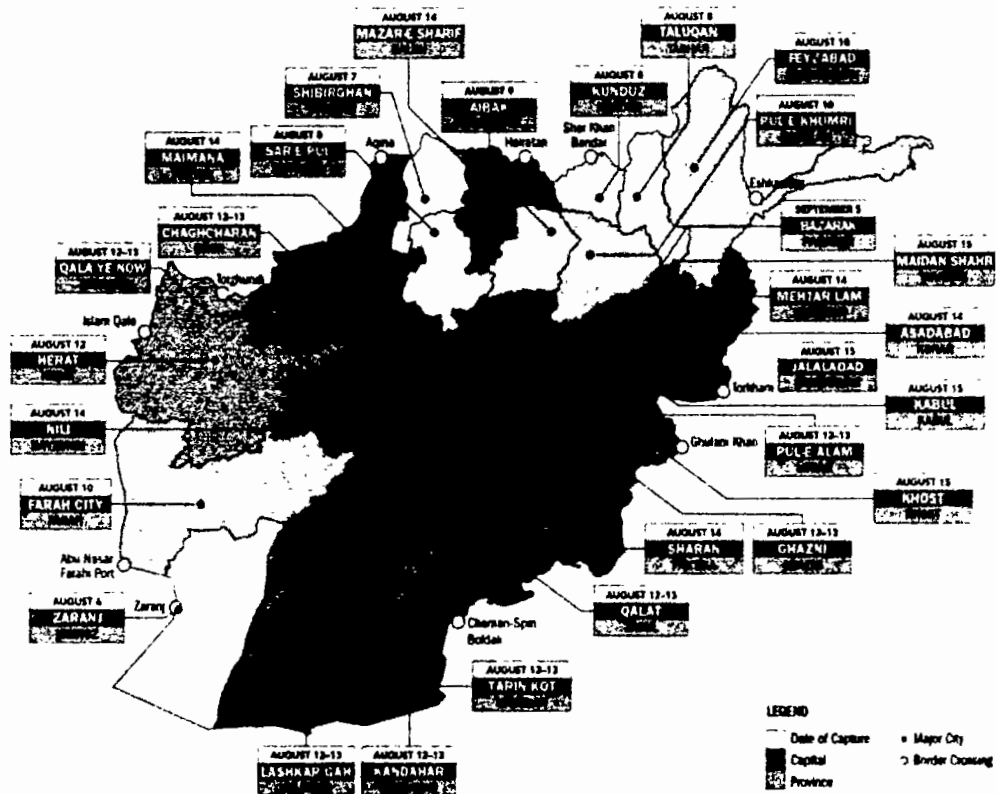
One of the most controversial aspects of the Doha Agreement was the provision for the release of up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for 1,000 Afghan security personnel held by the Taliban. The Afghan government was particularly wary of this clause, fearing that releasing a large number of Taliban fighters could lead to a resurgence in violence. President Ashraf Ghani initially resisted the prisoner release, arguing that it should be a part of a broader negotiation process rather than a precondition. The government's concerns were based on previous instances where released insurgents had rejoined militant groups and continued their attacks against Afghan

forces and civilians. The Afghan government consistently called for a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire as a fundamental element of any peace process. While the Doha Agreement included a commitment to reducing violence, it fell short of establishing a formal ceasefire. Afghan officials argued that a reduction in violence was insufficient and that a complete ceasefire was necessary to build trust and create a favorable environment for meaningful peace talks. The absence of a ceasefire raised concerns about the Taliban's willingness to negotiate in good faith and their ability to control their fighters.

Protecting the democratic and human rights gains made since 2001 was a chief concern for the Afghan government. The post-2001 era had seen significant progress in areas such as women's rights, freedom of expression, education, and democratic governance. Afghan officials feared that these gains could be threatened under a Taliban-led administration or as a result of concessions made during negotiations. The government insisted that any peace agreement must include guarantees to uphold the constitution, preserve democratic institutions, and protect the rights of all citizens, particularly women and minorities. The Afghan government emphasized the necessity of direct, inclusive negotiations between itself and the Taliban. It believed that a sustainable peace agreement could only be achieved through intra-Afghan dialogue that involved various stakeholders, including political factions, civil society organizations, and ethnic and religious groups. The government argued that an inclusive approach was essential to address the diverse interests and grievances within Afghan society and to ensure broad-based support for any peace deal. The Afghan government wanted continued international support throughout the peace process. It called on the international community to maintain diplomatic pressure on the Taliban to honor their commitments and to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to help stabilize the country during the transition period. Afghan officials also emphasized the importance of

international monitoring to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement and to prevent any backsliding by the Taliban. The implementation of the Doha Peace Deal faced numerous challenges. The Afghan government's concerns about the Taliban's sincerity and the potential for increased violence following the prisoner release were borne out in subsequent months. The intra-Afghan talks, which began in September 2020, were slow and fraught with difficulties, including disagreements over the agenda, the role of religion, and the future political structure of Afghanistan. The lack of a ceasefire meant that violence continued to plague the country, undermining confidence in the peace process. In conclusion, the Afghan government's stance on the Doha Peace Deal was shaped by a combination of skepticism, strategic considerations, and a commitment to preserving the gains of the past two decades. While the government supported the principle of a negotiated settlement, it had significant reservations about the terms of the Doha Agreement and the Taliban's intentions. These concerns highlighted the complexities of the Afghan peace process and the challenges of achieving a lasting and inclusive peace.

TALIBAN COMPLETES THEIR CONQUEST OF AFGHANISTAN AUGUST 6-SEPTEMBER 5, 2021



Source: SIGAR Report

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban reached the outskirts of Kabul, prompting then-President Ashraf Ghani to flee to Uzbekistan and leading to the collapse of the Afghan government.¹⁴⁵ By this time, six out of the seven Afghan National Army (ANA) Corps had either surrendered or disbanded. Only the 215th Corps in Helmand Province continued to engage in combat against the Taliban for two days after the president's departure, until it was ordered to cease fighting. On the

¹⁴⁵ Arif Ahmadi, "SIGAR Assesses Factors Behind the Collapse of Afghan Government", *The Khaama Press*, November 16, 2022, accessed on February 8, 2024, <https://www.khaama.com/sigar-assesses-factors-behind-the-collapse-of-former-afghan-govt/>

same day that President Ghani left, the Taliban entered the presidential palace. Although the Taliban had control over most of the country, it wasn't until September 6, 2021, that they captured the last provincial capital, Panjshir Province. The following day, on September 7, the Taliban announced its new interim government.

3.12- Shortcomings in Doha Peace Process

During the negotiations, the US adopted a flawed approach that had disastrous outcomes for Afghanistan, the US, and its allies. One of the presenters said that it was the US's worst strategic failure, even worse than Vietnam. Basically this was a flawed US strategy for achieving peace in Afghanistan. The Doha Agreement mainly sidelined the Afghan government by engaging in direct negotiations with the Taliban, excluding significant representation from the government in early talks. This approach undermined the legitimacy of any agreement reached, as the Afghan government represents the elected authority in the country. Critics argue that sidelining the Afghan government weakened its position and excluded it from crucial decisions regarding the country's future, including power-sharing arrangements and the role of the Taliban in governance.

The negotiations leading to the Doha Agreement were shrouded in secrecy, with key details of the agreement not being made public. This lack of transparency fueled suspicions and distrust among various Afghan stakeholders, including civil society groups and political factions. Without transparency, Afghan citizens were left in the dark about the terms of the agreement and how it would impact their lives, leading to concerns about its legitimacy and effectiveness. The Doha Agreement's timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. and international forces from Afghanistan was seen as overly hasty and lacking consideration for the country's security situation. Critics argued

that a rapid withdrawal could create security vacuums, embolden extremist groups, and jeopardize the gains made in the fight against terrorism. The agreement's failure to address ongoing violence and insurgency effectively raised doubts about its ability to bring about lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

There were significant concerns that the Doha Agreement did not adequately address human rights, particularly the rights of women and minorities in Afghanistan. The Taliban's history of suppressing women's rights and perpetrating human rights abuses raised doubts about its commitment to upholding these rights in any future governance arrangement. Critics feared that a peace agreement that failed to prioritize human rights could lead to a rollback of the progress made in advancing women's rights and minority rights in Afghanistan over the past two decades. The Doha Agreement lacked clear enforcement mechanisms for its provisions, raising questions about how its terms would be implemented and monitored. Without robust enforcement mechanisms, there was a risk that the agreement's provisions could be violated with impunity, undermining its effectiveness and credibility. The absence of accountability measures for violations of the agreement's terms raised concerns about the potential for parties to renege on their commitments without facing consequences.

The most sticking point was new Grand Loya Jirga could be convened to establish a consensus that did not happen. There were so many competing voices in Afghanistan. Northern Alliance, Tajiks, Uzbeks Hazars they thought differently and Taliban from Herat, Kandhar, and Pashtun belt they thought differently. All Afghan factions could not agree on single understanding of future constitution arrangement. Under this vacuum Taliban took power and they established Taliban interim government in Afghanistan. World did not recognize them.

Rashid Wali Janjua in an interview said that Doha agreement was all promised upon future

agreement among Afghan factions that what would be the next constitutional agreement whether it would be democratic government whether it would be a grand Jirga, power sharing formula but nothing fructified. Nothing could be concluded. It all happened in vacuum. America also wanted inclusive government in Afghanistan which is basically representation of various factions in Afghanistan i-e is Tajik, Uzbeks, and Hazars in Afghan ministries. But Taliban's thinks differently. Their definition of inclusivity is different. They said our definition of inclusivity is that those part of our movement they are also hazars, Uzbeks they cannot be those who are fighting .They said we have our own culture.¹⁴⁶

Some critics warned that the failure of the Doha Agreement to address underlying political and social grievances in Afghanistan could lead to a power vacuum and reignite civil war in the country. Without addressing the root causes of the conflict, any peace agreement risked being short-lived and unsustainable. The exclusion of key Afghan political factions and ethnic groups from the peace process raised concerns about the agreement's ability to achieve broad-based reconciliation and prevent a return to conflict. Furthermore, the criticisms surrounding the Doha Agreement as a flawed US strategy for achieving peace in Afghanistan highlight significant shortcomings in its approach, including limited Afghan government involvement, lack of transparency, security concerns, human rights considerations, enforcement mechanisms, geopolitical implications, and the risk of civil war. Addressing these criticisms and ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive peace process will be essential for achieving a lasting and sustainable peace in Afghanistan. In a recent interview, former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hikmatyar highlighted the stark contrast between the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan and NATO's departure. Unlike the Soviets, who planned their exit a year in advance and engaged in

¹⁴⁶ Rashid Wali Janjua, Interviewed by researcher, April30, 2024.

open communication with then-President Muhammad Najeebullah, NATO's withdrawal was abrupt and disorderly. The Soviets systematically withdrew their troops during the day, crossing the border into Uzbekistan, whereas NATO's exit was secretive and chaotic, leaving the Afghan government and military unaware. Hikmatyar criticized NATO's actions, stating that they bear full responsibility for the ensuing bloodshed and instability. He suggested that the US may have intentionally sought to perpetuate the conflict by leaving behind a power vacuum.¹⁴⁷ Dr Fakhr ul Islam said in an interview that it was written in Doha agreement that formation of interim government in Afghanistan will be broad-based. It will not include only Taliban, but political forces of Afghanistan will also be part of this .Pakistan also tried but Afghanistan did not accept this. That's why people are not recognizing them .Taliban did not implement this agreement in real terms. After taking government they banned Women's education. Pakistan wanted implementation of this clause that Afghan government will be broadbased.Because if there is peace in Afghanistan than definitely there will be peace in Pakistan. It will also benefited Pakistan. It will open ways to Central Asia. Also gas pipe line project will be started. But unfortunately it not happened.

3.13- Implications for Pakistan

The formation of the Taliban interim government in 2021 had mixed implications for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations during the PTI government's term. Pakistan welcomed the formation of the Taliban government and saw it as an opportunity to promote stability and peace in Afghanistan. The PTI government expressed willingness to engage with the Taliban-led government to address common challenges and enhance bilateral cooperation. However, the

¹⁴⁷ One-on-One Former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hikmatyar ,TRT, August 19, 2021, accessed on February 9, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JM_sdSRFEc4

formation of the Taliban government also raised concerns about the implications for regional security, stability, and human rights. Pakistan faced pressure from the international community to use its influence to encourage the Taliban to adhere to their commitments and respect human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan.

Like many other regional countries, Pakistan wasn't comfortable with presence of such great number of foreign forces in its backyard, however, the presence of these forces did provide some stability. The withdrawal led to a power vacuum and increased instability in Afghanistan, which could potentially spill over into Pakistan and the broader region. The resurgence of Taliban control and the potential for other militant groups to exploit the situation posed security challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan also feared a surge in refugee influx as a result of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, which could strain its resources and exacerbate socio-economic challenges. The withdrawal shifted the geopolitical dynamics in the region, with China, Russia, and other neighboring countries stepping up their engagement in Afghanistan. Pakistan had to navigate these shifting dynamics to safeguard its interests and maintain regional stability.

The focus of the Doha Agreement on negotiations between the United States and the Taliban overlooked broader regional dynamics and the role of neighboring countries in influencing the conflict in Afghanistan. Critics argued that a narrow focus on U.S.-Taliban negotiations failed to address the interests and concerns of regional actors such as Pakistan, Iran, and Russia. Neglecting to involve these regional stakeholders in the peace process risked undermining its sustainability and exacerbating tensions in the region, potentially leading to further instability in Afghanistan.

According to UNHCR, Pakistan is currently hosting 1.4 million Afghan refugees as of 2021, with the majority settling in Peshawar and Baluchistan. The interior ministry estimates

around 100,000 Afghan refugees residing in Islamabad. Given Pakistan's status as an underdeveloped nation, these refugees are increasingly complicating matters and exerting negative effects on the economy. The presence of these refugees significantly impacts the revenue-generating capabilities of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where most have settled. Despite government and international aid support, it falls short of meeting their basic needs. Moreover, their integration into labor markets, transportation sectors, land acquisition, and various businesses, particularly in KP, exacerbates unemployment in Pakistan. Additionally, Afghan refugees are implicated in illegal arms and drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Pakistan, contributing to a thriving underground economy. Consequently, a considerable number of Pakistani youths have succumbed to addiction, further straining societal fabric. Pakistan's government could engage with the new regime in Kabul to facilitate the repatriation of these refugees to Afghanistan. Such a move would potentially mitigate drug culture, unemployment, and smuggling, thereby alleviating the additional burden on Pakistan's economy.¹⁴⁸ Pakistan has been facing a wave of terrorism since it joined US led war in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been facing a wave of terrorism since it joined US led war in Afghanistan. The end of war was a sigh of relief as it not only ended a long protracted conflict in Pakistan's neighborhood but at the same time billions of Indian investment in anti-Pakistan efforts went down the drain in a flash. Indian footprints from Afghanistan were wiped out with the US withdrawal.

Ashraf Ghani has criticized the Taliban for their violent actions, including the killing of innocent people and suicide bombings. This criticism is well-founded. No one can justify the atrocities committed by the Taliban. The Taliban were caught off guard by these actions, as they

¹⁴⁸ Samiullah et al, "The Impact of Doha Peace Agreement on Pakistan." *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology* 18, no. 10 (October 3, 2021): 2137-2144. April 11, 2024, accessed on February 11, 2024, <https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/10131>

had been part of a back-door deal that promised them power through a negotiated agreement. This plan involved forming a Council and establishing an interim government, with the final decision on who would hold power to be determined later. Contrary to common misconceptions, the Taliban were not just cave-dwelling mountain residents. In reality, they were highly educated individuals with advanced negotiation and strategic skills. They surprised their opponents in Doha and caught the attention of the United States, leading to the belief that dialogue with them might be possible. However, Khalilzad, and his team had reservations about whether these intelligent and pragmatic fighters were truly under American control. To test their compliance and influence, they requested actions like announcing peace on Eid and observing if local commanders followed their directives. Following the announcement of interim peace and the cessation of hostilities by the Taliban, the United States viewed this as a crucial factor in shaping their decision-making process. However, the Taliban had one key demand: they were against the idea of an Afghan cabinet or Ashraf Ghani's representation at the negotiating table.

Instead, they sought direct communication with the United States. The exclusion of the Afghan government from this process remains a contentious issue. In the end, the Taliban displayed strategic brilliance and successfully finalized and signed a peace deal in 2020, with some secret agreements included. These secret agreements stipulated that the Taliban would not attack American forces, a promise they communicated publicly. In return, the agreement required the United States to not provide support to Afghan forces attacking the Taliban. These terms were set under certain conditions. The United States informed the Afghan government that they were not included at this stage but would be included later. Initially, the Afghan government was urged to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners, a task that was not easy but was eventually achieved. It was reported that 1,000 of these prisoners were hardened criminals, including supporters of suicide

bombers. The United States facilitated the release of these prisoners and emphasized the importance of strict adherence to the peace deal while exerting pressure on the Afghan government to comply. The Afghan government had no choice but to comply with these demands, as the United States provided 70 percent of its annual budget. This situation raises an important question: despite the extensive engagement of the international community and the entire region over 20 years, why were international community unable to establish a strong economic foundation for Afghanistan?

However resurgence of TTP in Afghanistan along with other terrorist organizations poses serious threats for Pakistan as well as for whole region. Not only Pakistan external security is threatened but Pakistan internal security is also at stake. After 2021 there is sharp increase in terrorist activities in South KP as well as in Balochistan. Many times Pakistan warned Afghanistan to take serious action against TTP but all in vain. Moreover there is a dire need to implement NAP in order to make security situation better in Pakistan. Pakistan has suffered a lot from many years from this evil of terrorism but no other nation acknowledge this fact.

The peace process in Afghanistan and the US withdrawal were supposed to bring an end to the fighting and promote stability, but the Taliban took over quickly, causing many problems. The withdrawal, which was meant to lead to lasting peace, instead led to political instability and security concerns. The international community must now work together to address the severe humanitarian crisis and promote stability in the region. A peaceful and prosperous future for Afghanistan requires continued efforts and involvement from regional countries, as well as a sustained and inclusive peace process that involves all stakeholders. This is crucial to ensure that Afghanistan moves forward, rather than returning to conflict and instability.

CHAPTER-4

CHALLENGES FACED BY PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN DURING PTI GOVERNMENT

4.1-Introduction

Welcome to a deep dive into the rollercoaster ride of governance experienced by Pakistan and Afghanistan under the leadership of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Just like any journey, this one's been full of ups and downs, twists and turns. In 2018, Pakistan and Afghanistan were at a crucial crossroads. PTI, led by Imran Khan, promised a fresh start, a new approach to governance. But the reality was far from simple. As the new government settled in, they faced a barrage of challenges, ranging from economic woes to security threats, and everything in between.

Let's start with the economy. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan were grappling with financial difficulties long before PTI came into power. But under PTI's watch, efforts were made to revitalize the economy through reforms and initiatives. However, progress was slow, and the road to economic stability was fraught with obstacles like inflation, unemployment, and a widening wealth gap. Then there's the matter of security. Pakistan and Afghanistan have long been plagued by violence and instability, fueled by insurgency, terrorism, and regional conflicts. Despite efforts to bolster security measures, both nations continued to grapple with the menace of extremism, posing a significant challenge to PTI's governance agenda.

But it's not all doom and gloom. PTI also embarked on diplomatic initiatives aimed at fostering regional cooperation and stability. From engaging with neighboring countries to brokering peace talks, efforts were made to navigate the complex web of international relations

and strike a balance between national interests and global obligations. As we delve deeper into the intricacies of PTI's governance in Pakistan and Afghanistan, we'll uncover the highs and lows, the successes and setbacks, and ultimately, reflect on the lessons learned and the way forward in an ever-changing political landscape. So buckle up as we embark on this journey through the challenges faced by Pakistan and Afghanistan during PTI's reign, and explore the resilience and resourcefulness of two nations striving for progress amidst adversity.

Pakistan immediately after independence in 1947 faced territorial disputes with the states of Afghanistan and India. Pakistan objected to the validity of the agreement between Kabul and British India after 1947, and the only nation to reject Pakistan's UN membership was Afghanistan. It is no surprise that at that time, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan were more dominated by differences. These differences increased exponentially as Afghanistan moved closer to Pakistan's archrival India. As a result, Pakistan's strategic depth approach became the dominant one in relations with Afghanistan. Pakistan sought to build relations with Afghanistan's Islamists, but the desire for a friendlier regime in Kabul did not come to fruition until the establishment of the ISAF in 1996.¹⁴⁹

Afghanistan, as a neighboring country, shares a long and porous border with Pakistan. This proximity and border dynamics have had an impact on Pakistan's security concerns, economic interests and regional stability. Pakistan's approach towards Afghanistan has shaped its policy towards Afghanistan. The instability of Afghanistan has created cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking and the movement of militants. Pakistan's porous border with Afghanistan has made it

¹⁴⁹ Zahid Shadab Ahmed, "The Taliban's Takeover of Afghanistan and Pakistan's Non-Traditional Security Challenges", *Global Policy* 13, no.1(2022), accessed on February 16, 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1758-5899.13045>

difficult to control these threats. As a result, Pakistan has developed policies to manage these security challenges. The geographic location of Afghanistan has had an impact on the security concerns and strategies of Pakistan towards Afghanistan.¹⁵⁰ During the Afghan-Soviet War, Pakistan cultivated strong ties with Pashtun Mujahideen, many of whom later formed the Taliban in the early 1990s.¹⁵¹ Through the emergence of the (IEA), Pakistan gained a supportive ally in Kabul that maintained no diplomatic links with India, which had shuttered its embassy there in 1996. Initially, only Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the UAE recognized the IEA. Islamabad's backing proved vital to the Taliban regime, providing crucial support in terms of personnel, finances, weaponry, and Pashtun fighters from Pakistan to combat the Northern Alliance.¹⁵² Despite tensions stemming from Pakistan's involvement in the War on Terror, the Taliban and Pakistan revitalized their relationship approximately in 2005 or in 2006. In 2018 there was government of Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan. American forces were there in Afghanistan. On the other hand Pakistan was trying to have good relations with Afghan government in order to secure its own frontiers. At the same time it was cooperating with United States for logistics and some intelligence sharing. Prior to that there was operation Radd ul Fasaad was carried out in 2018 against terrorists in Pakistan which was sanitization of our own area. Another most important thing was merger of Fata in which old order collapsed and new order was not properly established. The civil administration it almost vanished or became ineffective because military had been carried out operation. It was still there carried out operation Radd ul Fasaad and because of one terrorist incident withdrawal of military was not

¹⁵⁰ Miraj-ul-Hamid et al, "Pakistan's Afghan Policy :Predicaments ,Challenges And The Way Forward", *Journal of Positive Psychology* 7,no.5(2023):453, accessed on February 19, 2024, <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/16789>

¹⁵¹ Zahid Shadab Ahmed, "Political Islam, Jammāt-e-Islami, and Pakistan's Role in Afghan Soviet War, 1979-1988." In *Religion and Cold War: A Global Perspective*, edited by Philip E Muehlenbeck, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012:275-296.

¹⁵² Safiullah Taye and Syed Shadab Ahmed , "Dynamics of Trust and Mistrust in Afghanistan-Pakistan Relationship," *Asian Studies Review* 45,no.4(2021):557-575, accessed on February 19, 2024, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10357823.2021.1910798>

possible. Civil administration did not gain ground and judiciary did not establish its intent and there was kind of development upsurge, a lot of development activities taken place during that period.

IDPS have certain reservations about returning back. Government trying to resettle them but unfortunately it was promised during the meetings that out of NFC due share will be given to merged districts and KP for development. So that was an addition of 5% population into KP share. KP share in out of NFC share was 14.5% if we add 5% into it will become 19.5%. It means that every year 100 billion Rs have to be given to KP government to develop and maintain both administration as well as development activities. Relationship with Afghanistan also remain tenuous. With Tehreek Taliban Afghanistan it was not up to the mark. The Americans were dithering, they were ambivalent in their response. They never wanted to commit something. It was Donald Trump who said that I will bring back US troops from Afghanistan. Once the final deadline was given, after this Ashraf Ghani government became apprehensive and started accusing Pakistan for causing trouble, supporting Haqqani network, Taliban. They wanted to externalize all those troubles on Pakistan. Relationship which was earlier cordial became deteriorated. The most important thing is US withdrawal from Afghanistan during this period. US withdrawal happened in very precipitate manner. The government collapsed. Ashraf Ghani government could not holdup despite American support. Americans themselves were not expecting such a quick action.¹⁵³

After change of government in Kabul in August 2021 and coming to power of the Taliban, Pakistan was expecting a more friendly government in Kabul and therefore Pakistan pushed the international community to engage with the Taliban as the last bet. Without formally recognizing

¹⁵³ Rashid Wali Janjua, Interviewed by researcher at IPRI, April 30, 2024.

Taliban government, Pakistan provided all possible support to the Afghan interim government of Taliban, however, the issue of cross border terrorism remained the concern as TTP using Afghan soil started to increase their violent movement in Pakistan. On the advice of the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan engaged TTP in talks but the talks failed and the TTP resumed its attacks in Pakistan. Like the previous Afghan government, Taliban also did not support Pakistan's fencing of the border and many clashes were witnessed between the border forces of the countries.

Abdullah Khan Managing Director PICSS in interview said that during that tenure of 2018 to 2022 there were two different governments in Afghanistan. From 2018 to August 2021 the relations were not at a very good level. Pakistan was supporting Afghan peace process at different international forums while Afghan government was generally overlooked in the process. Afghanistan was skeptical about Pakistan's approach. The government of Ashraf Ghani used to accuse Pakistan for the escalation of fighting inside Afghanistan. Pakistan was blamed for supporting Taliban. That was a turbulent period. However, after fall of Kabul to Taliban, the relationship saw tremendous improvement. Imran Khan was a big advocate of end of war and he always demanded talks. US withdrawal was in line with his political philosophy. Imran Khan was highly rated by the Taliban leadership. Peace talks with TTP were started during Imran Khan's tenure and the PDM government continued with the process until August 2022.

4.2-Challenges Faced By Pakistan and Afghanistan from (2018-2022)

From 2018 to 2022, Pakistan and Afghanistan faced numerous challenges in their bilateral relations. However, the situation was slightly different when republican government of Ashraf Ghani was in place under the cloud of international forces and the situation changed when Ashraf

Ghani was dethroned and the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021 and transformed republic into an emirate. In an interview Mr. Guldad Director Research at PICSS explained that during Ashraf Ghani regime, major bilateral concerns was cross border terrorism as Pakistan was accusing Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security of facilitating and collaborating with Indian Research and Analysis Wing for creating troubles in Pakistan through various militant groups including TTP and Baloch militant groups. On the other hand he said that Afghanistan was accused Pakistan for supporting, facilitating and sheltering Afghan Taliban who are creating mayhem in Afghanistan. Besides counter-terrorism concerns, management of border was another contentious issue and the border issue got further aggravated when Pakistan started fencing the border with Afghanistan. Many clashes were reported between borders forces of the two countries with their respective claims. In addition, refugee issue remained the bone of contention as Pakistan was seeking return of Afghan refugees but the Afghan side was resisting repatriation citing security and other economic challenges. Finally, the trade and transit issues remained as talking point between the two countries.¹⁵⁴

4.2.1 Security Concerns

Terrorist attacks in Pakistan increased by 28% in the country in 2022, according to a report by the PICSS, Islamabad based think tank. The increase was led by Baluchistan, which saw the highest number of attacks. Attacks were mainly carried out by the BLA and the TTP. In response to these attacks, the PICSS reported 16 security forces operations in which 39 people were killed and 47 militants were arrested. In December alone, there were 49 attacks in which 56 people were

¹⁵⁴Guldad, interviewed by researcher, May9, 2024.

killed and 81 were injured. According to the PICSS, there were 376 terror attacks across the country in 2022 with 533 deaths and 832 injuries. There were also four suicide attacks in KP and 15 attacks in Islamabad. In the last four years, there has been a sharp rise in the number of attacks.¹⁵⁵

4.2.2- Cross Border Terrorism

4.2.21-Tahir Dawar Murder Case

The murder case of Tahir Dawar, a superintendent of police in Pakistan, is a complex and tragic story that unfolded against the backdrop of strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly in terms of security cooperation and border issues. Tahir Dawar was well-known and respected within Pakistan's law enforcement community for his dedication and professionalism. On October 26, 2018, he was abducted from Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan, under mysterious circumstances. His abduction sent shockwaves across the country, raising concerns about the safety of law enforcement officers and the ability of the state to protect its citizens. Politicians and individuals from various sectors have strongly denounced the murder of Dawar.

We have urged for rallies across KP to condemn and protest the heinous killing of the courageous Tahir Dawar," stated Ameer Haider Hoti, a member of the National Assembly in 2018 and the KP provincial head of the Awami National Party.¹⁵⁶ In the days following his abduction,

¹⁵⁵ Ali Hussain, "2022 Witnessed 28pc Rise in Terrorist Attacks :Report". *Business Recorder* ,January2,2023, accessed on February19,2024,<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40217889>

¹⁵⁶ Javed Khan, "Pakistanis Condemn Brutal Kidnapping ,Murder of KP Police Official", *Pakistan Forward*,November16,2018,accessed on February19,2024, https://pakistan.asianews.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_pf/features/2018/11/16/feature-02

there were conflicting reports and speculation about who was behind the kidnapping and what their motives might be. Some suspected the involvement of militant groups or criminal gangs, while others speculated about potential foreign involvement due to Dawar's role in counter-terrorism operations and his knowledge of sensitive security matters.¹⁵⁷

On social media, there are videos featuring Tahir Dawar expressing concerns about hostile foreign entities aiming to disrupt Pakistan, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), in their efforts to hinder the successful completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).¹⁵⁸ In another interview, Dawar speaks of the robust collaboration between the police and military intelligence agencies within the province. Tragically, Dawar's body was found on November 13, 2018, in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, near the border with Pakistan. He had been brutally murdered, sparking outrage and condemnation from across Pakistan. The circumstances of his death raised questions about how he had been able to cross the heavily guarded border between the two countries and why he had been taken to Afghanistan. Both Pakistani and Afghan authorities launched investigations into Dawar's murder, but progress was slow and marred by mutual accusations and finger-pointing. Pakistani officials accused Afghan intelligence agencies of complicity in Dawar's abduction and murder, alleging that they had failed to take adequate measures to protect him or to cooperate fully with Pakistani authorities in the investigation.

In a tweet Major General Asif Ghafoor said that:

We have lost a courageous police officer. His kidnapping, relocation to Afghanistan, murder, and the actions of the Afghan authorities thereafter raise concerns that point to the presence or funding of groups other than terrorists in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ayaz Gul, "Abducted Pakistani Police Officer's Body Found in Afghanistan", *Voice of America*, November 15, 2018, accessed on February 23, 2024 <https://www.voanews.com/a/abducted-pakistani-police-officer-s-body-found-in-afghanistan/4660458.html>

¹⁵⁸ Abbas Nasir, "Tahir Dawar Was not Ordinary Cop," *Dawn*, November 17, 2018.

¹⁵⁹ Tweet by Asif Ghafoor on 15 November 2018.

On the other hand, Afghan officials denied any involvement and criticized Pakistan for not doing enough to prevent cross-border attacks and infiltration by militant groups. They argued that Dawar's murder was a tragic consequence of the security vacuum and instability in the border region, which allowed criminal and terrorist elements to operate with impunity. The case of Tahir Dawar remains unresolved, and his family, colleagues, and supporters continue to demand justice and accountability for his brutal murder. It serves as a grim reminder of the challenges and dangers faced by law enforcement officers operating in volatile and insecure environments, as well as the complex geopolitical dynamics at play in the region. In another tweet DG ISPR said that: "We stress that, in order to prevent the use of Afghan territory against Pakistan, Afghan Security Forces must collaborate in border fence and bilateral border security cooperation while investigations by Pakistani authorities are ongoing."¹⁶⁰

4.2.2.3 -Attack in Loaralai in January 2019

According to an estimate 9 people were killed, including 5 civilian employees, 3 policemen, and 1 candidate, and 21 were injured in a terror attack on the DIG of Police Zhob Range's office in the Pakistani city of Loralai. The attack took place during the police department's written test. It was the second such attack on the security forces in the city in a month, after an attack on a Frontier Corps training camp. The attackers detonated themselves after blowing up the office's main gate. The attack lasted for two hours, and at least three explosions were heard in the vicinity. The wounded and bodies were taken to Loralai's district hospital, where six people were

¹⁶⁰ Tweet by DG ISPR Asif Ghafoor on 15 November 2018.

seriously hurt. No one has claimed responsibility for this attack.¹⁶¹

4.2.2.4 -Balochistan Chief Minister Condemns Attack on FC Personnel as Threat to Peace and Progress

Four members of the Frontier Corps lost their lives in an attack in Pakistan's Panjgur district, Makran division. At two checkpoints, the attack happened during shift changes. The four personnel were shot many times and instantly passed away. Their weapons were taken away by the invaders. This attack is the second in a 24-hour period against FC soldiers in Balochistan. Jam Kamal Khan Alyani, the chief minister of Balochistan, denounced the incident and called it a plot against peace and development initiatives. He pledged to prosecute those responsible and keep on the war on terror.¹⁶²

4.2.2.5- Terror Strikes Quetta: Suicide Attack Targets Frontier Corps Check Post

In Quetta, Pakistan, a suicide attack near a Frontier Corps check post resulted in four fatalities and twenty injuries. A suicide bomber on a motorbike and carrying six kilograms of explosives carried out the attack. The blame was attributed to the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif conveyed his sorrow, and Prime Minister Inran Khan denounced the incident. Mir Ziaullah Langove, the home minister of Bangladesh, also denounced the incident and noted that security personnel have given their all in the fight against terrorism. Less than two weeks have passed when a vehicle carrying Levies personnel in the Ziarat

¹⁶¹ Saleem Shahid, "9 killed 21 Injured in Loralai Police Attack", *Dawn*, January 30, 2019. Accessed on February 23, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1460704>

¹⁶² Saleem Shahid, "4 FC Men Martyred in Panjgur Attack", *Dawn*, February 18, 2019, accessed on February 24, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1464495/four-fc-men-martyred-in-panjgur-attack>

district struck a landmine, resulting in three personnel martyred and numerous injuries.¹⁶³

4.2.2.6- Balochistan Terrorists Attacked Pakistan Army Checkpoint, Ten Soldiers Martyred

In the Kech area of Balochistan, ten Pakistan Army personnel lost their lives in a terrorist attack on a security forces checkpoint. One terrorist was killed and numerous others were injured in the attack, which happened on January 25–26. A follow-up clearance operation resulted in the arrest of three terrorists, according to the military's media affairs branch. No matter the cost, the military forces are committed to driving terrorists from their territory. This comes after a similar occurrence in January, when intelligence-based operations resulted in the demises of two soldiers and the death of an equal number of terrorists.¹⁶⁴

4.3- Refugees Problem

Pakistan is home to 1.4 million Afghan refugees, making it the third-largest refugee population globally. However, estimates from the United Nations suggest that the actual number of refugees may be as high as three million. The swiftness with which the Taliban overran Kabul and seized power surprised many people as well as the rest of the globe. According to Safiullah Noori, 66, an Afghan refugee in Karachi, "I have witnessed the entry and evacuation of Soviet troops, the arrival and withdrawal of U.S. troops, and now the reemergence of the Taliban."¹⁶⁵ Pakistan, like all neighboring countries, supported the peace agreement between the

¹⁶³ Ghalib Nihad, "Four Martyred, 20 Injured in Suicide Attack Targeting FC Check post on Quetta Mastung Road," *Dawn*, September 5, 2021, accessed on February 24, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1644640>

¹⁶⁴ Naveed Siddiqui and Tahir Khan, 10 Soldiers Martyred in Terrorist Attack on Check post in Balochistan Kech's: ISPR, *Dawn*, January 27, 2022, accessed on February 25, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1671785>

¹⁶⁵ Sabrina Toopa, Zia-UR-Rehman, "Afghans Who Fled The First Taliban Regime Found Precarious Sanctuary in Pakistan", August 18, 2021, accessed on February 25, 2024, <https://time.com/6091056/afghanistan-refugees-pakistan/>

US and the Taliban in February 2020 in Qatar. One of the key provisions of the peace agreement was the complete withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. As the US troops began to pull out of Afghanistan in July 2021, Islamabad worried about what would happen to Pakistan if the US troops left without a negotiated settlement with the Taliban.¹⁶⁶ In July 2021, Pakistan's then Prime Minister, Imran Khan, expressed his fear that "we are upset that another wave of refugees is on its way and we do not have the political or economic strength to cope with it."¹⁶⁷ Since August 15, when the Taliban took control of the country's capital, Kabul, international aid agencies have estimated that over 300,000 Afghans including women and children have crossed into neighboring Iran illegally since the start of the year. Afghani families are desperate to get out of the country amid the worst drought in decades, soaring poverty, rising unemployment, and years of war that have pushed humanitarian needs to an all-time high this winter. Fears that the Taliban will retaliate against those who support the ousted Western-backed government have also led many Afghans to try to flee the country. The humanitarian situation has been aggravated by financial sanctions imposed by the United States and other Western countries against the Taliban government, which have effectively shut down the entire banking system in Afghanistan.¹⁶⁸

4.4- Durand Line Issue Bone Of Contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan

In the late 1880s, the Amir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman, initiated efforts to establish a

¹⁶⁶ Madiha Afzal, "An Uneasy Limbo for US-Pakistan Relations Amidst the Withdrawal from Afghanistan", *Brookings*, August 6, 2021, accessed on February 25, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/an-uneasy-limbo-for-us-pakistan-relations-amidst-the-withdrawal-from-afghanistan/>

¹⁶⁷ Syed Irfan Raza, "PM delivers Stinging Rebuke After Ghani's Outburst", *Dawn*, July 17, 2021, accessed on February 27, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1635491>

¹⁶⁸ Ayaz Gul, "More than 300,000 Afghans Flee to Pakistan Since Taliban's Takeover of Afghanistan", *Voice of America*, December 16, 2021, accessed on February 27, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/more-than-300-000-afghans-flee-to-pakistan-since-taliban-takeover-of-afghanistan-/6357777.html>

clearly defined border with India. This move coincided with British intentions to create a distinct buffer state, safeguarded from their sphere of influence, particularly due to concerns about Russian expansion into Central Asia. While the Amir consented to British control over Afghanistan's foreign policy, he insisted on non-interference in its internal affairs. A well-demarcated border seemed like a viable solution. However, tensions escalated following the finalization of the Durand Line in 1893 by Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of India. This contentious border agreement heightened tensions not only between Afghanistan and India but also intensified disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan post-1947.¹⁶⁹ Following the partition of British India in 1947, Pakistan inherited the 1893 agreement and later 1919 Treaty of Rawalpindi without any formal agreement or ratification between Islamabad and Kabul. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a Pashtun leader, voiced opposition to his people joining Pakistan, advocating for a referendum to determine their future. However, the referendum only offered the options of joining Pakistan or India, disregarding independence or union with Afghanistan. Despite limited electoral participation among Pashtuns and pressures from the British and the Muslim League, a narrow majority voted in favor of joining Pakistan.¹⁷⁰

Many Afghans dispute the legitimacy of Durand Line, claiming that the emir who gave his assent to this delineation was pressured to give his assent to it. However, this argument can be rebutted by noting that nearly 400 tribal lords from Afghanistan took part in the inauguration ceremony of Durand Line in 1893 as the international border between Afghanistan and British

¹⁶⁹ Arka Biswas, "Durand Line History, Legality and Future", *Vivekananda International Foundation*, September 2013, accessed on February 28, 2024, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/170887/Durand%20Line_History%20Legality%20%20Future_Final.pdf

¹⁷⁰ "The Durand Line-A Razor's Edge Between Pakistan and Afghanistan", *European Foundation for South Asian Studies*, accessed on February 28, 2024, <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/the-durand-line-a-razors-edge-between-afghanistan-and-pakistan/>

India. In his memoirs, emir Abdul Rahman Khan referred to this event as a major accomplishment of his reign.¹⁷¹

Rustam Shah Mohmand in an article titled as The Durand Line: A British Legacy that fuels new Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan stated that

Long ago, the Durand Line problem ought to have been settled. It seems that the Afghan side is a prisoner of the days when Kabul dominated the frontier regions. The Pakistani side hasn't addressed the matter clearly either in the interim. However, Pakistan has made matters worse by building a barrier across the 2,600-kilometer border at an astounding expense of more than \$1 billion. This has significantly harmed border peace and stability.¹⁷²

4.4.1-Pakistan Stance on Durand Line

Since 1947, several Afghan governments have sought to annul the Durand Line agreement unilaterally on the ground that the Indian subcontinent had become a British colony and the Durand Line had therefore ceased to be valid. However, Article 11 of the Convention on the Succession of State in respect of Treaties (1978) provides that the succession of any State shall not affect the boundaries established by a Treaty or the obligations and rights laid down in a Treaty. Article 62(2) also states that a substantial change of circumstances cannot be invoked to justify the termination of a Treaty that established a boundary in the past.

4.4.2 -Treaty of Rawalpindi (1919)

The Durand Line was initially established through an agreement between Sir Henry

¹⁷¹ Ahmed Nazeer Warraich, "Durand Line-A Binding International Border", *Courting The Law*, February 23, 2016, accessed on March 2, 2024, <https://courtingthelaw.com/2016/02/19/commentary/durand-line-a-binding-international-border/>

¹⁷² Rustam Shah Mohmand, "The Durand Line: A British Legacy That Fuels New Tensions Between Pakistan and Afghanistan", *Arab News*, July 7, 2023, accessed on March 4, 2024, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2333766>

Mortimer Durand, representing British India, and Abdur Rahman Khan, the Amir of Afghanistan, in 1893.¹⁷³ This agreement aimed to define the boundary between Afghanistan and British India, demarcating areas of control and influence. The Treaty of Rawalpindi, signed in 1919 following the Third Anglo-Afghan War, reaffirmed the Durand Line as the official border between Afghanistan and what had become British India, and later Pakistan after partition.¹⁷⁴ This treaty solidified the boundary as an internationally recognized border.

4.4.3 - Principle of Territorial Integrity

The principle of territorial integrity, a fundamental aspect of international law, emphasizes the inviolability of established borders. Once a boundary is agreed upon and recognized by both parties, it is expected to be respected by the international community. In the case of the Durand Line, the boundary was established through a bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and British India, and later inherited by Pakistan upon its independence in 1947. Despite occasional objections raised by Afghanistan, the Durand Line has been recognized and respected by successive Afghan governments, reinforcing Pakistan's claim to the territory based on the principle of territorial integrity.

4.3.4- Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969)

The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties governs the principles and procedures concerning treaties between states. Under this convention, treaties are binding upon the parties and

¹⁷³ Brad L.Brasseur, "Recognizing The Durand Line A Way Forward for Pakistan and Afghanistan", accessed on March4,2024, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/134344/durandline.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ Arka Biswas, "Durand Line History, Legality and Future," *Vivikenenda International Foundation*, September,2013,accessed on March2,2024, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/170887/Durand%20Line_History%20Legality%20%20Future_Final.pdf

must be implemented in good faith. The Durand Line agreement falls within the scope of this convention, as it was a legally binding agreement between Afghanistan and British India. Although Afghanistan has contested the validity of the agreement on occasion, the treaty remains in force, and Pakistan upholds its obligations under international law. Therefore, Pakistan's claim to the territory is reinforced by its adherence to international treaties and conventions.

4.3.5- Recognition by the International Community

Despite sporadic objections from Afghanistan, the international community, including the United Nations and most countries, recognizes the Durand Line as the legitimate border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This recognition is crucial for Pakistan's claim to the territory under international law. Furthermore, Pakistan's consistent advocacy for peaceful resolution of disputes and adherence to established borders has garnered support from the international community, further solidifying its legal and diplomatic standing regarding the Durand Line.

4.3.6 Stability and Peacekeeping

Upholding the Durand Line as the official border between Pakistan and Afghanistan contributes significantly to regional stability and peacekeeping efforts. Recognizing and respecting established borders is essential for maintaining peace and preventing conflicts between neighboring states. By adhering to the Durand Line as the internationally recognized border, Pakistan demonstrates its commitment to regional stability and peace, fostering goodwill and cooperation with its neighbor.

4.3.7 Principle of Uti Possidetis Juris

Many observers are in favor of Status quo instead of revisionist policies which means that keeping borders the way they are has turned out to be a better idea than changing them. Under the

umbrella of International law scholars argued that any effort to change the borders set during colonial times would lead to significant problems and violence in addition with more bloodshed.¹⁷⁵ The Durand Line's status as an international border is unequivocally established through the Durand Line Agreement, international law, historical evidence, and original maps from the time of the accord. As a result, the Durand Line issue is primarily a political and geostrategic matter, and its recognition as an international border is not disputed.¹⁷⁶ A book launch event was held on December 15, 2023, for 'Revisiting the Durand Line: Historical and Legal Perspectives' by Lutfur Rehman, co-organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad. The event featured discussions by notable speakers. The speakers highlighted that the book clarifies misconceptions about the Durand Line through thorough research and evidence. The book also includes original maps from the 1893 border agreement between Afghanistan's Ameer Abdur Rahman Khan and British Indian official Mortimer Durand, providing further evidence to support its claims.

Many scholars commonly believe that Ameer Abdur Rahman was coerced into signing the treaty. However, the author clarifies that the Ameer himself requested the British government to demarcate the border and actively participated in finalizing the agreement due to concerns over the expanding British and Russian empires. Despite this, Afghanistan's successive governments, following Pakistan's independence in 1947, have consistently refused to acknowledge the Durand Line as a legitimate international boundary. Contrary to popular belief, the border has indeed been

⁷⁵ P.Mweti Munya, "The Organization Of African Unity and its Role in Regional Conflict Resolution and Dispute Settlement: A Critical Evolution," *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 19, no.2, (May 1999): 579, accessed on March 2, 2024, <https://lira.bc.edu/work/sc/4d8c7b18-6b2c-45c4-b2cf-45362049ddc0>,

¹⁷⁶ Lutfur Rehman, "Durand Line as an Internationally Recognized Border Is Indisputable", *IPS TV*, December 28, 2023, accessed on March 5, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP1FzwPCLvA&t=241s>

demarcated through the efforts of three commissions: the Baluch-Afghan Boundary Commission, the Afghan-Waziristan Boundary Commission, and the Asmar Boundary Commission.¹⁷⁷ Consequently, the entire border has been delineated, with agreements signed and maps exchanged.

4.4- Experts Views about the Durand Line Issue

Zafar Nawaz Jaspal emphasized that the Durand Line issue has been misinterpreted multiple times, leading to unnecessary tensions. He stressed the need to clarify these misunderstandings once and for all, promoting healthy and friendly relations between neighboring countries.¹⁷⁸ Razia Sultana emphasized that the ongoing dilemma is primarily political and geostrategic, leading to persistent tensions and rivalries that ultimately do not benefit any state. She also highlighted that the Durand Line is not merely a historical issue but rather a matter of dividing an ethnic group, namely the Pashtuns. However, this argument is weakened by the fact that Pashtuns are deeply integrated into Pakistan's political, economic, and military spheres.¹⁷⁹ Abrar Hussain noted that Afghan governments have used the Durand Line issue for political leverage, but have never pursued it through international channels. This is due to a lack of supporting evidence for their claims. Meanwhile, Pakistan has chosen not to raise the issue, prioritizing friendly relations and considering the Durand Line a settled international boundary, with no need for further discussion.¹⁸⁰ Khalid Rahman stressed the importance of addressing bilateral issues for the mutual benefit of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and their people. He highlighted

¹⁷⁷ "Historian Lutfur Rehman has Sharing Insights from his research on Durand Line", *IPS TV*, November 30, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjJQ97ENJvM&t=371s>

¹⁷⁸ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Durand Line issue has been misinterpreted repeatedly", *IPS TV*, November 30, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW7Fqr6wpa8>

¹⁷⁹ Razia Sultana, "Durand Line is political and geostrategic issue", *IPS TV*, February 11, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwPb7Esu5cU>

¹⁸⁰ Abrar Hussain, "The rhetoric on Durand line has successively been used for political gains", *IPS TV*, November 30, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yIIa9s65ek&t=14s>

that the border dispute serves the interests of external and internal parties who seek to hinder the improvement of Pak-Afghan relations. Rahman identified misinformation as a major obstacle, impeding genuine research initiatives. He emphasized the urgent need to prioritize indigenous viewpoints, urging scholars and academia to work closely with research institutions to improve the credibility of research.¹⁸¹

In an interview Guldad gave its viewpoint regarding why Afghanistan has not raised issue of Durand Line at International forums? He said that Afghanistan has refrained from raising the Durand Line issue in international forums due to several reasons. The Durand Line is internationally recognized as the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Raising the issue in international forums may not yield significant support from the international community. Moreover, Afghan government was preoccupied with internal security, economic and political challenges. Focusing on the Durand Line issue was not be a priority compared to other pressing issues. Moreover, raising the issues at international forums could have been done at the cost of its relations with Pakistan.¹⁸²

Rashid Wali Janjua said that any state which inherits international frontiers so that it becomes a legacy for that state He further added that Afghan governments of Amir Abdur Rehman and Habibullah they themselves in treaty of Gandamak they ceded these territories that these are part of British India. So that's why they don't have legal case according to tenets of International law. They know it but there is a tumbled Afghan Irredentism.¹⁸³ It was just to grab public

¹⁸¹ IPS TV, November 20, 2023.

¹⁸² Guldad, interviewed by researcher, May 9, 2024.

¹⁸³ Afghan Irredentism means that they lay claims on foreign territories based on their own understanding or their own notions of Afghan nationalism. These areas that are part of Pakistan i.e. Peshawar, merged districts there are times these areas were claimed by Afghanistan. It was only when Maharaja Ranjeet Singh extended the frontiers till this place that was later on formalized. Since Afghan King signed the treaty of Gandamak and later on there were several other treaties signed which formalized this as international frontier.

sentiment.

Manzoor Afridi in an interview said that Durand line issue since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 from time to time we have seen so many allegations something like political allegations regarding the Durand line but as far as this is concerned it is just political game. Its due right of Afghanistan if it is really interested it can take this issue to the international forums may be the International Court of Justice(ICJ) at the Hague and may be at other international organizations that can use may be Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) where Pakistan and Afghanistan both are there. It can be even Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).Because in SCO Pakistan is a permanent member whereas Afghanistan is now observer. In SCO there is also a special contact group of SCO on Afghanistan and even almost all of the members of SCO they are very concerned about the Afghanistan .So in this regard SCO can be very instrumental and fundamental forum to raise this issue Durand Line there but till now Afghanistan did not raise this issue in ICJ, SCO, OIC or somewhere else. It is because Durand line is just political. It is just to play with the sentiments of the people on both sides of border especially the Pakhtun region or the Pakhtun people .Some Pakhtun nationalist they play this card thus to have an emotional attachment, just to gain sympathy of masses and just to grab power. If it is really an issue Afghanistan had the due right and has the due right to take this issue in international forums.¹⁸⁴

4.5- ICJ Ruling on Stability of Boundaries in Chad-Libya Border Dispute

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) decided that the terms of the Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighborliness, which the French Republic and the Kingdom of Libya signed on August

¹⁸⁴ Manzoor Afridi, interviewed by researcher, April24, 2024.

10, 1955, should be followed in resolving the border dispute between Chad and Libya. The court found that:

Once established, the boundary cannot be changed because doing so would violate the core idea behind the stability of boundaries. As a result, a boundary drawn by treaty attains a permanence that the treaty itself may not. When a boundary has been agreed upon, its continuation does not depend on the treaty that established it continuing to exist.¹⁸⁵

Furthermore, Pakistan's claims on the Durand Line are firmly grounded in historical agreements, international law principles such as territorial integrity and treaty obligations, recognition by the international community, and the imperative of maintaining stability in the region. These factors collectively reinforce Pakistan's legal and diplomatic standing regarding the boundary between the two countries, providing a comprehensive justification for its claims on the Durand Line.

4.6- Afghanistan's Stance on Durand Line

Afghanistan claims Durand line as controversial border. Basically, there are three reasons due to which Afghanistan claims that Durand Line is not a valid boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

1. The territories between West of river Indus once it was part in parcel of big Afghan empire and these territories were captured by Ahmed Shah Abdali.
2. The Durand line it was signed under duress.¹⁸⁶ It was signed because British Indian government forcefully forced Amir to sign the agreement because Ameer Abdur Rehman was also puppet

¹⁸⁵ Case Concerning The Territorial Dispute (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya/Chad), Paras 72-73, February 3, 1994, March 11, 2024, <https://www.un.org/law/icjsum/9404.htm>

¹⁸⁶ Bijan Omrani, "The Durand Line: Analysis of the Legal Status of the Disputed Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier", University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review 26, no. 1, (2018): 113, accessed on March 7, 2024, <https://repository.law.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1318&context=umiclr>

in hands of British Indian Government. That's why he was compelled to sign the agreement in duress.

3. On ethnic, linguistic and geographical considerations that since most of people of former NWFP they are Pakhtun that's why ethnically these areas and people are ethnically same culturally, linguistically and have one religion that's why Afghans did not accept Durand Line as valid boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁸⁷

However, Pakistan rejected all these claims raised by Afghanistan.

Sher Muhammad Abbas Satankzai, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan stated that:

Half of Afghanistan is situated on the other side of the Durand line. We have never accepted the Durand Line, and we will never accept it. Nobody can divide these tribes from each other. Rather, their (Pakistan) actions will result in the same thing as the partition of Bangladesh in 1971. God willing, and these lands will be liberated.¹⁸⁸

The statement was made during a ceremony in Logar to mark 35 years since the Soviet Union left Afghanistan.¹⁸⁹ Ahmedullah Sharifi afghan Phd scholar at IIUI was of the view that most of Afghan leaders did not recognize Durand line as they think it is imposed by Britishers. In Afghanistan there are 2 school of thoughts. One accepted as international border whereas 2nd school of thought opposed this. But majority in Afghanistan opposed it as international border.

¹⁸⁷ Himayatullah Yaqubi, "The Durand Line Historical ,Political and Legal Perspectives," *The Black Hole*, March 2, 2024, accessed on March 14, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzVqI5L8wCk>

¹⁸⁸ "Afghanistan's Taliban Reject Durand Line, Escalating Tensions With Pakistan," *Khama Press*, February 17, 2024, accessed on March 16, 2024, <https://www.khaama.com/afghanistans-taliban-reject-durand-line-escalating-tensions-with-pakistan/>

¹⁸⁹ Kashif Imran, "Pakistan Says Taliban Deputy FM's Rejection of Durand Line Fanciful, Can't Change Facts," *Arab News*, February 17, 2024, March 18, 2024, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2461556/pakistan>

4.7 -Border Fencing

In December and early January, Afghan Taliban fighters intervened to halt an ongoing Pakistani initiative to erect fencing along the shared border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both sides remain in disagreement over the fence, with the Taliban's reliance on Pakistan as a link to the international community complicating matters. The issue of the Durand Line border between the two countries remains contentious, as the Taliban asserts the right to unhindered movement of people across the colonial-era frontier. Pakistan delineates the Durand Line differently from Afghanistan, and sections of the Pakistani fence may encroach upon what Afghanistan and much of the international community consider Afghan territory. Pakistan has played down the clashes on the border, advocating for a diplomatic resolution to the issue publicly. However, unrest in its Pashtun regions is of greater concern now than it was three decades ago, given that the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas have been a source of terrorism and instability in recent years. Kabul's tolerance of a de facto safe haven for the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan; TTP) further strains bilateral relations. If Islamabad perceives that the Afghan Taliban is not just asserting a traditional stance on the Durand Line but actively supporting a movement to reclaim lost Pashtun lands, the relationship may deteriorate.

Pakistan's border fencing project has significantly impacted its internal security, as the Pakistani military now views the situation on its western border following the Taliban's takeover. The Taliban's rejection of Pakistan's border position and their physical efforts to dismantle the fence at multiple points pose a challenge to Pakistan's recent security strategy. The Taliban's assumption of power in Afghanistan and its establishment as the de facto government have altered its stance on borders and relations with neighbors. Observations of Taliban behavior along the

Pakistan border suggest some difficulty in command and control. While most incidents indicate hostility toward Pakistan among the Taliban's rank and file, higher levels of Taliban leadership appear capable of managing but not entirely preventing such sentiments.¹⁹⁰

4.8-Afghanistan-Pakistan Diplomatic Crisis Deepens Amid Abduction Allegations

Afghanistan withdrew its ambassador from Pakistan, Najib Ali Khil, following the reported abduction of his daughter, Silsila Ali Khil, in Islamabad. The incident highlighted the fragile Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship and its vulnerability to external interference. It further strained their ties at that time. This occurred at a challenging time for both nations as they struggled to maintain their bilateral relationship. While Pakistan claimed to support an Afghan-led peace process, Afghanistan remained skeptical.¹⁹¹

As Taliban attacks persisted in Afghanistan, Kabul increasingly criticized Pakistan and its security agencies. President Ashraf Ghani's recent remarks indirectly challenged Pakistan's stance on the Durand Line and water rights, further complicating matters. Accusations were also made against Pakistan for allegedly aiding Taliban fighters in border regions. However, Islamabad denied such claims, emphasizing its commitment to Afghan-led solutions. Critics in Islamabad suggested that Kabul's criticism aimed to undermine Pakistan's role in Afghan affairs. The abduction incident, allegedly involving Pakistan, was viewed with suspicion given its potential to

¹⁹⁰ Asfandiyar Mir, Richard Olson, Andrew Watkins, "Afghanistan Pakistan Border Dispute Heats Up," *United States Institute of Peace*, January 12, 2022, March 23, 2024, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/01/afghanistan-pakistan-border-dispute-heats>

¹⁹¹ Umair Jamal, "Afghanistan Pakistan Ties Frays Further Over Abduction of Afghan's Ambassador Daughter", *The Diplomat*, July 22, 2021, March 23, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/07/afghanistan-pakistan-ties-fray-further-over-abduction-of-afghan-ambassadors-daughter/>

provoke anti-Pakistan sentiments. Surprisingly, both the Afghan Taliban and the Afghan government condemned the abduction, suggesting it could be the work of external forces aiming to create discord. Pakistan denied involvement in the abduction, attributing it to a smear campaign. Amid escalating tensions, Pakistan recalled its ambassador from Afghanistan. The deteriorating relationship underscored the need for increased dialogue between the two nations. However, further ruptures seemed inevitable as both sides maneuvered to protect their interests.¹⁹²

4.9 -War of Words between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Talks with the Taliban are being considered, as stated by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who emphasized a willingness for negotiations, but not with those responsible for civilian casualties. Recent attacks, claiming over 130 lives across Afghanistan, have led Kabul to partly attribute blame to Islamabad. The Taliban and an ISIL-linked militant group have collectively caused nearly 200 deaths in Afghanistan this year. President Ghani demands tangible actions from Pakistan, rather than mere promises, to address the situation. Islamabad denies aiding terrorist groups and insists on its efforts to combat terrorism domestically. Both nations frequently accuse each other of failing to address militant activities along their border. Afghanistan supports its claims with captured militants alleging the existence of training camps in the Pakistani border town of Chaman. The United States has also accused Islamabad of sheltering terrorists, leading to a halt in military aid last month. Despite these allegations, Pakistan highlights both countries' victimization by terrorism and calls for joint efforts against this shared threat. Meanwhile, the Afghan public demands enhanced security measures from Ghani's government, backed by Western

¹⁹² Jamal, "Afghanistan Pakistan Ties Frays Further", *The Diplomat*.

support.¹⁹³

Pakistan firmly denies the groundless accusations concerning the attacks in Kandahar in 2018. Thus far, no concrete evidence or intelligence has been provided to support these claims. Given the mechanisms established under the (APAPPS) to jointly and thoroughly investigate such regrettable incidents, it would have been more prudent to utilize these channels rather than engaging in a media-driven blame game.¹⁹⁴ A Taliban representative General Mubeen criticized Prime Minister Imran Khan, labeling him as a puppet who lacked popular mandate.¹⁹⁵ The spokesperson, in an interview, urged Pakistan to refrain from meddling in Afghanistan's affairs. Earlier, during an interview, PM Khan remarked that Afghanistan couldn't sustain a puppet government, and suggested that the Taliban could only be encouraged to cooperate if they moved in the right direction. In response to Khan's comments, the Taliban spokesperson asserted, "You're referring to Imran Khan, who advocates for an inclusive government in Afghanistan? Pakistan itself is grappling with numerous challenges and difficulties. Imran Khan assumed office without the direct mandate of the Pakistani people."¹⁹⁶

4.10-Resurgence of TTP in Afghanistan after fall of Kabul

(TTP) got stronger in 2021 and started causing more trouble for Pakistan. They were based in Afghanistan but were causing problems inside Pakistan too. They attacked Pakistani security

¹⁹³ The Blame Game :Kabul Islamabad Point Fingers After Taliban Attacks, *CTGN America*,2018,accessed on March28,2024, <https://america.cgtn.com/2018/02/03/afghanistan-pakistan-taliban-haqqani-attacks-blame>

¹⁹⁴“ Pakistan Rejects Allegations Regarding Kandahar Attack “Ministry of Foreign Affairs,October24,2018,accessed on March28,2024,<https://mofa.gov.pk/pakistan-rejects-allegations-regarding-kandhar-attack>\\

¹⁹⁵ “Taliban Say Imran Khan Is Also A Puppet ,Should Not Interfere In Afghanistan,” *Friday Times* ,Septcmber24,2021,accessed on March29,2024, <https://thefridaytimes.com/24-Sep-2021/taliban-say-imran-khan-is-also-a-puppet-should-not-interfere-in-afghanistan>

¹⁹⁶ Keep Away From Our Matters Warning to PM Imran Khan,September23,2021,accessed on March29,2024 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HULk5njG7f8>

forces and important Chinese interests more often. The TTP also got more organized politically by bringing together different groups within itself. Al-Qaeda also said it still supports the TTP. After the TTP attacked the police in Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad, the Interior Minister of Pakistan warned that more attacks could happen.¹⁹⁷ However, the most notable development of the year was the evident partnership between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban, which provided support and backing to the TTP. This was surprising because the Pakistani government had previously claimed that the TTP mainly existed due to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and external support from the previous Afghan government, often in collaboration with India. Therefore, Pakistani officials suggested that the withdrawal of the U.S. from Afghanistan and the resurgence of the Taliban would decrease the threat posed by the TTP to Pakistan.¹⁹⁸

However, following the Taliban's assumption of power, the TTP appears to have gained momentum and appears stronger than before. The depth of the relationship between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban became evident after the Taliban's August takeover. Shortly after, the Taliban leadership released senior TTP leaders and a significant number of fighters who were imprisoned by the previous Afghan government. The Taliban regime also seems to have granted de facto political asylum and freedom of movement within Afghanistan to the top leadership of the TTP, from where they are orchestrating their violent campaign in Pakistan. Since the Taliban's rise to power, the TTP has emphasized that the Afghan Taliban not only serves as a role model insurgency but also as the primary support for their movement. TTP leader Noor Wali Mehsud has publicly reaffirmed his allegiance to Afghan Taliban leader Maulvi Hibatullah Akhundzada and declared

¹⁹⁷ Asfandiyar Mir, "After the Taliban's Takeover :Pakistan TTP Problem", *United States Institute of Peace*, January 19, 2022, accessed on April 5, 2024, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/01/after-talibans-takeover-pakistans-ttp-problem>

¹⁹⁸ Mir, "After the Taliban's Takeover", USIP.

the TTP to be an offshoot of the Taliban in Pakistan. However, the Taliban have been ambiguous regarding the current status and future of the TTP in Afghanistan, and they have not committed to cracking down on the group despite its attacks on Pakistan.¹⁹⁹

In a statement Taliban Commander Noor Wali Mehsud expressed his wishes to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He said that:

I extend my congratulations to Ameer-ul-Momineen Hibatullah Akhundzada on this auspicious victory on behalf of the TTP Mujahidin. To Mullah Yaqub and Mullah Baradar, congratulations! The future of the entire Islamic Ummah hinges on this victory, which is the victory of the entire Muslim Ummah.²⁰⁰

After Afghan Taliban came into force in Afghanistan they released TTP's commanders. This involved high-ranking figures such as Maulawi Faqir Muhammad Bajauri, the TTP's founding deputy leader, and former spokesperson Mufti Khalid Bulti. They were arrested in Afghanistan in 2013 and 2015, respectively. Right after Bajauri's release, he was observed addressing large gatherings of TTP fighters in Kunar province, close to his native Bajaur tribal district in Pakistan. In his speech, he asserted that the militant struggle against Pakistan's government was ongoing and urged those present to focus all their efforts on the jihadi activities within Pakistan. Commending the locals for supporting and providing refuge to the TTP, he declared that his group was now striving for a similar victory in Pakistan.²⁰¹

In an interview Guldad said that after change of government in Kabul in August 2021 and coming to power of the Taliban, Pakistan was expecting a more friendly government in Kabul and

¹⁹⁹ Mir, "After the Taliban's Takeover", USIP.

²⁰⁰ Mrityunjay Kumar Jha, "Pakistan Taliban Declares Allegiance to Kabul, Vows to Crush Islamabad", *Daiji World*, August 18, 2021, accessed on April 16, 2024, <https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=864344>

²⁰¹ "A Welcome Video of The Release of Teheek-e-Taliban Mujahideen Imprisoned at Pul-i-Charkhi and Bagram jails in Afghanistan, *Umer Media*, August 20 2021, accessed on April 19, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAUB7c9Yf_k

therefore Pakistan pushed the international community to engage with the Taliban as the last bet. Without formally recognizing Taliban government, Pakistan provided all possible support to the Afghan interim government of Taliban, however, the issue of cross border terrorism remained the concern as TTP using Afghan soil started to increase their violent movement in Pakistan. On the advice of the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan engaged TTP in talks but the talks failed and the TTP resumed its attacks in Pakistan. Like the previous Afghan government, Taliban also did not support Pakistan's fencing of the border and many clashes were witnessed between the border forces of the countries.²⁰²

Prime Minister Imran Khan revealed in an interview with TRT World that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government is engaging in talks with certain factions of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to explore possibilities of reconciliation with militants. Khan stated,

Some TTP groups are willing to negotiate with our government for peace and reconciliation, and we are in talks with them." When asked if the government would require militants to surrender their arms before offering clemency, Khan replied, yes, we forgive them, and they become ordinary citizens.

He also acknowledged that the Afghan Taliban are facilitating the dialogue, stating, "The talks are taking place in Afghanistan, so in that sense, yes." However, when questioned about the TTP's continued attacks on Pakistan's security forces despite the ongoing talks, Khan downplayed the surge in military casualties as a spate of attacks. "Khan emphasized the need for dialogue, expressing his disapproval of military solutions and belief in political dialogue as the way forward, similar to the approach taken in Afghanistan. While this is the first official admission of talks with the TTP, senior leaders have been hinting at it for nearly a month. President Arif Alvi and Foreign

²⁰²Guldad, interviewed by researcher, May9, 2024.

Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi have suggested considering amnesty for TTP members who renounce violence and adhere to the Pakistani Constitution. The opposition has reacted with outrage and rejection of the dialogue, criticizing the government for not taking Parliament into confidence. PPP Senator Sherry Rehman questioned the basis for distinguishing between "good" and "bad" Taliban, while former President Asif Ali Zardari emphasized the need to fully implement the National Action Plan and treat all terrorists as enemies of the state. PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui regretted the lack of transparency and consultation with the nation and Parliament before offering amnesty to the TTP.

On the other hand the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has rebuffed the Pakistani government's offer of amnesty, declaring its unwavering commitment to pursuing a violent campaign until the country is transformed into an Islamic state modeled after the Taliban's ideology. TTP's spokesperson, Muhammad Khurasani, asserted that "amnesty is typically extended to those who have committed wrongdoing, but we take pride in our armed resistance. In fact, we could potentially grant clemency to the Pakistani government if it agrees to enact Sharia law in the country."²⁰³

Pakistan former policy of considering Afghanistan as a strategic depth is a failure. Pakistan state should think upon this that Afghan Taliban played a double game at one side with US and on other side with Pakistan. The former strategic assets were sending messages written in blood. On

²⁰³ Abdul Basit, Pakistan's Peace Talks with Tehreek-e- Taliban Pakistan: Ten Times a failure", *Terrorism Monitor* 19,no.20(October,2021),accessed on April 24,2024, <https://jamcstown.org/program/pakistans-peace-talks-with-tehreek-e-taliban-pakistan-ten-times-a-failure/>

the other hand that Afghanistan should devise policy to fight with poverty rather than Pakistan.²⁰⁴

4.10.1- TTP's Demands from Government of Pakistan

1. Termination of Pakistani military outposts in the Newly Merged Districts, indicating the end of army departure.
2. The 25th Constitutional Amendment of 2018 should be reversed, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa NMD merger should come to a halt.
3. Using the Nizam-i-Adl regulation in the Malakand division to enforce the TTP's interpretation of Shariah law, claiming their rejection of the Pakistani constitution as un-Islamic. The TTP's members' freedom of movement without giving up their weapons and their operations in the Malakand region.²⁰⁵

Furthermore Pakistan rejected their demand of FATA Merger reversal and said that this is non-negotiable.

Asif Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan, has highlighted the reasons behind the failure of peace talks between Pakistan and the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He emphasized that the negotiations collapsed primarily because the TTP refused to surrender or pledge allegiance to Pakistan's Constitution. Additionally, they were unwilling to be held accountable for their crimes, including the notorious attack on the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar.²⁰⁶ The fact that a state actor has agreed to engage in peace talks with the group may

²⁰⁴ Hamid Mir, "Pakistan Confronts the Collapse of its Friendship with the Taliban", *Washington Post*, December 15, 2022, accessed on August 8, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/12/15/pakistan-afghanistantaliban-border-war/>

²⁰⁵ Palwasha Aftab, "Did Pakistan Really Back out of Talks?" *Pakistan Today*, December 27, 2023, accessed on April 24, 2024, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/12/27/did-pakistan-really-back-out-of-talks/>

²⁰⁶ "Special Envoy Tells Why Peace Talks with TTP Failed?" *Business Recorder*, 17th March, 2024, accessed on April 27, 2024, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40294020/special-envoy-tells-why-peace-talks-with-ttp-have-failed>

embolden them, potentially leading to unintended consequences. Islamabad's willingness to negotiate could be perceived as a sign of weakness, encouraging the group to make further demands. This could have severe repercussions, exacerbating the already volatile security situation in the region, where numerous terrorist organizations operate along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Furthermore, the recent release and pardon of militants by Islamabad may undermine Pakistani negotiators' ability to press the group to disarm, instead allowing it to regroup and reorganize. Moreover, the group's foray into mainstream Pakistani politics, despite its significant ideological differences, has seen it support the causes of Baloch and Pashtun nationalists, potentially leading to further complexities.²⁰⁷

4.11- Water Disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Afghanistan underwent a period where most of its regions faced a 60 percent decrease in the necessary rain and snowfall for food production. The swift growth of Kabul's population, coupled with severe drought conditions nationwide and the looming threat of climate change, heightened the demand for new water infrastructure. However, constructing such infrastructure proved politically intricate. The Afghanistan-Pakistan border area, characterized by a convoluted network of Trans Boundary Rivers, lacked a legal framework to prevent significant conflicts between the two nations.²⁰⁸ Around the world, countries often disagree over using shared rivers. But they've come up with ways to solve these conflicts, often with the help of groups like the

²⁰⁷ "TTP-Pakistan peace talks: The pitfalls and their implications", *Observer Research Foundation*, August 18, 2022, accessed on April 29, 2024, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/ttp-pakistan-peace-talk>

²⁰⁸ Elizabeth Hesaami, "Afghanistan's River Could be India's Next Weapon Against Pakistan," *Foreign Policy*, November 13, 2018, accessed on May 5, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/13/afghanistans-rivers-could-be-indias-next-weapon-against-pakistan-water-wars-hydropower-hydrodiplomacy/>

World Bank or the Asian Development Bank. Pakistan and Afghanistan both share the Kabul River, but they haven't agreed on how to share its water. Afghanistan wants to build the Shahtoot Dam on the river to help its people with water and power. But Pakistan worries this might reduce the water flowing into its northern areas.

Afghanistan says the dam won't take water away from Pakistan. Pakistan has also built dams on the Chitral River, affecting water in eastern Afghanistan. But both sides haven't really talked about these concerns. Experts say Afghanistan has the right to use its water resources responsibly, following international laws. These laws say countries can't change a river's natural flow in a way that hurts other countries. Usually, countries solve these issues by making treaties. But when there's no treaty, problems can arise. When starting projects like the Shahtoot Dam, both countries should think about how it might affect the other. Each country along a river has the right to a fair share of its water. This principle is used in many treaties. It's important to find solutions that don't harm anyone. There are rules and agreements about using water from international rivers. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan need to respect each other's rights as countries along the Kabul River. Using water fairly will help them both. The UN Convention on Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses is a guide for this. Many treaties have been signed about water, shaping international laws on sharing water. It's time for Pakistan and Afghanistan to talk and solve their issue peacefully.²⁰⁹

4.12- Illegal Trade Activities across the Border

Pakistan is also facing challenge of illegal movement of goods and people on

²⁰⁹ Syed Saad Ali Shah and Akhter Ali Shah, "Trans-Border River between Afghanistan and Pakistan." *The Express Tribune*, March 30, 2022.

Afghanistan-Pakistan border posing economic and security challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan put a curb on smuggling of currency and goods across the border, which put Afghan government in awkward position given economic challenges in Afghanistan. Pakistan also questioned the transit trade facility being extended to Afghanistan as many imported goods for Afghanistan (whose import was banned in Pakistan due to economic crisis) were ending up in Pakistani markets putting strain on local industry and causing huge losses to national exchequer.

4.13- Opportunities between Pakistan and Afghanistan

CASA-1000, the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, presents a significant opportunity for Pakistan's energy sector. This ambitious project aims to transfer surplus electricity from hydropower-rich Central Asian countries, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, to power-deficient South Asian nations, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. For Pakistan, CASA-1000 offers several key benefits. First and foremost, it addresses the country's chronic energy shortages by providing a new source of electricity. Pakistan has long struggled with power outages and load shedding, which have hampered economic growth and industrial productivity. The additional electricity from CASA-1000 will help alleviate these issues, ensuring a more reliable and stable energy supply. Moreover, CASA-1000 promotes regional connectivity and cooperation. By linking Central Asia with South Asia through a network of transmission lines, the project fosters closer economic ties and collaboration among participating countries. This not only enhances regional stability but also opens up new opportunities for trade and investment.

Furthermore, CASA-1000 contributes to Pakistan's broader energy diversification goals. As the country seeks to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and transition towards cleaner sources of energy, hydropower from Central Asia offers a renewable and environmentally sustainable

alternative. By integrating this renewable energy into its grid, Pakistan can reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. In addition to these benefits, CASA-1000 has the potential to stimulate economic growth and development in Pakistan. The project requires significant investment in infrastructure, including transmission lines and substations, which creates jobs and stimulates economic activity. Moreover, the availability of reliable electricity can attract foreign investment and spur industrial development, particularly in energy-intensive sectors such as manufacturing and IT.

However, it is essential to recognize that realizing the full potential of CASA-1000 requires addressing various challenges, including financing, regulatory frameworks, and geopolitical considerations. Ensuring the timely completion of infrastructure projects, facilitating cross-border electricity trade, and resolving potential disputes among participating countries are critical to the success of the initiative. Overall, CASA-1000 represents a transformative opportunity for Pakistan's energy sector, offering a reliable source of electricity, promoting regional cooperation, and supporting sustainable development goals. By leveraging this opportunity effectively, Pakistan can address its energy challenges, boost economic growth, and contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

4.14- Diplomatic Edge over India

The new political landscape in Afghanistan may bring about a significant shift in regional dynamics. Previously, the Afghan government had allowed India to establish a strong presence in the country, which allegedly fueled support for insurgent groups like the Baloch separatists and the TTP, perpetrating terrorism in Pakistan. With the change in government, India's influence in Afghanistan is likely to diminish, reducing the pressure on Pakistan's security forces, which had

been engaged on two fronts. This development presents an opportunity for Pakistan to play a crucial bridging role between the Taliban regime and the international community, particularly in addressing concerns around terrorist organizations like Islamic State Khurasan Province and Al-Qaida. By doing so, Pakistan may regain its strategic importance, which had been overshadowed by India's growing influence globally.²¹⁰

During the PTI government, Pakistan and Afghanistan faced many problems that made their relationship tense and affected the region. The Taliban took over Afghanistan, causing security worries and a flood of refugees into Pakistan. Disagreements over borders and trade made things worse. Pakistan's internal politics, including the fall of the PTI government later on, also impacted the relationship. Afghanistan struggled with poverty, economic instability, and restrictive policies, which had negative effects on Pakistan's security and economy. Both countries needed to work together to solve these shared problems.

²¹⁰ Umer Karim, "The Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan", *RUSI*, September 3, 2021, accessed on May 15, 2024, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/taliban-takeover-afghanistan-opportunities-and-challenges-pakistan>

CONCLUSION

From last 40 years Afghanistan remained battleground for superpowers. Afghans faced many hardships in order to continue their normal lives. Ground realities cannot be ignored in foreign policy decisions. No doubt there were elections in Afghanistan but previous governments came in Afghanistan with the help of foreign occupations. The period from 2018 to 2022 witnessed a dynamic and transformative phase in Pak-Afghan relations under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government. The geopolitical landscape of South Asia experienced significant shifts during this time, impacting the diplomatic, economic, and security dimensions of the bilateral ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This thesis has endeavored to provide a comprehensive analysis of the key developments, challenges, and achievements that marked this crucial period. One of the pivotal aspects of PTI's approach to Pak-Afghan relations was a commitment to fostering peace and stability in the region. Imran Khan's diplomatic approach towards Afghanistan during his tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan can be characterized as pragmatic and focused on promoting peace and stability in the region. He emphasized the importance of a negotiated settlement to the Afghan conflict and sought to improve bilateral relations through dialogue and cooperation. Khan advocated for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, urging all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue to find a political solution to the conflict. He supported the intra-Afghan peace talks and offered Pakistan's facilitation to help bridge the gaps between the Afghan government and the Taliban. After the change of government, Pakistan pushed Taliban to engage with all shades of opinion in Afghanistan for lasting peace. Pakistan also extended economic cooperation to the new regime.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's administration emphasized a cooperative and constructive

engagement with Afghanistan, recognizing the shared historical, cultural, and economic ties that bind the two nations. The initiation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) in 2018 exemplified this commitment, providing a framework for bilateral cooperation on issues ranging from security and counter-terrorism to trade and economic development. Pakistan prioritized its relationship with Afghanistan in its foreign policy from 2018-2019, investing heavily in strengthening ties between Islamabad and Kabul. Key initiatives included:

- Repatriation of illegal immigrants who had entered either country unlawfully.
- Enhanced military-to-military cooperation, including joint drills in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K.P.)

The security dimension of Pak-Afghan relations remained a focal point during the PTI government's tenure. The region continued to grapple with the challenges posed by terrorism, insurgency, and cross-border militancy. PTI's commitment to a peaceful Afghanistan, as underscored in the Afghan peace process, sought to address these challenges through dialogue and negotiations. The landmark intra-Afghan peace talks, which commenced in Doha in 2020, marked a significant step towards a political resolution of the long-standing conflict in Afghanistan. Like many other regional countries, Pakistan wasn't conformable with presence of such great number of foreign forces in its backyard, however, the presence of these forces did provide some stability. The withdrawal led to a power vacuum and increased instability in Afghanistan, which could potentially spill over into Pakistan and the broader region. The resurgence of Taliban control and the potential for other militant groups to exploit the situation posed security challenges for Pakistan. Pakistan also feared a surge in refugee influx as a result of the deteriorating security

situation in Afghanistan, which could strain its resources and exacerbate socio-economic challenges. The withdrawal shifted the geopolitical dynamics in the region, with China, Russia, and other neighboring countries stepping up their engagement in Afghanistan. Pakistan had to navigate these shifting dynamics to safeguard its interests and maintain regional stability.

Economic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan also witnessed notable developments during the PTI government's tenure. Efforts were made to enhance trade and economic cooperation through various initiatives, including the establishment of border markets and the implementation of trade facilitation measures. The opening of the Ghulam Khan Border crossing and the completion of the Torkham border terminal further underscored the commitment to facilitating cross-border trade and people-to-people connectivity.

However, challenges persisted in the economic domain, including issues related to transit trade, tariff barriers, and the need for infrastructure development. Overcoming these challenges requires sustained efforts from both countries to create an enabling environment for trade and economic collaboration. The Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meetings between Pakistan and Afghanistan served as a platform for addressing these issues and exploring avenues for increased economic integration.

The people-to-people ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have long been a source of strength for the bilateral relationship. The PTI government, recognizing the importance of cultural and educational exchanges, took steps to enhance these connections. Scholarships for Afghan students in Pakistani universities, cultural exchange programs, and initiatives to promote tourism between the two nations were notable endeavors that contributed to building a more robust foundation for people-to-people relations. Nevertheless, the period under review also witnessed

strains in the bilateral relationship, often stemming from historical grievances, border management issues, and divergent perspectives on regional dynamics. Incidents along the Durand Line, particularly the fencing of the border, at times heightened tensions and underscored the need for a nuanced and sensitive approach to address historical complexities. The formation of the Taliban interim government in 2021 had mixed implications for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations during the PTI government's term. Pakistan welcomed the formation of the Taliban government and saw it as an opportunity to promote stability and peace in Afghanistan. The PTI government expressed willingness to engage with the Taliban-led government to address common challenges and enhance bilateral cooperation. However, the formation of the Taliban government also raised concerns about the implications for regional security, stability, and human rights. Pakistan faced pressure from the international community to use its influence to encourage the Taliban to adhere to their commitments and respect human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan.

Looking forward, the future prospects of Pak-Afghan relations under the PTI government or subsequent administrations will depend on the sustained commitment to dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding. The evolving regional dynamics, including the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and the potential impact on the security situation, add a layer of complexity to the bilateral relationship. The success of the Afghan peace process and the ability of both nations to navigate shared challenges will be crucial in determining the trajectory of their relations. In conclusion, the period from 2018 to 2022 marked a critical juncture in Pak-Afghan relations, characterized by a mix of challenges and opportunities. The PTI government's efforts to foster peace, enhance economic cooperation, and strengthen people-to-people ties laid a foundation for a more stable and constructive relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, addressing the persistent challenges and building on the achievements will require

sustained commitment, diplomatic finesse, and a shared vision for regional stability and prosperity. As both nations navigate the complexities of the evolving geopolitical landscape, the lessons learned from this period can serve as a valuable guide for shaping a more positive and cooperative future in Pak-Afghan relations.

Challenges included historical grievances, border management issues, and divergent perspectives on regional dynamics, which at times strained the bilateral relationship. Opportunities for increased regional connectivity, economic integration, and collaborative efforts in counter-terrorism provided a foundation for building a more stable and constructive relationship. The research underscores the need for future administrations to navigate complex issues, capitalize on opportunities, and foster a spirit of cooperation that transcends historical complexities. In conclusion, the findings of the research underscore the complexity and dynamism of Pak-Afghan relations under the PTI government from 2018 to 2022. While progress was made in various dimensions, challenges persisted, requiring sustained efforts and diplomatic finesse to navigate historical complexities and shape a future characterized by mutual understanding, trust, and collaborative efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan. International media criticized Pakistan for playing dual game on war on terror. What Pakistan did was in its own interests. Everyone play games to protect their own national interests. What Pakistan did paid off well. We have also to work on masses level .We have also to build our narrative to win the hearts of people. We have to make connections within two people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Especially to the people living adjacent to the border areas. So these are the things which India has taken as a cash and Taliban they also want to pressurize Pakistan. Indian PM Vajpayee said “We can change history but not geography, we can change friends but not neighbors”. Same we cannot change the borders. It is ground reality that cannot bc changed. So the thing which is required from both Pakistan and

Afghanistan is strategic patience.

Pakistan and Afghanistan both are brothers. They have deep social, historic and political roots. Unfortunately Afghanistan remained battle ground for super powers for many decades which creates internal instability in Afghanistan and also posed threat to regional stability as well. Pakistan from very start wants peaceful Afghanistan and it also proved this fact in facilitating peace talks between Taliban and USA. Pakistan also knows this fact that if there is peace and tranquility in Afghanistan then it will prosper whole region. It was speculated that after the formation of new government in Afghanistan it proved best for Pakistan's interest but unfortunately it didn't happen. It seems that Afghan government has failed to implement Doha Peace Agreement in its real terms.²¹¹ It is necessary to build friendly relations with one another because war is not ultimate solution for problems. Cordial relations are in best interest for both nations.

²¹¹ Momna Mushtaq, "Pak Afghan Taaluqat aur Bhrti Kasheedgi," *Daily Rahnuma*, 26th March, 2024.

FINDINGS

The PTI administration showed that it was placing a greater priority on developing mutual ties with Afghanistan and understood the significance of stability and collaboration between the two nations. The PTI government recognized the importance of a stable Afghanistan for regional security and launched diplomatic actions meant at achieving peace and reconciliation in the country. PTI generally and Imran Khan particularly was against the military solution in Afghanistan. The management of cross-border security remained difficult despite efforts to strengthen relations, since episodes of militant assaults and cross-border migrations posed concerns to the security of both countries. The PTI government handled matters pertaining to Afghanistan while navigating intricate regional dynamics and striking a balance with important regional parties including China, Russia, Iran, and Central Asian nations. Acknowledging the Taliban's influence in Afghan politics, the PTI government worked with the Taliban leadership to promote peace negotiations and aid in efforts at reconciliation led by Afghans.

Pakistan showed its commitment to addressing the humanitarian issues in the area by sending food supplies, medical help, and refugee relief to Afghanistan. With projects aiming at enhancing cross-border trade and removing trade barriers, efforts were made to improve economic cooperation and trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Managing the flood of Afghan refugees and putting policies in place to address refugee concerns while encouraging voluntary return and sustainable reintegration presented difficulties for the PTI government. In order to address the issues of cross-border security, steps were taken to improve border management and security collaboration between Pakistan and Afghanistan. These measures included cooperative border patrols and intelligence sharing. Non-state actors operating along the Pakistan-Afghan border

presented difficulties for the PTI government, requiring coordinated efforts to combat terrorism and militancy in the area. In an attempt to build mutual understanding and goodwill between Pakistan and Afghanistan, efforts were undertaken to support cultural exchanges and people-to-people interactions. Promoting regional cooperation and backing for peace and stability in Afghanistan, among other related problems. In order to resolve concerns pertaining to Afghanistan, the PTI government engaged in diplomatic efforts and took part in international forums. It promoted regional cooperation as well as support for the peace and stability of Afghanistan. Public opinion and government policies on Afghanistan were influenced by media narratives and public perceptions, which significantly shaped Pakistan-Afghan relations. Concerns about human rights and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan were taken up by the PTI government, which pushed for the defense of weaker groups and the funding of relief initiatives. In order to secure borders, share intelligence, and combat terrorism, the military and security services were vital to Pakistan-Afghan relations.

A stable and inclusive administration is essential for maintaining peace and stability in the area, and the PTI government kept an eye on political events and governance concerns in Afghanistan. Pakistan contributed to international efforts to address Afghanistan's development and humanitarian needs, and international aid and development assistance played a vital role in assisting Afghan reconstruction and development initiatives. Pak-Afghan relations were impacted by environmental and natural resource management difficulties, such as water-sharing agreements and environmental deterioration, necessitating collaborative measures to overcome common challenges. In order to encourage economic integration and regional growth, the PTI administration funded regional connectivity and infrastructure projects, such as the TAPI gas pipeline and the CASA-1000 electricity transmission project. The need for ongoing diplomatic

engagement and cooperation to address shared challenges and advance peace and stability in the region is highlighted by the persistent challenges that Pakistan-Afghan relations faced despite efforts to improve relations, including security threats, political instability, and regional tensions.

Moreover, there were flaws in Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Especially Pakistan was key negotiator in Doha Peace Accord. It is written in Doha agreement that Afghan soil would not be used against America or its allies. So, question is here what about Pakistan? After 2021 there is sharp increase in terrorist activities in Pakistan. It was also a miscalculation on Pakistan side that after Taliban came into power in Afghanistan India's influence will be minimized but unfortunately it didn't. Secondly and most importantly why there was dialogue with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan? What about the innocent children of APS and other thousands of people who lost their lives in suicide bombings and terrorist activities. TTP is a rogue element so how it is possible to having dialogue with these elements? States cannot be run on sentiments. Another important thing is that "Imran Khan said that Talibans have shackled the chains of slavery". Critiques argued that Talibans were not slaves in Afghanistan. They fought their war themselves. Another important thing which researcher wants to discuss is that most of the people are reluctant to talk on and give their opinion on Pakistan Afghanistan relations. According to them it is very sensitive topic and also they were feeling fear to talk on this subject. So question here arises is why they show reluctance? From whom they feared?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For both internal and foreign security strategies, establish broad decision-making mechanisms involving government agencies, think tanks, political figures, civil society, and security agencies.
2. Make sure that foreign policy statements are articulated carefully and diplomatically, refraining from using provocative language, and centralize the distribution of information by designating an official foreign ministry spokesperson.
3. Before making any unilateral moves towards Afghanistan, such as recognizing the Taliban administration, give top priority to consultation with regional actors like China, Iran, and Russia and Central Asian states.
4. Take a measured approach to dealing with the Taliban, pushing for the lifting of Western sanctions while promoting adherence to international norms.
5. Create a thorough framework for refugee policy that includes legislation giving Afghan refugees legal status, including them into the tax system, and obtaining cooperation from other countries for the administration of refugees.
6. State should put attention on gaining the attention of the Afghan people by interacting with many aspects of Afghan life and offering support for healthcare and education.
7. Seek bilateral interactions with Afghanistan to tackle matters such as thwarting acts of

terrorism, augmenting commerce, and modernizing protocols for border and water security.

8. To improve bilateral ties, official agreements should be established with Afghanistan on matters including commerce, border management, and refugees.
9. To encourage stability and democratic culture, elevate the combined districts of the former FATA to the status of full provinces.
10. Promote parliamentary representation and governance in the amalgamated districts to foster democratic participation and ward of militarization.
11. Expand media outreach and engagement in Kabul to enhance policy formulation and gain a deeper understanding of Afghan viewpoints.
12. Offer scholarships to female and male Afghan students in order to foster mutual understanding and education between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
13. Build hospitals close to the Pak Afghan border to help Afghans easy access for treatment.
14. Establish cooperative counterterrorism initiatives with neighboring countries to tackle security threats from extremist organizations based in Afghanistan.
15. To encourage economic cooperation, create trade facilitation mechanisms with

Afghanistan, such as barter agreements and commerce in Pakistan's native currency.

16. Counter illicit commercial activity by establishing trade zones and implementing appropriate policy frameworks to address smuggling on the Pakistan-Afghan border.
17. Include religious scholars in advancing religious diplomacy to improve people-to-people exchanges and bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
18. Adopt a practical strategy when interacting with the Taliban, acknowledging their influence in Kabul and promoting adherence to international agreements and standards.
19. Stay out of Afghanistan's domestic issues and avoid depicting Pakistan as the Taliban's spokesman; instead, concentrate on articulating Pakistan's position in a solid and practical manner.
20. Encourage the development of a state-to-state bilateral relationship with Afghanistan while upholding its territorial integrity and sovereignty and abstaining from meddling in its internal affairs or taking unilateral action. Afghans need good friends not masters.
21. If there is Aman ki Asha with India than why not with Afghanistan?
22. Keep close eye on regional matters. Afghan soldiers recently returned to Afghanistan after completing their training in India and now it is decided by Talibans that they will serve in

ministry of defense. India is undoubtedly Pakistan's opponent, so Pakistan needs to be aware of this.

23. Government should devise proper governance policies for newly merged districts in order to prevent deteriorating situation.

24. Moreover foreign policy of Pakistan should be discussed in educational institutions, research institutes public hearings etc.

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APPENDIX: 1

Questionnaire

PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS DURING PTI GOVERNMENT (2018-2022): A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. What were the major challenges encountered by Pakistan and Afghanistan in their bilateral relations from 2018 to 2022?
2. Why Afghanistan does not raise Durand line issue in International forums?
3. How would you describe Imran Khan's diplomatic approach or stance towards Afghanistan during his tenure as Prime Minister?
4. How did Pakistan contribute to the facilitation of the Afghan peace process during this period?
5. How did the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan impact Pakistan's strategic interests and regional stability?
6. How did the formation of the Taliban interim government in 2021 impact Pakistan Afghanistan relations during the PTI government's term?
7. Can you provide your interpretation of Prime Minister Imran Khan's statement that the "Taliban's shackled the chains of Slavery"? What do you think he meant by that?
8. What specific objectives or purposes do you think General Faiz Hameed's visit to Kabul might have served, especially considering his position as the head of Pakistan's ISI?
9. Could you shed some light on the nature of discussions or engagements that might have taken place during General Faiz Hameed's visit to Kabul, and what outcomes or agreements

were anticipated or achieved?

10. International media criticized Pakistan on playing dual game regarding war on terror? What is your opinion on this statement?
11. What do you think that Doha Agreement is a success or failure especially keeping in mind its point number 2?
12. What security concerns emerged for Pakistan following the increased influence of the Taliban in Afghanistan during this time?
13. Can you explain the difference between good Taliban and Bad Taliban?
14. How did the activities of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist groups operating from Afghan soil affect Pakistan's security during this period?
15. What measures were taken by Pakistan to address the threat of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, particularly from groups like the TTP?
16. How did Pakistan manage border security amid the developments in Afghanistan?
17. How did Pakistan address the refugees and humanitarian issues stemming from Afghanistan during this period?
18. How do you perceive the PTI government's efforts in providing support and assistance to Afghan refugees in terms of integration and meeting their basic needs?
19. Were there areas of successful bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan despite the challenges faced?
20. Why Pakistan does not oppose Afghan Taliban's government? Still Pakistan have threat of two front war?

APPENDIX: 2



Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan

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The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, a member of the United Nations and recognized by the United States and the international community as a sovereign state under international law, and the United States of America are committed to working together to reach a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement that ends the war in Afghanistan for the benefit of all Afghans and contributes to regional stability and global security. A comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement will include four parts: 1) guarantees to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any international terrorist groups or individuals against the security of the United States and its allies, 2) a timeline for the withdrawal of all U.S. and Coalition forces from Afghanistan, 3) a political settlement resulting from intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations between the Taliban and an inclusive negotiating team of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and 4) a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. These four parts are interrelated and interdependent. Pursuit of peace after long years of fighting reflects the goal of all parties who seek a sovereign, unified Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbors.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States have partnered closely since 2001 to respond to threats to international peace and security and help the Afghan people chart a secure, democratic and prosperous future. The two countries are committed to their longstanding relationship and their investments in building the Afghan institutions necessary to establish democratic norms, protect and preserve the unity of the country, and promote social and economic advancements and the rights of citizens. The commitments set out here are made possible by these shared achievements. Afghan and U.S. security forces share a special bond forged during many years of tremendous sacrifice and courage. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan reaffirm their support for peace and their willingness to negotiate an end to this war.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan welcomes the Reduction in Violence period and takes note of the U.S.-Taliban agreement, an important step toward ending the war. The U.S.-Taliban agreement paves the way for intra-Afghan negotiations on a political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan reaffirms its readiness to participate in such negotiations and its readiness to conclude a ceasefire with the Taliban.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan furthermore reaffirms its ongoing commitment to prevent any international terrorist groups or individuals, including al-Qa'ida and ISIS-K, from using Afghan soil to threaten the security of the United States, its allies and other countries. To accelerate the pursuit of peace, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan confirms its support for the phased withdrawal of U.S. and Coalition forces subject to the Taliban's fulfillment of its commitments

under the U.S.-Taliban agreement and any agreement resulting from intra-Afghan negotiations.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States therefore have made the following commitments:

PART ONE

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States recognize that al-Qa'ida, ISIS-K and other international terrorist groups or individuals continue to use Afghan soil to recruit members, raise funds, train adherents and plan and attempt to conduct attacks that threaten the security of the United States, its allies, and Afghanistan. To address this continuing terrorist threat, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States will continue to take the following steps to defeat al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and other international terrorist groups or individuals:

1. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan reaffirms its continued commitment not to cooperate with or permit international terrorist groups or individuals to recruit, train, raise funds (including through the production or distribution of narcotics), transit Afghanistan or misuse its internationally recognized travel documents, or conduct other support activities in Afghanistan, and will not host them.
2. The United States re-affirms its commitments regarding support for the Afghan security forces and other government institutions, including through ongoing efforts to enhance the

ability of Afghan security forces to deter and respond to internal and external threats, consistent with its commitments under existing security agreements between the two governments. This commitment includes support to Afghan security forces to prevent al-Qa'ida, ISIS-K, and other international terrorist groups or individuals from using Afghan soil to threaten the United States and its allies.

3. The United States re-affirms its readiness to continue to conduct military operations in Afghanistan with the consent of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in order to disrupt and degrade efforts by al-Qa'ida, ISIS-K, and other international terrorist groups or individuals to carry out attacks against the United States or its allies, consistent with its commitments under existing security agreements between the two governments and with the existing understanding that U.S. counterterrorism operations are intended to complement and support Afghan security forces' counterterrorism operations, with full respect for Afghan sovereignty and full regard for the safety and security of the Afghan people and the protection of civilians.
4. The United States commits to facilitate discussions between Afghanistan and Pakistan to work out arrangements to ensure neither country's security is threatened by actions from the territory of the other side.

PART TWO

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States have consulted extensively on U.S. and Coalition force levels and the military activities required to achieve the foregoing commitments including through support to Afghan security and defense forces. Subject to the Taliban's fulfillment of its commitments under the U.S.-Taliban agreement, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the United States, and the Coalition jointly assess that the current levels of military forces are no longer necessary to achieve security objectives; since 2014, Afghan security forces have been in the lead for providing security and have increased their effectiveness. As such, the parties commit to take the following measures:

1. The United States will reduce the number of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan to 8,600 and implement other commitments in the U.S.-Taliban agreement within 135 days of the announcement of this joint declaration and the U.S.-Taliban agreement, and will work with its allies and the Coalition to reduce proportionally the number of Coalition forces in Afghanistan over an equivalent period, subject to the Taliban's fulfillment of its commitments under the U.S.-Taliban agreement.
2. Consistent with the joint assessment and determination between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the United States, its allies, and the Coalition will complete the withdrawal of their remaining forces from Afghanistan within 14 months following the announcement of this joint declaration and the U.S.-Taliban agreement, and will withdraw all their forces from remaining bases, subject to the Taliban's fulfillment of its commitments under the U.S.-Taliban agreement.

3. The United States re-affirms its commitment to seek funds on a yearly basis that support the training, equipping, advising and sustaining of Afghan security forces, so that Afghanistan can independently secure and defend itself against internal and external threats.
4. To create the conditions for reaching a political settlement and achieving a permanent, sustainable ceasefire, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will participate in a U.S.-facilitated discussion with Taliban representatives on confidence building measures, to include determining the feasibility of releasing significant numbers of prisoners on both sides. The United States and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will seek the assistance of the ICRC to support this discussion.
5. With the start of intra-Afghan negotiations, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan commits to start diplomatic engagement with members of the UN Security Council to remove members of the Taliban from the sanctions list with the aim of achieving this objective by May 29, 2020, and in any case no later than 30 days after finalizing a framework agreement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.

PART THREE

1. The United States will request the recognition and endorsement of the UN Security Council for this agreement and related arrangements.

2. The United States and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are committed to continue positive relations, including economic cooperation for reconstruction.
3. The United States will refrain from the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Afghanistan or intervening in its domestic affairs.
4. The United States will continue to work to build regional and international consensus to support the ongoing effort to achieve a political settlement to the principal conflict in Afghanistan.