



Pak-Afghan Relations: Security Challenges and Policy Options

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Pakistan-Afghanistan relations with particular focus on major security challenges and policy options for long-term stability. Historical, political, territorial, ethnic, and geopolitical factors, such as the Durand Line dispute, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorism, cross-border terrorism, refugee flows, border management, and regional competition have all played a role in shaping the relationship. The research method is qualitative, with historical analysis and comparative analysis. This study used case study design to analyze relations between the two states. The findings indicate that mistrust, long-term territorial issues, militancy, geopolitical competition, and institutional cooperation deficits are significant challenges to good relations. While the fences and counterterrorism measures have enhanced security management, they have not eliminated political tensions. There is a need for greater diplomacy, cooperation on counterterrorism, border management, economic integration, and confidence-building measures for sustainable stability.

1. Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan are neighboring countries with strong historical, cultural, and religious as well as ethnic and social ties, especially between Pashtun people across the border. Despite these connections, the relationship has been complicated since Pakistan gained independence in 1947, because of territorial issues, political mistrust, cross-border militancy, migration of refugees, and outside influences (Kakar, 2012; Javaid, 2016).

Geography lies at the heart of the relationship. For the principle of state succession, the Durand Line, which was drawn in 1893 with the agreement of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan between the British India and Afghanistan, remains the internationally recognized boundary line between the two nations for Pakistan; however, successive Afghan governments have not accepted it as a legitimate boundary line because according to them it was imposed by the British on the Afghan territory and made this boundary as much a question of Pashtun identity and historical memory as of territory (Kakar, 2012; Javaid, 2016; Bahar, 2021). The struggle by Britain and Tsarist Russia to control Afghanistan in the nineteenth century over its strategic significance, and the growing importance of the Khyber and Bolan passes for both military and economic reasons, are major causes of this dispute (Barfield, 2010; Saikal, 2012).

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This colonial inheritance was subsequently given to the Pashtunistan movement which caused Afghanistan to support claims of Pashtun autonomy within Pakistan, an issue which Pakistan deems a threat to its national integrity (Bahar, 2021; Malik et al., 2023). Ever since, Pakistan has used the security concerns to justify the fencing, troops and counterterrorism operations, citing the need for them, while the Afghan authorities have interpreted these as Pakistan's unilateral attempt to solve the border dispute (Azam, 2024; Rashid, 2000).

Militancy has added a further, more urgent dimension. Pakistan regards the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as one of its primary security challenges and has blamed militants for using Afghan territory to strike in Pakistan, while Afghanistan has denied any involvement and instead cited the internal security issues in Pakistan (Azam, 2024; Yusuf, 2014). This relationship intensified following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021 (Ehsan, 2026; Sultani & Avcu, 2026), as in the past the two sides have had close ties and hoped for better cooperation but faced attacks by TTP and unaddressed disputes over the Durand Line, with Kabul rejecting Pakistan's calls for more significant engagement (Hassan & Jalil, 2024).

The trend is the same with respect to border management. Pakistan has fenced off most of its approximately 2640-kilometre border to prevent infiltration and smuggling, a move which it considers crucial, but Afghanistan has condemned as unilateral fencing off, occasionally leading to border clashes (Malik et al., 2023; Zareen et al., 2026). International intervention has also affected the bilateral relationship since the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the Taliban presence in the 1990s until the American-led intervention in the post-9/11 period, all of which have taken the focus of bilateral relations away from the issue of territory and onto terrorism and foreign involvement (Grare, 2006; Jones, 2009).

The Afghan refugees in Pakistan have been residing in the country for years, creating administrative and security issues with registration and repatriation policy (Bahar, 2021; Haq et al., 2026). Further opportunities for cooperation come from shared trade routes and regional connectivity, if they can be put into practice within a political context of stability (Zareen et al., 2026).

Overall, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations illustrate how historical grievances stemming from the Durand Line and Pashtunistan are compounded by more recent issues such as militancy, border disputes, and refugee movements (Kakar, 2012; Hassan & Jalil, 2024). The post-2021 period shows that there can be no solution to these issues through these historical connections alone; these countries need to build trust through continued diplomacy, cooperation in the fight against terrorism, mutually agreeable border management, humane refugee policy, and economic cooperation, all of which have not been achieved yet by unilateral security measures (Sultani & Avcu, 2026; Zareen et al., 2026).

2. Literature Review

The scholarship on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations ranges from International Relations, Security Studies and South Asian politics and all of them agree that there are a close social and cultural relationship between the two states, but that they have never had a stable relationship. Historical grievances, the Durand Line, Pashtunistan, militancy, refugee flows, border management, and external involvement have always been central themes in the context of historical and contemporary security issues, as illustrated in recent research that elucidates how each of these issues reinforces the other (Javaid, 2016; Bahar, 2021; Azam, 2024).

The conflict over the status of the border and Pashtun-dominated areas began shortly after Pakistan's independence in 1947. This research provides an overview of the relations spanning the twentieth century (Javaid 2016); Kakar (2012) examines the origins of the troubled relations in the Durand Line, Pashtunistan and strategic-depth considerations between 1947 and 2001. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the relationship shifted to one of strategic and security interest with Pakistan supporting armed groups from Afghanistan and taking in significant numbers of refugees, which supported armed groups (Rubin, 2002; Bahar, 2021). The Taliban made their appearance in the 1990s and brought Pakistan's involvement into Afghan politics to the fore, and colonial era border ambiguities remain at play in state activities long after independence (Leake & Haines, 2017).

The Durand Line remains the most significant historical issue in literature. It was established in 1893 between British India and Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and accepted as the international border for Pakistan but not accepted by the Afghan government as the true border which divides the Pashtun and other tribes and is a colonial imposition (Akbar, 2024; Azam, 2024). This is closely related to the Pashtunistan question which Bahar (2021) describes as one of six ongoing tensions between the state and the Pashtun community, the other five being the Taliban, Baloch issue, Indo-Afghan relations, water and refugee disputes.

The post-9/11 scholarship has shifted to terrorism and cross-border militancy, with Pakistan acting as a frontline counterterrorism ally while Afghanistan was the domestic battleground and the host to international intervention, which made it difficult for Islamabad to balance domestic militancy and external pressure (Azam, 2024; Fair, 2014). The escalation of border conflicts has been cited as a result of the revival of cross-border militancy, with allegations of the presence of 'militant safe havens' both by the Pakistani government and its military and by the Indian government and its military, which has stymied

cooperation between the two nations in their struggle against militants (Raja, Ghumro, & Zeb, 2022; Asma, Akhtar, & Ullah, 2024). Some of the issues that have not been addressed since the Taliban' return since 2021 have added to these tensions, including the Durand Line and Pakistan's border security, and conflicts with the TTP. As mentioned by Zarawar, Alokozay and Numan (2024) in the comparison between the Pakistan Taliban and the previous government of Pakistan (2014-2021), Durand line and security along the border have yet to be addressed and resolved, adding to these tensions since the return of the Taliban in 2021.

Since 1979, there has been a social and economic connection with refugees, cross-border terrorism, Indo-Afghan relations, and the Durand Line are all linked on a close level (Malik et al., 2023). Border management scholarship focuses on fencing, formal crossing, and surveillance as means to control militant infiltration of the border; Raja, Ghumro and Zeb (2022) look at it from a security, diplomatic, and economic lens; Parveen, Siddiqui, Shah and Soomro (2021) examine its economic costs and benefits. The underlying Durand Line dispute is yet to be settled as Afghan objections persist. The Durand Line issue seems to be unresolved with Afghan objections (Zada, 2024).

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been impacted by external involvement from the United States, the former Soviet Union, and India, among others, which has made it impossible to consider Pakistan-Afghanistan relations purely bilateral (Zareen et al., 2026). This is echoed in the latest research on the post-2021 period, which is explored by Sultani and Avcu (2026) on the cycle of mistrust since 2021, by Ehsan (2026) on drivers of divergence during the second tenure of the Taliban, by Shabbir (2026) on Pakistan's regional role after the withdrawal of the Americans, and by Haq, Ullah and Bibi (2026) on the need for renewed regional cooperation, economic integration and counterterrorism coordination.

The literature sheds light on individual aspects of the relationship, but is scattered across conflict studies, security and geopolitical studies. An integrated analysis is needed from 1947 to the present. The history of one state's security leading to insecurity and countermeasures for the other (Herz, 1950; Jervis, 1978) suggests the specific theoretical approach that is developed in the next section.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Realist Theory and the Security Dilemma

The Realist Theory and the Security Dilemma. The Realist Theory and the Security Dilemma. The study is based on Realist Theory, and the security dilemma is the major concept to be analysed. Realists believe that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no central authority to provide states with security, and states seek to maximize their security, power, and survival interests through rational self-interest (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Herz's (1950) and Jervis's (1978) security dilemma theory is an explanation of how “defensive” measures adopted by one state to make it safer can be viewed as threatening by another state. In these situations, defensive maneuvers may result in counterdefensiveness, distrust, and competition (Buzan, 1991). This context can be considered for Pakistani-Afghan relations as regards fencing the borders, deployment of troops, counterterrorism operations, and demands related to militants. Prevention of militant attacks and territorial security are important in Pakistan; Pakistan also attaches a lot of importance to the Durand Line, while in Afghanistan sovereignty is given an important preference. The framework thus explains why security efforts are not always leading to more bilateral security.

3.2. Operational Framework of the Study

The study uses an operational framework to clarify the concepts in the study, observable indicators for each concept, and the relation of each concept to the study:

Concept	Definition	Indicators	Relevance to Study
Pak-Afghan Relations	The political, diplomatic, security, economic, and social interaction between Pakistan and Afghanistan.	Official engagement, border policy, trade, refugees, public statements, mediation.	Provides the broad dependent context for the study.
Security Challenges	Threats that undermine state security, public safety, and interstate stability.	TTP attacks, border clashes, sanctuaries, civilian displacement.	Explains why relations remain tense despite cultural and economic links.
Counterterrorism Verification	Mechanisms for confirming whether commitments against militant groups are implemented.	Joint investigations, intelligence sharing, monitored action against the TTP, third-party facilitation.	Key policy requirement, since verbal assurances alone are insufficient.

Border Management	Rules and infrastructure Fencing, crossing permits, customs controlling movement across the procedures, biometric systems, border security reduces militancy or Afghanistan-Pakistan border. hotlines.	Determines whether border simply obstructs trade and travel.
Humanitarian-Security Dilemma	The tension between state security concerns and the protection of vulnerable populations.	Refugee registration, deportation, non-refoulement concerns, screening not be reduced to a blunt security instrument.
Policy Options	Practical courses of action available to Pakistan and Afghanistan.	Diplomacy, military restraint, conditional incentives, border mechanisms, refugee relevant output of the study.

4. Research Methodology

Qualitative research methods were used in this study. Since Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are largely policy-driven, and the behavior of diplomats and security perceptions are shaped by historical-geopolitical dynamics, the qualitative approach would be more appropriate than a quantitative one, as statistical data, no matter how informative (Creswell, 2014). The case study design is used in this research to explore the "how" and "why" of bilateral challenges. Five major cases are explored: Durand Line and Border Management, the border issue of Cross-Border Terrorism and the TTP, India's involvement in Afghanistan, Refugees and economic connectivity, and the emergence of the Taliban after 2021.

The research is based on secondary sources such as academic journals and books, reports of the UN, International Crisis Group, SIPRI, government and policy institutions, credible news archives, and security databases like the Global Terrorism Index and South Asia Terrorism Portal. Document analysis, historical tracing of official statements, treaties, security reports and bilateral relations were conducted. This study has employed qualitative historical analysis and comparative analysis to identify major themes, patterns, and causal relations and differences between the perspectives of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

5. Findings and Discussion

The study has revealed that the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been complex and very fragile since various historical conflicts, security concerns, geopolitical rivalry, border-management issues, militancy, refugee flows and mutual distrust have made it so. Religious, cultural, ethnic, geographical and economic connections have failed to foster a secure bilateral relationship. Security has always been at the core of the relationship dating back to 1947. The Durand Line issue, the militancy across the border, activities of the TTP, refugee flow, external engagement in Afghanistan, and India's engagement in Afghanistan have affected bilateral relations several times.

The results also show that mutual mistrust plays one of the most important roles influencing bilateral interaction. From Pakistan's point of view, issues of border security, territorial integrity, counterterrorism, and prevention of militant infiltration are of great importance to national security. However, any action taken to increase security is therefore perceived as a threat by the other party, and a cycle of distrust, security measures, and reactions to the perceived threat is formed. Diplomatic, trade, peace, and confidence-building measures have thus far had only partial and temporary effects. The study also demonstrates that bilateral relations have been greatly affected by regional and international actors. Regional security architecture is the result of the Soviet invasion, the Afghan jihad, the war on terror led by the United States, and the Taliban's emergence and return to power in 2021. Pakistan's security concerns have been affected significantly by India, while the United States and China have increased their role in terms of connectivity and economic cooperation in the region. These external factors have only added to the Pakistan-Afghanistan security dilemma.

To ensure better security and bilateral relations, Pakistan has started a number of policies including border fencing, border monitoring, counterterrorism operations, refugee management policies, diplomatic relations, trade through transit and regional connectivity projects like CPEC, CASA-1000 and TAPI. However, this has been hampered by low institutional coordination, militancy, border conflicts, disagreements with the Afghan government and a lack of trust. The results, therefore, indicate that a multi-faceted approach is required, one that includes security cooperation, political dialogue, border management, refugee coordination, economic integration and confidence-building, for sustainable progress.

Primary Areas	Associated Issues
Historical and Territorial Disputes	1. Durand Line Dispute 2. Pakhtunistan Issue
Security and Militancy Challenges	3. Cross-Border Terrorism and TTP 4. Border Management and Fencing
Regional and Geopolitical Dynamics	5. India's Role in Afghanistan 6. War on Terror and U.S. Involvement

Contemporary Developments (2021– 9. Taliban Resurgence and Renewed Security Challenges 2025)

5.1. Durand Line Dispute and Border Management

The Durand Line is one of the most sensitive and controversial aspects of the Pak-Afghan relations. Immediately after the independence of Pakistan in 1947, successive Afghan governments doubted on the legality of the border agreement which was signed between British India and Afghanistan in 1893. Pakistan's Border, the Durand Line, is internationally acknowledged as such, whereas many of the Afghan political groups do not recognize that as a permanent boundary.

This disagreement has led to political suspicion, border disputes, unauthorized border crossings, smuggling, and insurrection across the border. To stop the infiltration of the border and terrorism, Pakistan started fencing at the border crossings and stepped up deployment of army at the borders. However, in Afghanistan, fencing activities were often regarded as unilateral actions, which were opposed by the country.

5.2. Outcomes

The results show that border insecurity was one of the significant factors to the stability between the two countries. Pakistan saw fencing as essential for national security and anti-terrorism efforts, whereas Afghanistan saw it as a political move to 'regularize' the disputed border. As a result, tensions increased along the borders in particular since the Taliban took power in 2021.

5.3. Relevance Study: Border Fencing after 2021

In fact, Pakistan had expedited the fencing process on the Pak-Afghan border since the Taliban took over Afghanistan to curb cross-border attacks and infiltration by militants. Though relations were expected to improve in Taliban regime, the tensions between both countries over destruction of fences along their borders and military exercises in border regions, particularly at Chaman and Torkham were continuing.

Fencing was a must to avoid terrorism, illegal migration and smuggling activities, Pakistan contended. Afghanistan Taliban government, on the other hand, was opposed to some parts of the fencing, which they saw as infringements on Afghan sovereignty.

Name	Involvement	Impact
Pakistan Government	Construction of border fencing and increased military deployment	Improved border surveillance but increased diplomatic tensions
Afghan Taliban Government	Opposition to fencing in disputed areas	Intensified border disputes and military clashes
Frontier Corps (Pakistan)	Security operations and border management	Reduced illegal crossings but increased militarization
Local Border Communities	Cross-border movement for trade and families	Economic disruption and mobility restrictions

5.4. Findings

The study concludes that the Durand Line issue has not been resolved and still dictates the perceptions of both sides in dealing with security matters. The fence at the borders was a boon to Pakistan's capacity for managing security affairs; however, it did not help in building political trust. Rather, it exacerbated fears in Afghanistan about sovereignty and territorial legitimacy. The results show the failure to achieve adequate answers to the deeper historical issues with only military options in the framework of mutual recognition mechanisms and diplomatic involvement.

5.5. Cross-Border Terrorism and TTP

5.5.1. Rationale

The most serious security issue in Pak-Afghan relations has been the cross-border militancy. After the War on Terror, the Afghan soil has been exploited by militant groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for launching attacks in Pakistan.

Pakistan long ago called for very effective response against sanctuaries of militants and Afghan governments were incapable or reluctant to take such steps.

5.5.2. Outcomes

The TTP was resurgent after 2021, which introduced a grave difficulty in the bilateral relationship. There were rising incidents of terrorism in Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Pakistan has blamed the Afghan Taliban for giving protection to the TTP militants and the Taliban have denied it.

5.5.3. Relevance Study: Rise of TTP after Taliban Takeover (2021–2025)

After the re-ascendancy of the Taliban, TTP refocused and started a renewed attack campaign against Pakistani security forces. Ceasefire agreements were breached and counterterrorism operations and air strikes by the Pakistan armed forces were undertaken against militant gathering spots close to their border.

Name	Involvement	Impact
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	Conducted attacks inside Pakistan	Increased insecurity and civilian casualties
Pakistan Army	Counterterrorism operations	Strengthened security response but increased tensions
Afghan Taliban	Mediation attempts and denials of support	Failed to fully control militant groups
Civilian Population	Victims of violence and displacement	Humanitarian and economic suffering

5.6. Findings

The findings indicate that the Taliban's return did not eliminate Pakistan's security concerns. Instead, the presence of militant groups became a major obstacle in bilateral relations. Pakistan's security-oriented policies focused on military responses, but the absence of institutional counterterrorism cooperation limited long-term stability. The study emphasizes the need for joint security mechanisms and cooperation in intelligence sharing between the two countries to achieve sustainable peace.

5.7. India's Role in Afghanistan

5.7.1. Rationale

Despite that fact that India's political, economic and diplomatic initiatives in Afghanistan have always had an impact on Pakistan's security perceptions. Growth of Indo-Afghan cooperation was seen as a strategic threat from Pakistan, which was apprehensive of being surrounded by its neighboring countries both from the east and west. India, however, was an important development partner of Afghanistan.

5.7.2. Outcomes

India bears a significant investment in the reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and providing necessary investment in education and infrastructure sectors after the year 2001. Pakistan charged that Indian government was providing a safe haven to anti-Pakistan groups particularly in Balochistan and tribal regions with the undergarment of Afghan territory. This triangular rivalry led to the increase of mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

5.7.3. Relevance Study: Indo-Afghan Strategic Cooperation

India's involvement in projects such as dams, roads, parliament buildings, and trade corridors increased its influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan remained concerned about intelligence cooperation and security agreements between India and Afghanistan.

Name	Involvement	Impact
India	Economic aid and strategic cooperation	Increased influence in Afghanistan
Afghanistan Government	Partnership with India	Enhanced regional balancing strategy
Pakistan Government	Opposition to security cooperation	Heightened mistrust and insecurity
Regional Actors	Competition for influence	Intensified geopolitical rivalry

5.8. Findings

The findings show that India was still a great player in the Afghan policy of Pakistan. In the eyes of Pakistan, Indo-Afghan strategic relations were merely about the regional strategic competition. The study ends by attributing a major role of the geopolitical rivalry for the difficult exchanges of mutual 'confidence' and 'trust' between the two neighbors, and for a more complex 'security dilemma'.

5.9. Refugees, Trade and Economic Connectivity

5.9.1. Rationale

Pak-Afghan relations continue to have important dimensions in the form of economic interdependence and Afghan refugees. For decades, Pakistan afforded millions of Afghans the asylum that they sought, and Afghanistan relied heavily on Pakistani ports, and trade routes for international access.

5.9.2. Outcomes

While economic cooperation enabled regional connectivity, border closures, political tensions and security concerns posed a recurring problem and imposed a recurring burden on trade relations. The refugee issues were also related to terrorism, identity politics and domestic security in Pakistan.

5.9.3. Relevance Study: Trade and Refugee Crisis after 2021

Initially, the collapse of the Afghan economy after 2021 was affecting the number of refugees, causing a decrease in bilateral trade, due to security concerns and restrictions on crossing the borders. In Pakistan to curb undocumented refugees, documentation and deportation guidelines were tightened.

Name	Involvement	Impact
Afghan Refugees	Migration into Pakistan	Humanitarian and economic pressure
Pakistan Government	Refugee regulation and deportation policies	Security control but diplomatic criticism
Traders and Businesses	Cross-border commerce	Economic losses due to instability
International Organizations	Humanitarian assistance	Limited relief efforts

6. Findings

The results indicate that refugee and trade issues are closely linked to issues of security. Although Pakistan has been providing humanitarian support for decades, but the continued instability has led to social, economic and political pressures within Pakistan. Economic relations continued to face risks from border security issues and strained relations between governments. The study reveals that greater regional economic integration, with stable political relations, may be able to curb mistrust and enlarge interdependence.

6.1. Taliban Resurgence and Contemporary Dynamics (2021-2025)

6.1.1. Rationale

With the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in 2021, a new chapter begins in Pak-Afghan relations. Firstly, Pakistan had hoped that both countries will cooperate more with each other due to historical relations and the ideological similarity. But the ties deteriorated as security concerns and border issues flared up.

6.1.2. Outcomes

The results are indicative that the government of Pakistan under the rule of the Taliban was not able to overcome the security concerns mainly in the form of TTP groups and the issue of cross border militancy in Pakistan. Meanwhile, friction between the two countries over the issue of border fencing, management of refugees and disruption of trade further escalated tensions between the two countries.

6.1.3. Findings

Pak-Afghan relations are characterized with structural issues which the contemporary phase proves that good can't be converted with regime change. However, old suspicions, unresolved border issues, militancy and strategic rivalry continued to pervade the bilateral relationship.

The study additionally reveals that Pakistan's policy choices have mostly relied on the security management, border management, diplomacy and economic connectivity. However, these policies failed to have a pan regional effect without mutual trust, institutional coordination and regional cooperation.

It is therefore concluded that future relations between Pak-Afghan relation can be stable on the basis of:

- Strengthening bilateral diplomatic mechanisms
- Establishing joint counterterrorism cooperation
- Promoting regional trade and connectivity
- Developing refugee management frameworks
- Reducing external geopolitical competition
- Encouraging confidence-building measures between both states

7. Conclusion

Although Pakistan and Afghanistan have strong historical, religious, cultural, ethnic, and geographical ties, the relationship between the two countries has been fragile and prone to conflict since 1947. The study suggests that misunderstandings of each other, unresolved past grievances and conflicts, security issues, cross-border militancy, geopolitical rivalry, institutional weaknesses in cooperation, refugee movements, and border administration issues are the primary factors that have impacted bilateral relations. There is a constant argument related to the Durand line and Pakistan has implemented fencing along the border, which resulted in increased border security but also caused political tensions with Afghanistan. Since the Taliban regained power in 2021, terrorism has emerged as one of the most severe security threats of the modern era, especially cross-border terrorism by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It is also found that the strategic environment has become more complex owing to the involvement of external powers in the region, such as India, the United States, China, and others. Economic cooperation, transport trade, refugee issues, and regional connectivity are also promising avenues for further development of relations but have frequently been hampered by insecurity and political tension.

Overall, the linkage between Pakistan and Afghanistan is, in nature, a multi-dimensional security dilemma; that is, any action undertaken by one state as a measure to enhance security is considered a threat by the other state. Security is not enough to maintain peace. Diplomatic channels between the two countries should be strengthened, effective cooperation in the field of counterterrorism and intelligence exchange should be established, mutually acceptable border-management procedures should be put in place, and the issues concerning the Durand Line should be resolved peacefully through dialogue. Connectivity, in terms of trade and transit, should be encouraged in the broader framework, e.g., TAPI, CASA-1000 and related CPEC. International support should also be provided to implement a balanced and humane refugee-management framework. Finally, confidence-building, people-to-people exchanges, cultural and educational exchanges, and long-term policies are key to trust-building. A multi-faceted approach based on security, diplomacy, economic cooperation, a humanitarian approach and regional engagement would go a long way in reducing the security dilemma and building sustainable peace and stability between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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