



PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS: COMPLICATIONS SINCE 9/11

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Abstract

The environment of post-9/11 international relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the focus of this study. It contends that friendly and cooperative ties between these two close neighbours are crucial to the maintenance of security and to different development objectives (political and economic) in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, a lack of confidence remains, and the war on terrorism is a major source of tension between the two nations. While Afghanistan has frequently demanded that Pakistan should do more to stop and beat the supposed extremists who sneak into Afghanistan, Pakistan has denied these claims and instead placed blame on the Afghan government for failing to prevent cross-border incursions and for not reestablishing the country's infrastructure. Her relationship with Pakistan has suffered greatly as a result of interference from outside nations, mainly India. One school of thought holds that the current state of affairs has harmed the country's long-term national interests, particularly in the wake of September 11. According to the findings of this research, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is crucial. Both nations' interests and regional and global peace



necessitate cordial connections for geopolitical, political, economic, and other reasons. They have the power to end many of the problems the two future South Asian states are facing. If the leadership of both nations is unable to resolve all of the problems that have been plaguing their relationship, however, the hope of peaceful coexistence will be neutralised by outside powers.

Keywords: Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, relations, refugees, terrorism

Introduction

Afghan President Hamid Karzai's spokesperson told Time magazine that peace and development for Afghanistan are impossible until cordial relations are established with Pakistan (Quoted in The Post, 2008). Maintaining security and pursuing different avenues of growth (political and economic) are two of Pakistan and Afghanistan's most pressing concerns, therefore friendly and constructive ties between these two neighbouring neighbours are crucial. This is especially the case because of the strategic importance of their locations and the intricacy of regional and international affairs. However, in the current setting, Pakistan and Afghanistan have a trust gap as they combat terrorism, with each country blaming the other for shaky security and a poor economy. While Afghanistan has frequently demanded that Pakistan should do more to stop and beat the supposed extremists who sneak into Afghanistan, Pakistan has denied these claims and instead placed blame on the Afghan government for failing to prevent cross-border incursions and for not reestablishing the country's infrastructure. Afghanistan's ties with Pakistan have suffered as a result of the country's incompetent political system and ineffective leadership, as well as the interference of other countries in Afghanistan's domestic affairs. The situation has deteriorated so much, some observers say, that after September 11, the United States' long-term national interests were seriously harmed. The fight against terrorism itself has emerged as a top priority for both nations. (Javaid, 2020)

Concerns have also been raised about India's manipulation and improvement of its relationships with Afghanistan to the detriment of Pakistan and Afghanistan's relations. In addition, the American-installed Karzai administration in Afghanistan has passionately focused on developing its connections with India while neglecting Pakistan's significant concerns. This has caused tensions between the two countries. Many people believe that India's frenetic and vigorous diplomatic actions on Afghan soil are intended, at least in part, to drive Pakistan further away from Afghanistan. The goal of this study is to try to figure out important problems that make it hard for Pakistan and Afghanistan to keep talking to each other and get along better. In light of the fact that the international community is working together to fight the threat of terrorism and that Pakistan and Afghanistan play a big part in this, the relationship between the two countries has become more important. If the problematic pattern of ties that now exists between the two nations does not



change, it will be impossible for the regional and international levels to effectively cope with the instability and disorder caused by terrorists. Due to the fact that all of this is true, it is of the utmost importance to evaluate and appropriately address the following irritants in Pakistan and Afghanistan's relationship. (Hussain, 2020)

Background

Pakistan and Afghanistan have a single boundary, often known as the Durand Line, that is 2,240 kilometres in length (Ahmed, 2007). Tense ties with Afghanistan have persisted despite the fact that the two countries share a common history, culture, and religion. Instead, they've become a source of trouble. Afghanistan's hostile stance has worsened an already dangerous security situation, which threatens Pakistan's very survival due to the Indian threat coming from the east. A security scenario wherein both the East and West are closing in at once with the intention of crushing a stillborn Pakistan was described by Ian Stephon as a "pincer movement" (Rubin, 2006). Pakistan's security needs and hopes for peace with India along its northwestern border have never been fulfilled, in large part due to Afghanistan's antagonistic stance. Until the Taliban took over for four years in the 2000s, every government in Kabul had some level of animosity against Islamabad (Akhtar, 2008). At the heart of such antagonistic connections and hostile/unfriendly attitudes are Afghanistan's aspirations for a few regions in Pakistan's northwestern corner that briefly belonged to lands captured by Ahmad Shah Abdali from 1747 to 1773 (Siddiqi, 2008). Pakistan and Afghanistan share a common border of almost 2,000 kilometres and the same religion (Islam), as well as common ethnic groups (the Pashtuns and the Balochs), yet their bilateral ties have historically been tense. It's also worth noting that neither government has ever had complete authority over the territory they share as a border. During the ten-year war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the US and others took advantage of how easy it was for mujahideen groups in the area to move back and forth between Afghanistan and Pakistan. (Javaid, 2020)

However, violence erupted between these groups during the ensuing civil war, wreaking havoc on the country until the Taliban, an ultraconservative organisation, took control of the government in the mid-1990s. A multinational coalition led by the United States overthrew the Taliban government in 2001. Since then, the Taliban have spent the past several years reorganising the border regions between the nations that are next to Afghanistan. The Taliban and its followers have, for the most part, continued to take part in efforts to expel United States soldiers from Afghanistan and to launch attacks against the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States (Zeb, 2006). In this context, a number of groups have asserted that the militants' ability to use Pakistani territory as a "safe haven" has made warfare particularly difficult. Pakistan and Afghanistan are frequently observed blaming each other for the persistence of insurgency in their respective nations. The eradication of terrorism has become a challenge for both the Pakistani



and Afghani administrations, and it is probable that neither country can accomplish this task alone. Despite this, the prospects of increasing collaboration between Pakistan and Afghanistan remain intact.

Durand Line Conflict

The Durand line is the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it has caused a lot of trouble between the two countries. It dates back to the beginning of their relationship. Afghanistan was the only Muslim nation to oppose Pakistan's admission to the United Nations, citing the Durand line issue as the cause. It remained to be a major cause of strain in their bilateral relations until the late 1970s. However, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the accompanying departure of over 3.15 million Afghan refugees, the vast majority of whom were Pashtuns, had a direct impact on the region, the situation became far less volatile throughout the 1980s. During the immediate phase following the withdrawal of Soviet forces, there was no resurgence of the hostility that existed between the two nations during prior decades. However, the change in government that occurred in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11 has radicalised the country's foreign policy regarding this issue, and the government of Karzai has been issuing proclamations stating that essentially, it rejects the established border between the two nations. To deter illegal entry into Afghanistan, Pakistan suggested fencing off the border at the Durand line whenever Afghan authorities are inclined to make reference to illegal infiltration (alleged) into Afghanistan's borders. Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, Pakistan's interior minister, announced on March 9, 2006, that Pakistan wished to fence its border with Afghanistan and place landmines to prevent outsiders from entering Pakistan (Grare, 2006). Despite this, Afghanistan has not shown any sign of being inclined to accept any such proposition that Pakistan has made. Afghanistan asserts that the Durand line is not a recognised international boundary, despite the fact that it was established in 1894 through negotiations between King Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan and Sir Mortimer Durand, who represented the British Indian government, the forerunner of Pakistan. Some military planners are of the opinion that the resurrection of the revisionist posture in Afghanistan is also affected by external powers, which have a propensity to abuse the circumstance for their own self-serving purposes.

Pakistan asserts that Afghan authorities have acknowledged the Durand Line as a legal international boundary many times, despite the fact that Pakistan has long considered the Durand Line to be a genuine and recognised international boundary (Grare, 2006). It does so on the basis that for the document to be authentic, it must be signed by representatives of two distinct sovereign states. This causes it to reject the Afghan claims (Grare, 2006). Even the notion that this treaty is only in effect for the next one hundred years is not supported by this evidence. In most contexts, the argument is made that this treaty was signed in an amicable and unrestricted setting. During



his speech to an audience that comprised military, civil, and tribal leaders from Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman, the current king of Afghanistan, delivered a summary of the understanding and agreement that had been reached between the parties, outlined the terms that had been signed, and implored the audience to be steadfast in their support for the British alliance. In addition, the King reminded the audience that this was the first time Afghanistan had been able to demarcate its legitimate boundary and that this would aid in preventing future misunderstandings and strengthen Afghanistan. This is the first time Afghanistan has reached this milestone, the King added. In any event, Afghanistan and Pakistan's ongoing dispute over the Durand line should have been addressed sooner. It is a significant barrier that is standing in the way of their amicable connection, and as a result, it is impeding the growth and prosperity not only in their bilateral ties but also in other areas. Both nations need to wake up to the fact that they need to find a solution to this problem as quickly as possible so that they may focus their efforts on other elements of their shared interests. It is imperative that Afghanistan lives up to its historical obligations and abides by the laws of the international community. On the other hand, Pakistan ought to make every effort to avoid any sort of conflict with Afghanistan and ought to continue to adhere to the path of diplomacy in order to address any remaining concerns with Afghanistan.

Struggling with Terrorism

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Pakistan was compelled to implement the anti-Taliban measures it had been diplomatically and politically backing throughout the 1990s. Pakistan has pledged to join the global war on terrorism and help rebuild war-torn Afghanistan. It took an active part in and gained support from others for the donor conferences that sought funding to reconstruct Afghanistan. To prevent accused infiltrators from entering Afghanistan, Pakistan sent in over 80,000 troops. However, this anti-terrorism alliance has long since reached a difficult phase. Longtime accusers of Pakistan's complicity in cross-border terrorism against NATO, ISAF, and the Afghan government include prominent Afghan officials in Kabul. The lawless area near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is where many outsiders believe the previous Taliban regime's leadership and Al Qaeda's top brass are currently based and operating (Gartenstein-Ross, 2012). At the same time, Afghan officials have repeatedly accused Pakistan's ISI of supporting and abetting radicals and terrorists. Following July 14, 2008, terrorist attacks on the Indian embassy in Kabul, which shocked Afghanistan and caused massive fatalities and devastation, Karzai blamed the ISI (Maley, 2013). He kept on the same note, blaming Pakistani intelligence agencies for the bloodshed, damage, and instability in Afghanistan (Khan, 2008). The Afghan government directly blamed Pakistan when NATO forces were attacked by terrorists on July 13, 2008, killing scores of soldiers (Maley, 2013).



Pakistan has denied these claims, saying that it is in its best interest for Afghanistan to be successful and that it has no part in the destructive operations of the extremists who threaten Afghanistan's stability (Maley, 2013). Pakistan wants Afghanistan to be stable and peaceful, according to the PPP administration led by Prime Minister Gilani, and Karzai's words may help to slow down development activities in the region, both of which the Afghan government has disputed. The foreign ministry of Pakistan agrees that the claims are without merit and has demanded that Kabul's administration cease passing the buck (Maley, 2013). There is also the important question of how Pakistan knows if someone travelling to Afghanistan is an Afghan native or a terrorist. Neither Afghanistan nor the international soldiers stationed there are to blame, in the eyes of Pakistan. The insurgency is being blamed on Pakistan by the struggling Afghan government as a way to deflect attention from their own massive failure and ineptitude (Akhtar, 2008). The Afghan government is too feeble and unable to deal with the country's issues, and when it does so, it blames Pakistan (Akhtar, 2008). They wish to convince the world that Pakistan is responsible for all of Afghanistan's problems. NATO airstrikes inside Pakistan have further strained already tense relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan is extremely displeased by these attacks, which it views as an outrageous infringement of its sovereignty. Also, it goes against the norms of international law. The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is at an all-time low after the Afghan government gave NATO soldiers permission to launch attacks within Pakistan's national border. Because of the way things are now, we need to go back to the original goals of the war on terrorism, which were to work together while also respecting each other's sovereignty and not letting foreign groups use any of their land against each other's interests. So far, it has been shown that, despite what Karzai has said, Islamabad still wants to get along with Kabul and thinks it needs to actively work for peace with Afghanistan (Maley, 2013).

The Taliban and Al-Qaeda Factor

The fact that Al-Qaeda is helping the Afghan Taliban is another obstacle on the path to peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It's also worth noting that the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the group blamed for suicide bombings in Pakistan, receives funding and backing from Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda has provided the TTP and its two leaders, Hakimullah Mehsud and Baitullah Mehsud, with extensive assistance and encouragement. Numerous analysts assume that the network of Osama bin Laden directs "militants" in Pakistan to conduct its operations (Hussain, 2020). After the United States and its allies drove Al Qaeda and the Taliban out of Afghanistan in 2001, Al Qaeda reassembled in North Waziristan, where they were protected by the Haqqani network, directed by Jalaluddin Haqqani, an old buddy of Bin Laden's. Drone strikes and other military operations have destroyed al-leadership Qaeda's structure, but the group's numerous important leaders have evaded capture thus far. The Jordanian double agent who killed seven CIA personnel in December in Khost, Afghanistan, was a suicide bomber supplied by Al-Qaeda to the Haqqani



network. A video depicting Hakimullah Mehsud and the bomber was released after the attack, establishing a connection between Haqqani's organisation, Al-Qaeda, and the TTP (Hussain, 2020). Former tribal administrator Mehmood Shah asserted, "There is no doubt that a tie exists between the Pakistani Taliban and the Haqqani network."

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Jalaluddin Haqqani fled to North Waziristan. It was there that he established a guerrilla war base from which to wage battle against the Soviet troops, complete with training camps and recruitment centres. It wasn't long until the Haqqani network was the most powerful in Afghanistan, particularly in the Khost, Paktia, and Paktika provinces. The Pakistani Taliban considered Osama bin Laden and Haqqani as comrades after they developed close during the Afghan struggle. Therefore, the Haqqani network may have connections to both al-Qaeda and the TTP. Across the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, they are all seen as mutually supporting. Afghanistan and Pakistan's governments have made measures to curb Al Qaeda's backing for the Taliban. Pakistan has launched military operations in Northern Areas in an effort to restore government authority there. Operations against insurgent networks are being carried out by Afghan and coalition forces. Both nations would benefit from taking these measures, which would help keep their diplomatic ties running smoothly. (Hussain, 2020)

The Issue of Refugees

The issue of Afghan citizens seeking asylum in Pakistan has been a source of friction between the two nations since the former Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in the 1980s and Pakistan welcomed Afghans who arrived on its soil and took in almost three million refugees. Since the 1980s, in particular, the problem has been a source of friction between the two nations. This was in spite of the historical fact that during the Khilafat movement in the early 1920s, when these Muslims sought sanctuary in Afghanistan during tough times, the same Afghans had blocked their border for the aspirational Muslims of the Subcontinent. In any event, the Afghan migrants had not only put an additional burden on Pakistan's economy but also significantly increased social and political problems. After 2000, the second wave of refugees left their homes due to the continued civil war, the Taliban's oppression, and other reasons (Hussain, 2002). However, this time Pakistan did not make its land available to the new people who were looking for safety. The primary reasons for this denial were political, social, economic, and ethnic in nature. In addition, the international community was not eager to help shoulder any of the responsibility. It is imperative that the over 2.6 million refugees who are already residing in Pakistan be returned to their home countries as quickly as possible. This enormous number includes a number of extremists who frequently cross the border into Afghanistan, causing problems for both Pakistan and Afghanistan (Rubin, 2006). Mismanagement on the part of the government of Pakistan, as



seen from the perspective of the government of Afghanistan. On the other side, Pakistan has responded to these accusations by stating that it is doing all in its power to investigate all of these factors and effectively deal with the situation.

Indian Involvement

The relationship between India and Pakistan and Afghanistan is widely acknowledged to be a zero-sum game in which Pakistan's gains are viewed as India's losses and vice versa. Now, India has taken full advantage of the altered circumstances and new realities that have arisen since September 11th, 2001, to make and strengthen ties with Afghanistan at the cost of ties with Pakistan. It has taken a proactive approach to diplomacy and learned how to build pro-Indian groups in Afghanistan. They have opened a large number of diplomatic posts in Afghanistan's most populous and strategically significant cities, where they are rumoured to be actively working against Pakistan's best interests by advancing India's. India's actions and initiatives along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border have prompted major worry on the part of the Pakistani government, which has been publicly voicing its disapproval. India is accused of producing counterfeit Pakistani banknotes and conducting terrorist and sabotage activities within Pakistan (Grare, 2006). Pakistan says that India has set up terrorist training camps at the Afghan military base of Qushila Jadid, north of Kabul, in the Panjshir Valley, Gereshk, in southern Helmand province, and at Kahak and Hassan Killies, in western Nimruz province and northeast of Kabul (Grare, 2006).

Pakistan's government accuses Indian diplomatic posts in Afghanistan of attempting to destabilise Pakistan's western regions, particularly the tribal areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. On August 13, 2004, the then-chief minister of Baluchistan, Jam Muhammad Yusuf, stated that Indian intelligence agencies supported forty distinct terrorist camps around the nation. (Grare, 2006). Pakistan levelled new allegations against India, this time accusing it of stirring up problems in its Waziristan province, Al Qaeda and the local Taliban presented the Pakistani military with formidable opposition in this region. The Pakistani government accuses India of creating tensions in North and South Waziristan and claims that Indian consulate activities in southern Afghanistan have provided funds and weapons to militants in the tribal region (Grare, 2006).

This leads many to conclude that the foreign groups now present in Afghanistan are actively working to undermine Pakistani control over its own land. In July 2006, Mushahid Hussain, who used to be the head of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, said that RAW had been training 600 Baluchs in Afghanistan. He said that India was behind the Baloch insurgency and that Afghan intelligence agencies had been in touch with RAW (Grare, 2006). The government of Pakistan believes that these events have undermined the public's trust in Afghanistan and, as a result, the country's ability to aid in the global battle against terrorism. Afghanistan should give serious consideration to Pakistan's concerns and work to allay Pakistan's apprehensions about



foreign entities participating in anti-Pakistan actions on Afghan territory. Pakistani apprehensions may cause the country's leaders to reevaluate their approach to Afghanistan, and may even make them apathetic to the country's participation in the reconstruction effort. The people of Afghanistan need to see that their future prosperity is intertwined with Pakistan's. Afghanistan has to be more practical in its dealings with Pakistan so that it may better negotiate with Pakistan and isolate India. Afghanistan's efforts to allay Pakistan's worries are urgently required for the sake of the region's progress. The prospects for peaceful relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan seem gloomy if India maintains anti-Pakistan efforts with Afghan assistance.

Issues with the Taliban Regime

Pakistan is taking a harder stance in an effort to encourage Afghanistan's Taliban authorities to clamp down on terrorists sheltering on their land in the face of growing bloodshed, but the Afghan Taliban are still unwilling to take action, preferring to broker a settlement instead. When Pakistan launched airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan last month, ties between the two countries quickly deteriorated. Some 40 people, according to eyewitnesses, were killed when the attacks targeted a refugee camp and another area. UNICEF estimates that 20 children perished. Although Pakistan's foreign ministry never verified the April 17 attacks, it did send a strong warning to the Taliban not to provide a safe haven to terrorists two days later. The Taliban are backed into a corner as a result of the increased pressure. Since its inception, the Taliban has maintained strong ties with other terrorist organisations in Pakistan, including the Pakistani Taliban, often known as TTP. After the Taliban took command in Afghanistan in August, the TTP and other factions became even more active there. But observers believe the Taliban are reluctant of cracking down on them because they don't want to make additional enemies at a time when they're facing an increasingly brutal assault from an affiliate of the Islamic State group in Afghanistan. In recent weeks, dozens of people have been killed in explosions across Afghanistan, with most of the attacks aimed against the Hazara minority. The Islamic State's splinter group ISKP has been held mostly responsible. The violence has discredited the Taliban's assertions that they can maintain the kind of security that is standard for a government. The TTP and a government delegation from Pakistan met this week with a group of Pakistani tribal chiefs in an apparent attempt to reach a settlement and relieve the pressure. The TTP said on Wednesday that it would be extending its appeal for a ceasefire until May 30. According to Bilal Karimi, the Taliban government's deputy spokesperson, the Taliban leadership "is doing all possible to ensure the continuance and success of the discussions while also requesting flexibility from both parties." Despite the fact that past cease-fires with the TTP failed, the current one has already been shattered by violence. A rise in domestic violence appears to be adding fuel to Pakistanis' frustrations. Three Chinese nationals were slain by the separatist



Balochistan Liberation Army in late April. Increasingly frequent attacks on Pakistani military installations have been blamed on the TTP and IS in Afghanistan.

The Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, an Islamabad-based nongovernmental organisation that monitors militant activity, reports that the number of insurgent strikes in Pakistan has increased by over 50% since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan. Between September and mid-May, 170 assaults were registered, resulting in the deaths of nearly 110 civilians and 170 police, military, and paramilitary personnel. According to an estimate by the United Nations, as many as 10,000 TTP fighters may be hiding in Afghanistan. To date, the government of Afghanistan has done almost little to eliminate insurgent strongholds within the country. Prominent Afghans from southern Afghanistan told The Associated Press that the Pakistani Taliban and Pakistani Baloch secessionists had constructed multiple safe homes in the area during the previous U.S.-backed government's administration and that they had stayed since the Taliban takeover. In April, Pakistan took a considerably more aggressive stance by launching airstrikes. They showed up after seven soldiers were slain in an ambush by militants close to Afghanistan's border. When tensions rise along the border between the two countries, Pakistani and Afghani border forces frequently exchange rocket fire, although Pakistani jets seldom attack targets inside Afghanistan. (Diplomat, 2022)

After weeks of political instability, Imran Khan was deposed as prime minister of Pakistan. After the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, Khan pushed for dialogue between the international community and the insurgents. Michael Kugelman, an official at the American Wilson Center, said that Khan "had a soft spot for the Taliban and was against using force in Afghanistan on principle." He said that now that Khan is gone and the TTP is still attacking, we should expect Pakistan to be more willing to use military operations. The Taliban in Afghanistan have warned Pakistan that they will retaliate for any more military action. Defense Minister Mohammad Yaqoob, appointed by the Taliban, warned Pakistan in late April that the airstrikes "are not acceptable." "Our national interest is the sole reason we have tolerated this attack," but "in the future, we may not be so tolerant." Yaqoob, who is the son of Mullah Mohammad Omar, is a key leader in the group, which is currently at odds about how to manage the country in the wake of the conflict that has devastated it. The ruling council appears to be evenly divided between moderates and conservatives. Pragmatists have fought for universal education for girls of all ages and for increased international cooperation. The hardliners seek to return Afghanistan to the time of the Taliban's leadership in the late 1990s when girls and women were often forbidden from entering public spaces and tribal law and a rigorous, uncompromising interpretation of Islam were created. Recent harsh edicts, such as requiring women to wear full-face veils with only the eyes visible and banning girls from school after sixth grade, imply the hard-liners have the upper hand. According to numerous influential Afghans who are connected with the Taliban leadership, Yaqoob is one of



the group's pragmatists. No one on either side of the divide appears to have made a choice to remove the militants from their territory. The conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan is not going to be resolved quickly. Shuja Nawaz, a researcher and fellow at the South Asia Center of the United States Atlantic Council, asserted that the Taliban will continue to shelter the TTP in the hopes that they will eventually increase their own influence inside Pakistan. (Diplomat, 2022)

Conclusion

There is no denying the significance Pakistan and Afghanistan have for one another. For geopolitical, political, economic, and other reasons, friendly ties between the two nations are crucial. The two most promising nations in South Asia can overcome many of the challenges they confront and contribute to regional prosperity if they can establish amicable ties with one another. If, however, the leaders of both nations are unable to resolve their differences, external forces will be able to nullify this possibility. Managing the impact of any such external factors is necessary to protect both their immediate and long-term goals. Afghanistan and Pakistan have a common future of economic success. Afghanistan, which is now cut off from the rest of the globe due to its landmass, would finally be able to connect to the rest of the world if the Gwadar port were built. Pakistan's support is crucial to the success and continuation of the struggle against the forces that threaten both nations. Both nations must work quickly to resolve this problem. They need to do everything they can to clear the air of any lingering concerns. Refugees from Afghanistan who have been living in Pakistan for decades should be a joint priority for the two nations. When it comes to rebuilding, Afghanistan may also look to Pakistan for help. The new Taliban government needs to cooperate with Islamabad to accelerate and enhance its engagement with the world.

Pakistan relies on energy imports from Afghanistan, among other things. It is conveniently close to the oil-rich republics of Central Asia. Without Afghanistan's help, Pakistan would not be able to have access to the oil resources of Central Asian republics. The projected Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan natural gas pipeline is mainly dependent on the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Starting in southern Turkmenistan on the border with Afghanistan, the proposed gas pipeline would go to Multan, Pakistan (790 miles; 1,271 kilometres) before branching off to India for a further 400 miles (640 kilometres). The portion of the project reaching Pakistan was anticipated to cost US\$ 2.9 billion, with the expansion to India costing a further US\$ 600 million (Independent Bangladesh, 2008). That this pipeline would also be a big advancement in the relationship between the two countries is something they should both recognise. A transit charge from the pipeline, according to a specialist on Pak-Afghan relations, would provide a significant financial boost to war-ravaged Afghanistan (Independent Bangladesh, 2008). Furthermore, he claimed that if Afghans begin to realise significant economic benefits in the form of employment and a big transit charge, they would themselves be ensuring the safety of the



pipeline despite severe security implications (Independent Bangladesh, 2008). To counteract the growing diplomatic presence of India in Afghanistan, Pakistan needs the cooperation of that country's government. It can help prevent foreign fighters from entering Pakistan and wreaking havoc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the country's two bordering regions. One of the socioeconomic problems shared by Pakistan and Afghanistan is the prevalence of drug trafficking, which the two nations are better able to combat together. They can work together to patrol and monitor the international border to prevent the flow of contraband.



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