



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Analyzing the Durand Line and its Implications for Pak-Afghan  
Bilateral Ties**

**Asma Akbar**

Visiting Faculty Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author**

[asmavt8484@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:asmavt8484@iiu.edu.pk)

**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the disputed Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan established in 1893 which was drawn between British Diplomat Sir Mortimer Durand and Amir Abdurrahman of Afghanistan, it has been a contentious fence between Pakistan and Afghanistan creating tensions over several aspects such as border security, sovereignty, and cross-border movements. However, through the lenses of social constructivism, a prominent theory of International Relations, the whole issue has been explained and analyze the historical, political, security and socio-economic dimensions of the Durand Line. The study used qualitative research method combining both primary and secondary data sources to enable a better understanding of the complex issues associated with the Durand Line and its impact on Pak-Afghan bilateral relations. To address these issues, the study recommends a multifaceted approach, including strengthening diplomatic engagement, joint border management, and economic integration, resolving historical grievances and promoting people-to-people contacts.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Border Security, Constructivism, Durand Line, Militancy, Pakistan, TTP

**Introduction**

As a result of the negotiation between Sir Mortimer Durand, a British diplomat in 1893, and Afghanistan's ruler, Abdur Rahman Khan; a Durand line was drawn that is now the boundary line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The line was drawn to shape the territorial jurisdiction of British and Afghan land influence in the region. It is approximately 2,430 kilometers from the tripoint with China in the northeast to the tripoint with Iran in the southwest, cutting through Pashtun tribal lands. Since its inception, it has been a great source of controversy and tension. Afghanistan has always refused to recognize it as its international border with Pakistan. Pashtun tribes, whose lands touch the border, due to their free movement across it, lead to social, cultural, and familial ties that cut across the border. The dispute over the Durand Line has always added tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, with Afghanistan claiming parts of Pakistani territory and Pakistan's alleged control over areas claimed by Afghanistan. As a result of such continuous tensions, there is constant insurgency and instability in both tribal areas and Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2020).

As a result of Pakistan-Russian (Soviet) expansionism in central Asia towards Afghanistan, the British always used Afghanistan as a buffer zone between itself and them. In this regard, a fixed border with Afghanistan was seen as a strategy (Yaseen, Muzaffar, & Naeem, 2019). As mentioned earlier, the negotiations leading to the Durand Line were carried out between Mortimer Durand, the British Indian government's foreign secretary, and Abdur Rahman Khan, the Amir of Afghanistan. It was a one-sided negotiation to the large extent in which the British exerted significant pressure on the Afghan side. Thus, as a result, the Durand line came into being; extending to the tripoint with China in the northeast to the Iran-Afghanistan border in the southwest. The line divided Pashtun tribes on both sides; which produced tensions among them and largely considered the border as an imaginary line that divided them. This issue is also a leading factor towards the

“Pashtunistan” factor. This has been a source of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Bangash, 2010). It was a de facto border between British and Afghanistan, and later became the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Afghanistan has never officially recognized the border; which continuously impacts Afghan-Pakistan relations. Particularly, in the context of cross-border terrorism and insurgency in the region; it has remained a prominent issue. Similarly, the Durand line issue impacts the geopolitics of the region as well, with both Afghanistan and Pakistan extending their interests along the border (Begum, 2015). In the context of international relations, the issue of the Durand line holds immense importance. As mentioned, Afghanistan has always refused to recognize it as an international border with Pakistan. Over time, it has strained relations between the two countries. On both sides of the border, there are a lot of Pashtun population settled, that has been divided by this line. This Pashtun population has deep ties among themselves which often lead to cross-border movements, refugee flows, and occasional unrest among Pashtun communities on both sides. Similarly, this complex nature of the Durand line has been greatly exploited by terrorist groups, including the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and others, which majorly cause terrorism, insurgency, and cross-border unrest. The instability along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border not only affects bilateral ties but is a source of regional instability, particularly in South Asia (Bibi & Muzaffar, 2023). Similarly, the involvement of international actors, including the United States and other Western countries can also be noticed about the Durand line, due to their interests in Afghanistan and combating terrorism in the region. Overall, the Durand Line issue remains a complex and sensitive issue in contemporary international relations, with implications for regional stability, security, and cooperation among neighboring countries. Resolving this longstanding dispute could contribute to greater stability and cooperation in South Asia (Qassem & Duraani, 2008).

It can be said that both countries experience very complex and multifaceted relations, in the context of historical, cultural, economic, and security dimensions. Among them, the major one is the Durand line issue; which largely impacts the bilateral ties since the beginning. It has been a source of dispute between the two neighbors for decades. Afghanistan has raised objections to the legitimacy of the border several times, and some Afghan leaders have even argued for its renegotiation and ultimate rejection. On the other hand, Pakistan has constantly rejected questions over the legitimacy of it and considers it as a legitimate internationally recognized border. The Pakistani authorities greatly linked regional peace and stability with the recognition and acknowledgment of the border (Omrani, 2009)

Keeping the mentioned issue aside, both countries have had several phases of cooperation and collaboration, especially in several aspects such as trade, security, and counterterrorism. In this regard, Pakistan and Afghanistan acknowledge and prefer regional stability. However, continuous tensions and mistrust have constantly shaped and influenced the relationships between Pakistan and Afghanistan; consisting of cross-border attacks, allegations of supporting insurgent groups, and competing strategic interests. Efforts to improve bilateral relations and address the Durand Line dispute have been hard and challenging, with progress often hindered by domestic political considerations, regional dynamics, and the broader geopolitical context. While Pakistan and Afghanistan share a complex relationship with historical, cultural, and economic ties, the Durand Line dispute is still an important hurdle to obtaining long-term stability and collaboration between the two states. Political will, diplomatic engagement, and a commitment to addressing the concerns of both sides will be needed to address this issue. This paper comprehensively highlights the various implications of the Durand Line issue on the bilateral ties of two neighbors and shapes a detailed way forward to improve the complex ties in this regard (Ali & Safdar, 2020).

The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, historical dynamics, future direction and how it affects the stability of Afghanistan. If the Taliban takes power, it is likely to become the most influential political party in Afghanistan. These changes will affect the prospects for stability in Afghanistan and the wider region in Pakistan. She noted the many challenges that must be addressed to improve relations between the two countries. These challenges include a lack of trust between the two governments, perceptions of Pakistan interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs, the presence of terrorist groups on both sides of the border, and the refugee crisis. However, she recommended that Afghanistan improve its governance and fight against terrorist groups to win Pakistan's trust on the Durand Line border issue. She also suggested that Pakistan work to resolve the refugee crisis and stop interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs. In order to make the region more prosperous and peaceful, the two countries must cooperate on border security and counter-terrorism (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021).

The complex relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many historical factors, political, social, economic, and historical provide thorough explanations of how they shaped the relationship. The book provides the historical background of the Durand Line, which is disputed and not recognized by the Afghan government. Therefore, this is the main reason for continued border friction. Likewise, the author discusses several past conflicts in Afghanistan, including Soviet intervention and the U.S. war on terror, and argues that Pakistan's role has been destabilizing because of its consistent support of the insurgent Taliban who advocated armed conflict. The book explores many major social and economic issues that adversely affect bilateral relations. For example, Pakistan and Afghanistan have close ties, although this relationship has often sparked conflict. Pakistan's economy and society are being negatively affected by the presence of hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees (Baqai & Wasi, 2021).

Afghan history, the Durand Line, and Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Historical accounts of British colonial control of India, particularly the events leading up to the Durand Line Agreement of 1893, are important sources. This studies on Afghan history provides important background, covering topics such as the rise and fall of multiple dynasties and the impact of foreign powers on Afghan sovereignty. Understanding the long-term impact of the Durand Line requires reading scholarly books that analyze Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, focusing on the historical causes of the conflict, current issues, and attempts at reconciliation (Begum, 2015).

Important player in Afghanistan: United States: Preventing terrorism, promoting regional stability, and opposing China and Russia are some of the goals of the United States in Afghanistan (Muzaffar & Khan, 2016). China: Afghanistan's natural resources, strategic position along the Belt and Road Initiative, and potential to destabilize Central Asia are all important to China. India: Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and the possibility of terrorist groups using Afghanistan as a base to attack India are concerns for India (Muzaffar, Khan, & Yaseen, 2019). Iran: Iran is concerned about the presence of Sunni extremist groups in Afghanistan and the possibility of instability spreading to its borders. Russia: Russia wants to prevent instability and terrorism from spreading from Afghanistan to Central Asia. Pakistan could use its influence with the Taliban to encourage a negotiated solution with the Afghan government. To prevent terrorists and weapons from crossing the border, Pakistan should strengthen border security (Humza & Khan, 2022). The impact of globalization on border security, examine the historical development of border management technologies, and examine the role of international cooperation in solving transnational security problems are important sources. Understanding the complexity of the Durand Line and its impact on bilateral relations requires a study of Pak-Afghan relations that focuses on the historical causes of the conflict, current issues, and reconciliation efforts. Additionally, it analyze international organizations such as the United Nations and regional security

agencies on best practices in border management, counter-terrorism strategies and regional security cooperation (Ikram & Anwar, 2018).

## **Materials and Methods**

This research adopts a qualitative approach, combining primary and secondary data sources to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the complex issues related to the Durand Line and its impact on Pak-Afghanistan relations.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Understanding the Issue through International Relations Theory**

Theory always plays an important role in explaining an issue systematically. In this research, the issue of the Durand line and its implications on Pak-Afghan bilateral ties can be best explained through social constructivism, a school of thought in international relations. Constructivism highlights the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping state behavior and international results. In the case of the issue of the Durand Line, which is the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, constructivism describes insights into how perceptions, historical narratives, and social constructions influence the bilateral relationship between the two countries (Khawrin & Jabarkhil, 2023).

Constructivism explains how states' perceptions of borders are not fixed but rather socially constructed. In the case of the Durand Line, Pakistan and Afghanistan have different interpretations of its legitimacy and significance. Pakistan considers it as an internationally recognized border made under British rule, while on the other hand, Afghanistan always refuses its legitimacy and declares it as a forcefully imposed one. Similarly, constructivism relies upon the importance of historical narratives in shaping state identities and interests. The history of the Durand Line, including its creation in 1893 by British colonial authorities, its impact on Pashtun communities straddling the border, and subsequent tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, has shaped the way both countries perceive their territorial integrity and sovereignty (Akhtar & Ullah, 2024). Constructivist scholars say that state behavior is impacted by perceptions of national identity and sovereignty. In the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan, issues over the Durand Line are connected to wider queries of national identity and sovereignty. Afghanistan's refusal to recognize the border shows its will for territorial integrity and rejection of colonial-era agreements perceived as compromising its sovereignty. Moreover, Constructivism also highlights the role of norms and international law in shaping state behavior. While Pakistan always uses legal and diplomatic justifications for the Durand Line, Afghanistan questions these norms, asking for a renegotiation of the border based on principles of self-determination and territorial integrity. Constructivism uncovers how such self-interpreted norms and international law are shaping the states' behavior and their policies. Constructivism discusses the significance of diplomatic interactions and social processes in regulating state behavior as well. Measures to settle the Durand Line issue via diplomacy, negotiations, and confidence-building measures are impacted by social constructs such as trust, identity, and perceptions of the other. Constructivist analysis would highlight how these social factors impact the possibilities for bilateral cooperation and conflict resolution. In the case of the Durand line, the importance of ideas, perceptions, and social constructions in shaping Pakistan and Afghanistan's bilateral relationship can be noticed (Fiaz, 2014).

## **Implications**

### **Impacts of Durand Line on Tribal Societies, Ethnic Groups, and Social and Cultural Dimensions**

The Durand Line issue significantly impacts tribal societies, ethnic groups, and socio-cultural characteristics have a significant impact due to the Durand Line issue. This has many great implications. One example is the division of the Pashtun tribes in the two countries along the Durand Line, which disrupted traditional Pashtun tribal areas and organizations. This further split the Pashtun tribes and sub-tribes into two separate political entities. This division also led to internal conflict and violence over territory and allegiances. Other ethnic groups, including the Baloch, Hazaras, and Tajiks, also divided territories, as did the Pashtuns. This division contributes to ethnic rivalries and conflicts by creating cross-border ethnic ties and movements for independence or unity.

The Durand Line created a new frontier with unique economic, political, and cultural realities, changing the social climate for Pashtun and other tribal communities. Communities living near borders face various difficulties related to trade, access to resources, and movement across borders. The cultural activities and exchanges passed down from generation to generation between the Pashtuns and other ethnic groups were disrupted by the separation of the Durand Line. It results in the imposition of different legal frameworks, language systems, and curricula on both sides of the border, which in turn leads to divergence in cultural norms and identities. However, as communities learn to cope with the difficulties of border living, it also promotes cultural adaptability and resilience. Likewise, border policy affects the social and cultural makeup of border towns. While policies that encourage cooperation and cross-border contact can foster a sense of solidarity and shared identity, those that prioritize isolation and enforcement may foster feelings of isolation and mistrust among residents. But so far, such cooperation and cross-border trade have been uncommon (Ata, 2023).

The Durand Line had a profound and long-lasting impact on tribal communities, ethnicities, and social and cultural aspects that still influence the geopolitics and identity of the region to this today.

### **Political Dynamics**

Since its establishment, the Durand Line has been a controversial topic since its beginning, with both sides disagreeing on its effectiveness. Afghanistan claims that the Durand Line was built against their will during the British colonial period. They believe that its purpose was always to serve as a dividing line between British India and Afghanistan, rather than an international border. The Afghan government has refused to recognize the Durand Line as the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as it claims it divides Pashtun tribes and communities (Qureshi, 1966). From a Pakistani perspective, the Durand Line is the internationally recognized border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. They claimed that Afghanistan received money by giving up rights to parts of the region when representatives from both sides signed the agreement. Pakistan believes that the Durand Line should be viewed as a border to maintain stability and prevent cross-border terrorism and militancy (Janjua, 2009).

The British drew the Durand Line primarily for administrative and strategic reasons, aiming to create a gap between British India and the growing Russian Empire. When Afghanistan emerged from British colonial rule, Afghanistan's position on the Durand Line became even more pronounced, as successive Afghan governments denied the line's legitimacy. While Pakistan considers the Durand Line to be an internationally recognized boundary, many other countries also believe that it retains the post-independence colonial boundary due to the principle of physical possession of law, unless agreed otherwise by successive governments. At the same time, border conflicts and tensions arose between Afghanistan and the United States due to Afghanistan's refusal to recognize the Durand Line (Qassem & Duraani, 2008).

The legitimacy of the Durand Line affects bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, affecting issues such as cross-border trade, refugee migration, and counter-terrorism initiatives. The conflict has been resolved through a series of diplomatic efforts and negotiations, but a complete resolution remains elusive. The dispute over the legality of the Durand Line reflects complex historical and geopolitical dynamics that are exacerbating current tensions and straining Afghanistan-Pakistan relations.

More importantly, the Durand Line issue has a greater impact on the domestic politics of Pakistan and Afghanistan. For example, from Pakistan's perspective, it is representative of the country's identity and is often used to defend its geographical integrity. Any change in its status could inflame nationalist sentiment and affect political debate. In Pakistan, Pashtuns also live in areas along the Durand Line. The border dispute could have implications for political dynamics by exacerbating tensions between Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. Unrest along the Durand Line, including the movement of militants across the border, affects security strategies and affects political decision-making. Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and other neighboring countries have been affected by its stance on the Durand Line. It becomes a crucial aspect of foreign policy discussions and negotiations (Khan & Wagner, 2013).

From Afghanistan's perspective, Afghanistan says the Durand Line is an artificial border imposed by British colonialists and is not considered an international border. This position is popular in Afghan politics, especially when it comes to territorial claims made by the Pashtuns. Political factions use the Durand Line issue as a focal point and support Afghan nationalism. It emphasizes the story of recovering lost territory and resisting foreign invasion. Loopholes in the Durand Line have allowed insurgents and illegal traffic to pass, exacerbating security problems in Afghanistan. Political parties use these issues to shape their agenda. Afghanistan has accused Pakistan of interfering in its affairs, citing the Durand Line dispute as evidence. Domestic political dynamics and foreign relations were affected by this narrative (Mahmood, 2005).

Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are at the root of the ongoing conflict between the two countries - the Durand Line dispute. This often casts a shadow over joint efforts and hinders progress on common issues (Durani & Khan, 2002). The Durand Line dispute has raised widespread concerns about democracy, stability, and governance in both countries. Political actors may exploit or manipulate the issue to gain support or divert attention from other issues. The Durand Line is not the only problem; it interacts with larger regional dynamics involving foreign actors and other neighboring countries. Geopolitical tensions and regional competition may intensify as a result.

### **Security Implications**

From the beginning, Durand's line had numerous security issues. Pakistan and Afghanistan's shared border poses many difficult questions, especially in light of the Durand Line dispute. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan was drawn by the British Indian government in 1893 and is known as the Durand Line. There is a protracted territorial dispute over Afghanistan's refusal to recognize it as a formal international border. The lack of recognition exacerbates conflict and makes border security measures more difficult. The Durand Line is full of loopholes, making possible large-scale cross-border movement of people and products, as well as illegal activities such as terrorism and smuggling. This fluidity undermines efforts to properly manage and protect borders. Additionally, the area surrounding the Durand Line is inhabited by a variety of ethnic groups.

In addition, some Pashtun tribes live around the Durand Line, most of which have historically crossed without any restrictions. This ethnic affiliation often complicates the implementation of security procedures and compromises border control systems (Ikram & Anwar, 2018).

The border area provides sanctuary to some extremist groups such as the Pakistani Taliban and other insurgent groups, which is another major security issue. These groups use porous borders to operate, launch attacks, and seek refuge on both sides, posing serious security risks to both Pakistan and Afghanistan. These difficulties have worsened significantly since the Taliban recently became the dominant force in Afghanistan. Both the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban are considered natural friends because of their significant ethnic, cultural, ideological, religious and social commonalities. As a result, after the former seized power, it gave the latter a safe haven. Therefore, the TTP have intensified their violence near the Durand Line as they feel safer and stronger in the current situation. This is likely to be the biggest security threat Pakistan currently faces along the Durand Line, and will have an immediate impact on Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations (Osman & Muzhary, 2017).

Moreover, militancy, insurgency, and cross-border terrorism along the Durand Line have long been seen as issues on which Pakistan and Afghanistan diverge over security and border management. The de facto border between the two countries is the Durand Line, which was created in the late 19th century but Afghanistan questions its validity. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) are two militant groups that have carried out violence in the region over the past few years. These groups often operate across porous borders, attacking both sides, destabilizing the region, and complicating law enforcement issues. As stated previously, the TTP expanded its territory particularly significantly following Taliban attacks in Afghanistan. As described in the previous paragraph, especially the TTP has gained tremendous ground in the wake of the Afghan Taliban's power in Afghanistan; which ultimately intensified the security concerns across the border (Akhtar & Ullah, 2024). The terrorist activities of the TTP have remarkably increased for the last two years; which has furthered complicated the security situation in the various areas of Pakistan, especially near the border.

This instability has affected bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in many ways. Diplomatic relations are strained as the two countries accuse each other of providing shelter to militants and failing to take adequate action to curb cross-border terrorism. Tensions increased and mutual distrust arose. In addition, the presence of militant sanctuaries along the border hampers the two countries' efforts to maintain peace and stability. It inhibits trade and commerce, hinders economic growth, and discourages foreign investment. Large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing violence further strain resources and infrastructure. In this context, there is an urgent need for broad-based dialogue and high-level talks on both sides, which have so far eluded them.

### **Economic Considerations**

The people on both sides are very similar in social, cultural, religious, and national characteristics. These similarities make the Durand Line, the border that separates Pakistan and Afghanistan, the perfect location for economic growth and cooperation between the two countries. If commercial routes are opened along the Durand Line, Pakistan and Afghanistan can conduct more bilateral trade. Product categories that fall under this category include consumer goods, textiles, minerals, and agricultural products. Lowering tariffs and simplifying customs procedures can further increase trade. Connectivity between the two countries can also be enhanced by funding infrastructure projects along the Durand Line, such as building ports, railways, and roads. In addition to making trade easier, this will improve human relations and economic integration. Jointly pursuing energy-related projects, including building pipelines or hydroelectric dams, could help meet the energy needs of both countries. This could lead to more reliable and affordable energy, spurring industrial expansion and advancement. What's more, tourists from all over the world may be attracted by the Durand Line's stunning scenery and rich cultural heritage. Building the region's tourism infrastructure and encouraging international travel can bring money and jobs to nearby areas (Kayathwal & Kayathwal, 1994).

However, the situation is now very different, with the above potential facing significant obstacles and hurdles due to ongoing issues and the controversial nature of the Durand Line. Trade and commerce between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been severely affected by the Durand Line dispute. The emergence of seamless business relationships is hampered by the uncertainty and instability they generate. These salient features indicate that the Durand Line issue has adversely affected Pakistan's economic relations with Afghanistan. The unresolved border conflict at the Durand Line has led to periodic tensions and blockades, hampering the flow of products between the two countries (Poya F, 2021). Due to this uncertainty, businesses are finding it difficult to plan and conduct trading activities effectively. Because official trade routes were difficult to navigate, informal trade flourished and often bypassed these routes. While this unofficial trade can bridge the gap, it also reduces government revenue, weakens regulatory standards, and evades taxes (Omrani, 2009).

Ongoing disagreements are hampering border infrastructure. Formal trade cannot expand without investment in roads, border crossings, and other infrastructure. Similarly, political unrest can hamper initiatives aimed at enhancing cross-border connectivity, such as building communications and transport corridors. The two countries' ability to cooperate and integrate economically is hampered by a lack of connectivity. The border is porous due to the Durand Line dispute, which complicates security measures and makes it difficult to control the movement of people and products. Such volatility further erodes investor trust in international trade. When diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are hampered by the Durand Line conflict, finding win-win solutions to economic and connectivity issues becomes more difficult (Smyth, 2008).

## **Discussions**

In the era of interdependence and globalization, no state is self-sufficient, and neither it can live in isolation. States need one another for economic, political, and social needs. The same is the situation in the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan as well. It is rightly stated that enemies and friends can be changed but one cannot change the neighbors. In the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan, both countries are neighbors that share deep commonalities in terms of culture, religion social aspects, etc. Therefore, it is the need of the hour that Pakistan and Afghanistan should shape a collective framework to improve their bilateral ties and resolve their issue through peaceful means. This will not only bring prosperity to both countries but will enhance the overall security and stability of the region as well.

Pakistani and Afghan security personnel should jointly guard the border. This could help deter smuggling and illegal border crossings. To stop illegal activity and unauthorized crossings, strengthen border control measures by erecting barriers, increasing personnel and installing surveillance technology at high-risk locations along the Durand Line.

More importantly, both countries should strictly observe their commitments towards international obligations and agreements. Especially, in the current situation, Afghanistan is blamed for keeping allegedly closed ties with several terrorist Non-state violent actors such as TTP, which is ultimately involved in the militant activities in Pakistan. Pakistan has strong concerns over this matter and has raised the issue repeatedly on both bilateral, regional, and international levels. In this regard, both states need to make a joint comprehensive plan to deal with such matters which are a source of contention in smoothing bilateral ties.

Similarly, Collective consensus and cooperation in this regard is vital; which will consequently yield positive outcomes for both countries in specific and overall region in general.



## **Conclusion**

The issue of Durand line has diverse impacts on both Pakistan and Afghanistan. People across both sides of the border are directly exposed to such implications. These implications are of a variety of nature's such as ethnic, cultural, nationalistic, and economic, security political, etc. The issue of Durand line is a major source of hurdle and contention in paving the way to a long-lasting and healthy tie between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Durand Line was drawn during the colonial era without regard to local tribal affiliations or historical boundaries, leading to long-standing dissatisfaction among Pashtuns. Afghanistan has never officially recognized the borders, viewing them as arbitrary impositions by colonial powers. This has exacerbated cross-border movements, insurgencies, and instability in both countries and the region. By resolving this historical grievance, Afghanistan can strengthen its relationship with Pakistan and focus on domestic development and nation-building. A stable border will also facilitate trade and economic cooperation, benefiting both countries.

Similarly, Pakistan's stability and security are closely linked to resolving the Durand Line issue. Acknowledging and addressing Pashtun grievances can help alleviate internal tensions and foster a sense of unity and inclusivity. Additionally, a stable border would enhance Pakistan's ability to combat cross-border terrorism and insurgency, promoting regional peace and security. In this regard, Pakistan must engage Afghanistan on both state and non-state levels and frame a comprehensive framework for a soft border to ensure uniformity in bilateral ties.

In addition to Pakistan and Afghanistan, the greater South Asia region will also benefit from resolving the Durand Line dispute. Initiatives aimed at promoting regional cooperation, such as trade agreements, infrastructure development projects, and cooperative counter-terrorism measures, would benefit from a stable border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Greater cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan could also help stabilize neighboring countries such as Iran and Central Asian republics.

## **Recommendations**

- To promote understanding between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan should establish and maintain open and regular channels of engagement at all levels such as diplomatic, military and intelligence.
- Strengthening border security to prevent criminal activity and maintain stability on the shared border, strengthen border security through cooperative duties, better border controls and front-line surveillance technology.
- Engage non-state actors to promote grassroots support for a peaceful resolution and build connections between the two countries, engaging local communities, tribal elders and powerful individuals.
- Encourage people-to-people contact Track II diplomacy can improve relationships and promote empathy through business investments, educational programs, and cultural exchanges.
- Addressing mutual security concerns by cooperating on counterterrorism initiatives and exchanging intelligence, both countries must establish their true commitment to combating terrorism.
- Regional and international cooperation a coordinated regional approach can be promoted and valuable support gained through interactions with regional and

international entities, including through the Asia Center-Istanbul Process and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

- Commitment to Cooperation the success of any resolution depends on Pakistan and Afghanistan remaining committed to engaging in productive dialogue, prioritizing mutual interests and working together to improve their shared future.

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