



## The Impact of CPEC on Regional Politics around Durand Line

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### Abstract

*The Purpose of this Research is to explore the impact of CPEC on Regional Politics around Durand Line while establishing links of such influences with socio economic history of this region. The research effort shall also help to identify avenues and opportunities for Afghanistan and Pakistan in accepting the Durand Line as an International Border. It is a fact that despite being neighbors with socio-cultural and ethnic alignments, the two countries have experienced strain in relations during seven decades of co-existence. Political stability has never been good in the region because of weak administrative control on this border. Optically,*



*Durand Line has been the main reason. Unaccounted movement of refugees, tax evaded businesses and trade, cross border tribal influences, human trafficking, illegal manufacturing and exchange of arms and ammunition kept the region under turmoil. Security situation all around Pakistan Afghanistan Border remained a question mark. The last One decade has been a decade of realization. The post 9/11 attacks in New York and US War on Terrorism paved way for re-identifying legitimacy and acceptance of the Durand Line. And then the China Pakistan Economic Corridor played a defining role in re-affirmation of Durand Line. Security situation and controls needed to be improved before crafting such huge BRI Investments by China. Governments in Pakistan & Afghanistan have begun to feel that clarity on Durand line will resolve half of their security issues if not all. Pakistan started putting up physical barriers all along, the Durand Line. Afghanistan's Military responded with equi-controls. About 10-15% of the border belt areas resisted to this call. But Pakistan's Resolve continues to strengthen the border. This is leading to an increased control and acceptance of the Durand Line. For US these enhanced controls would lead to segregation of Afghan extremists from some of the Tribal Radicals of Pakistan, ultimately weakening their opposition in Afghanistan. The government in Kabul has also been demanding non-interference from Pakistani Tribal Areas. For China strengthening Durand Line means security of CPEC. All these developments put together create an opportunity for both Afghanistan and Pakistan to increase cordiality with each other. This research effort can draw the attention of experts not only on both sides of this border but other states as well supporting the demarcation drive of the Durand Line. Moreover it will also enlighten about the likely repercussions for regional players in case of non-acceptance of the Durand Line.*

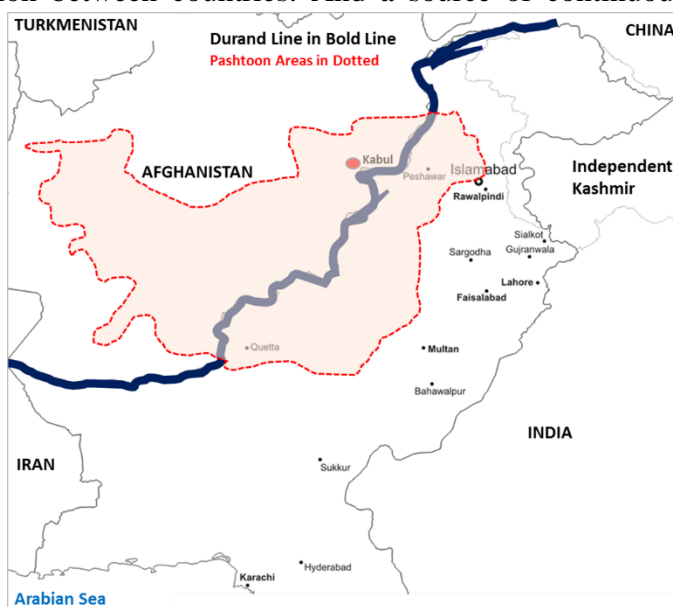
**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Pakistan, CPEC, China, Durand Line

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## Introduction

Disputed Geographical Borders are one of the Major reasons which impact strategic relations between countries in the world (Duckenfield, 2013). The earlier a country resolves its border dispute, easier it becomes for her to progress. Unfortunately, many of the states are engaged in border disputes with their neighbor's (Conant, 2014). A National Geographic Researcher declared the overall number of border disputes to be 150 across world. Many of them serving as serious and continuous bone of contention between countries. And a source of continuous atrocities and suppressions. Kashmir is the biggest and probably the most hindrance between Indo Pakistan Relations. Ghaza, Golan Heights & West Bank between Israel & Palestine, Abkhazia & South Ossetia between Georgia & Russia, Diaoyu & Senkaku Islands between China & Japan, 3219 km of Berm Walls between Morocco & Saharawi's, Aksai Chin between China & India are a few significant examples.



Most of these Disputes are as old as 50 Years and yet to be settled. An undecided border (Migdal, 2004). Actually causes more harm to international relations than any other factor.

Durand line is yet another example. Optically it is a 2430 km border line drawn by the British on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1893 through a mission lead by Sir Mortimer Durand and agreed by Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan. At that time it was primarily because of three reasons:



- a. Afghan Tribes were very brutal in dealing with the British. Between 1839 and 1881 the British tried twenty six different expeditions in the western mountains to exercise influence over Kabul but failed to move ahead of Peshawar (Loney, 1979).
- b. With a History starting from Aryans in 1500 BC, Followed by Greeks in 300 BC, Turks in 1000 AD & then Mughals in 1600 AD British were concerned about probabilities' of invasion from Central Asian Empires of Macedonia, Russia (*Had Reached Aral Sea by 1840 AD*) and Even Turks who were observed to increase their influence West of Afghanistan (Wahab, & Youngerman, 2007).
- c. Due to ethno-linguistic racial alignment of the people of British controlled territories of western sub-continent with those in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad, community interaction and business activity was always on rise along the western front. British Indian Rules were often ignored or discarded by the locals leading to administrative difficulties.
- d. Abdur Rehman was aspiring to get Balochistan to have access to the Arabian Sea and he thought he might get it if he accepted the British demand of determining borders (Roberts, 2003).

All the above reasons lead to British need for declaring and identifying a border for British Controlled Areas in the West and Afghanistan (Khan, 2001). The Russian



Threat served as detrimental to Durand line. It is pivotal to record here that while an agreement was reached for locking Durand Line as an Accepted Border between Sub Continent and Afghanistan, there was a lot of hot debate between Britishers and Afghan team. Ultimately Afghans accepted and agreed to allow Exclusive British Control over Dir, Swat, Peshawar, Waziristan and Chitral. In return the Afghans were able to secure some strategic strongpoints like Asmar, Nuristan and some other parts of Afghanistan's eastern regions. A small piece of land in Chitral and Waziristan (Birmal) were left un-demarcated because of partial disagreements. The first demarcation of Durand Line took almost three years and efforts were made to align natural barriers or features supporting border needs. On ground more than dozen villages were cut into halves and many agricultural lands had to be abandoned by locals on both sides of the border. Mohamad Tribe and the Waziri tribes were slightly more effected.



Sir Mortimer Durand in 1903. From a 'Spy'

After this Demarcation of border Britishers began increasing their control of the tribal belt through various strategies. More than 60000 British soldiers were allocated by 1897 but still the local tribal chiefs were unhappy over any foreign dictation (Siddique, 2014). By 1904 Lord Curzon the Viceroy of India had to further disintegrate the area. Punjab was geographically limited to areas south and east of River Attock and tribal belt. There are certain Myths also about Durand Line that have been widely accepted and popular with regards to Durand Line. Firstly, This was an interim arrangement only for 100 years, secondly it was not whole heartedly accepted by Ameer of Afghanistan and right from day one it had controversies and last but not the Least; the Durand Line was an agreement between the Britishers and Afghans only (Alikuzai, 2013).

The western region was categorized into two geographical groups one with more British acceptance as North Western Frontier Province and yet another as Tribal



Belt which was to be operated through semi-independent local Malik's/tribal heads. Still locals continued creating problems with skirmishes and small scale raids (Gulzad, 1991). According to one estimate more than 200 raids were conducted from anti Durand locals on the locals working for or supporting Britishers in these tribal areas by 1940. As far as Afghanistan was concerned the declaration of Durand line helped Amir Abdul Rehman in exercising a better control and unification of racially influenced Afghan Tribes.

Irrespective of administrative difficulties Afghan Rulers for almost 56 Years from 1893 AD till 1949 AD maintained legitimacy of Durand Line with British Government in the Sub Continent. They kept endorsing Durand line as an International Border between British Lead Sub-Continent and Afghanistan during various intra state accords, treaties or agreements as were conferred in 1905 AD, 1919 AD, and 1921 AD & even in 1930 AD.

However interestingly despite of a Memorandum of Understanding between Britishers and Afghans, as soon as sub-continent was abandoned by Britishers in 1947 after dividing it into Muslim lead Pakistan and Hindus Lead India (Roberts, 2003); the Afghan Rulers drifted away from any such agreement. Afghan Parliament called as Loya Jirga convened a session in July 1949 to denounce Durand Line.



Source : Durandline (n.d). Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durand\\_Line](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durand_Line)

The Uneasy air between Pakistan and Afghanistan during the first decade after the partition of sub-continent was phenomenal and devastating (Yusafzai, 2011). Afghan Pushtoons Officially Demanded (Siddique, 2014) through a letter from Lord Mountbatten to Enjoin Pushtoons Speaking Areas as Separate Entity who diverted the request to incoming successor authority.

- The Afghan Government looked divided with regards to newly emerged neighbor Pakistan. Their Ambassador to Pakistan expressing that Afghanistan did not have any claims on NWFP and even if there were any, they have been given up in favor of Pakistan. Whereas Afghan



Radio was talking about re-amalgamation of Pushtoons speaking territories back into Afghanistan maintaining status quo of 1650 AD.

- Afghanistan voted against Pakistan at United Nations.
- Pakistan tried exercising stronger control at western Borders for maintaining their administrative control in newly freed Islamic state resultantly local trade and movement through Khurram, Tochi & Gomal bypasses was disrupted or slowed down. The borders were frozen for Trade.
- One or few air strikes were also done to restrict aggressive initiation from Afghani Pushtoons tribes leading to further unease. Even then there were infiltrations' and raids by Afghan Troops, disguised as local tribe's men ahead of Durand Lines. The cross border initiations were so much that a Pushtoons Square (Geographical Site) & a Pushtoons Day (Historical Day) were also pronounced.
- British Ambassador in Kabul, Sir Daniel Lascelles, was having tough time communicating with angry Afghans and he clearly informed London that Afghans have by large rejected Pakistani Authority over Pushtoons belt even if it was earlier part of British Colonial Rule.
- In 1960 and 1961 the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan became worse over Durand Line legitimacy. Aerial Bombing had to be used for containing Afghani's short of Durand Line. So much so Afghanistan began trading through Soviet Union and Russian Influence increased.

Durand Line remained an epicenter of Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Socio Cultural alignment between Pushtoons of Pakistan & Afghanistan can never be undone despite Geographical & Historical barrier/existence of Durand

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Line. In 60's & 70's some alignments and agreements were observed between Pakistan & Afghanistan however at no stage Afghans and specially pushto speaking Afghans were ready to take Durand Line as a Legitimate Border (Johnson, 2011). Between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This has led to serious problems for both governments, the one in Kabul and the other in Islamabad.

The interaction between locals was unmanned, unrecorded and unmanageable for decades. As and when political & security disorders were observed in both countries the cross border interventions were highlighted.

The weak recognition and identity of Durand line lead to greater security concern for Pakistan during Russo –Afghan War from 1979-89. The worst happened when more than 3.3 Million Afghan Refugees migrated to Pakistan and due to socio-cultural and ethnic alignments all around Durand Line they could not be managed properly. Despite of 340 officially marked refugee camps, the Afghans spread and mixed into various demographics of Pakistan Even when the war finished their return remained a question mark.

<b>Pashtuns</b>	<b>81.5</b>
<b>Tajiks</b>	<b>7.3</b>
<b>Uzbeks</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Hazarites</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Turks</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Baloch's</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>3.9</b>

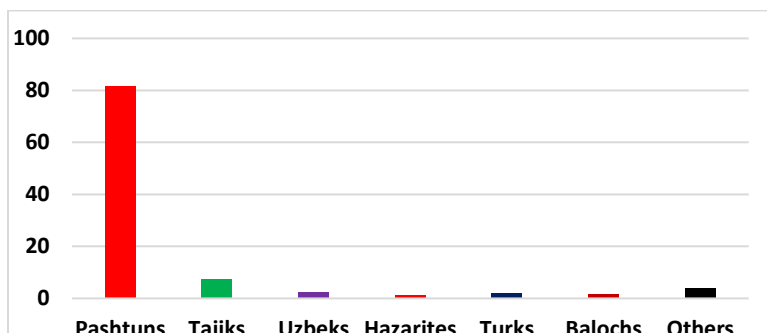


Table 1.1 refers to Racial Breakdown of Registered Afghan Refugees according to Ministry of States & Frontier Region as was recorded during 2005 Census in Pakistan. From 1979 till 2016 Pakistan had to spend a magnum effort and a massive human resource to deal with the multi-dimensional socio economic problems caused because of this invasion (Begum, 2017). Their population grew at fast pace and weak identity of Durand Line served as the biggest barrier in dealing with frequent movement of these refugees over the line. By 2016 UNHCR was proclaiming that almost 3.8 million refugees (Hilali, 2017). have been repatriated back into Afghanistan and only 1.3 million Afghans are left behind. It may be slightly sceptical because large number of Afghan Refugees remain unregistered even today in Pakistan. There are many who operate with dual identity cards and passports. This is even a bigger security concern. Probably this was one significant reason because of which present government (Azam, 2018, September 17), expressed its desire to offer Pakistani Identity to the Afghans Born in Pakistan during Russo-Afghan crises followed by War on Terrorism by US in Afghanistan. However, this can be one of the arrangements.

The Real problem lies in the legitimacy and acceptance of 125 Years old Durand Line. Figure 1.1 clearly indicates that 80% of the refugees that came to Pakistan during 30 Years of foreign invasions in Afghanistan; on one or the other pretext, were Pashtuns.

The Afghan Pashtuns got an opportunity to interact, mix, blend and unify with their racial and linguistic brethren The Pakistani Pashtuns for almost 30 Years which



began transforming into a movement by 2014 initially as Mahsud Tahafuz Movement (Malik, 2016), and then as Pashtun Tahafuz Movement. Anti-Pakistan Elements in India and Afghanistan backed these movements. It sent waves of alarm in Pakistani Military (Afzal, 2018, May 30), as well as Establishment. The Government had to take quick proactive and remedial measures to snub such feels. It seems some interim settlements have been achieved but a lot more has to be done to get Pakistan out of Racial and Regional Divides. Durand Line has been the biggest concern between Pakistan & Afghanistan. Their disagreements on the subject have given room to the outside players to dislodge any peace effort or diplomatic move. India has established four consulates in Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar & Mazar Sharif and an Embassy in Kabul. They are more than 3000 Indians working on diverse Indian Investment projects worth 2.8 Billion US Dollars in Afghanistan. Pakistan continues to desist Indian Presence in Afghanistan and has confidently provided evidence to the judges of international law, of anti-Pakistan initiations by Indians working in Afghanistan. Brigadier Kulbhashan Yadav is just one example. However, we all as good neighbor shave to move ahead of historic enmities and have to look forward to mutually beneficial diplomatic moves.

Afghan Government has to understand as well as the people that Pakistan & Afghanistan have more reasons to be supporting each other rather than getting into hunch pins. Ryszard Czarnecki, Vice President of European Parliament who by birth and origin is polish recently expressed that it's time to revisit the Durand Line trying to discard 1893 Durand line without knowing deep details. Though at no place in his career he ever mentioned about reuniting meager German minority living in Poland ceding with Germany or Independent Palestine because of his strong bondage with Netanyahu. If Afghan Pushtoons are being instigated to raise voice for Pushtoonistan by the champions of new great games, then we also need to listen to the voices of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turks, and Mongols & Persians in Afghanistan. This can never be an option to a Peace Process in South Asia.

The Peshawar APS School Incident served as the biggest alarm in the history of Pakistan with regards to Afghanistan. On the other hand US with their continuous presence in Afghanistan since 9/11 have actually felt (The Dawn Newspaper's



Correspondent, 2017, September 9) and experienced that until and unless Durand Line is properly manned and managed by both Afghanistan & Pakistan the security situation can never improve. It indeed was an opportunity for both states facing extremist elements within their demographics. Pakistan Military was already prepared to take on Durand Line much more seriously than ever before. General Raheel Sharif initiated the ground work followed by General Farooq Bajwa. Seizing Durand Line was not easy. The work started back in Feb, 2017 by Pakistan Army to secure the 2611 km Durand Line with a pair of 3meter chain linked fences and a 2 meter gap shadowed with mesh of Hi Quality barbed wires. According to Voice of America, within First Six Months 200 km of the border fence was set with 150 new border out posts in place (The Express Tribune, 2017, October 13). Improved Fortification around 443 administrative facilities were also done. Building the fence is not easy, at occasion's local Afghans and sometimes even the Afghan Military is indulging to disrupt the fencing work. Just in September and October 2018 there have been such incidents at few places on Durand Line i.e. Kandahar, Zero Point, Saro Shahano.

Pakistan is exercising every cool to desist forcing of fence. As, when and where there is a resistance efforts are being made to decide a line of mutual respect. Anti-Peace elements, those enemies of prosperity in Afghanistan and Pakistan and also those playing great games in the region may probably be behind all such anti fence moves. The fence seems much more essential to establish secure Afghanistan and Pakistan. It surely be of Interest to US who remained disturbed for a decade over Haqqani Network, TTP and some other extremist organizations having easy to and fro movement between Pakistan & Afghanistan. Pakistan is adamant of completing the fence work by fall 2019 or may be early 2020.

Due to weak control and identity of Durand Line the tribes on both sides of the border kept seeking illegal, immoral and anti-state support from cross border socio linguistic ally's and war lords making security situation on both sides instable. According to an estimate just in the tribal belt next to Durand line inside Pakistan is living much below than poverty line (Hyman, 2009, January 27). 57% Population do not have clean drinking water to drink, literacy rate at 17% and for women it is



even worse at 3% and one doctor to deal with 8000 people. Secure borders would help both sides to focus with more ease and clarity on social well-being of the people of these areas (Cheema, & Khan, 2005). Pakistan and Afghanistan must get out of such historic impediments through strategic vision and objectivity as soon as possible. One km this side or one km that side should not be a bigger concern but mutually accepted declaration of border is important. When the borders will be known and established the limits will also be known and respected by both sides. FATA (Shinwari, 2012), needs to be better administered and managed by Pakistan so as to enhance their Security Control.

### **Conclusion**

Lord Curzon the Vice Roy of India a decade after demarcation agreement between British Administration of Sub Continent and Afghanistan was expressing before an audience at Oxford University in 1907 that defining a frontier is not as easy as it looks. He felt it was futile to assert that an exact science of frontiers can be evolved because every nation, government, social group, climatic partners and territorial allies have a different way of looking at frontiers. He declared evolution of a frontier as an art and not a science. It seems he had read or sniffed the aftermath of Durand Line more than 100 Years ago.

During last one decade we have seen magnum improvement not only in the security situation short of Durand Line towards Pakistan but also in overall administrative control of these areas by the Federation of Pakistan. Pakistan Army played a pivotal role in social up gradation of the areas along Durand Line. The Drone attacks have also been halted for good. Cross border interferences and influences have also shrunk to minimal. These all are fruits of strengthening and improving the ground controls on Durand Line. It's time for Afghanistan & Pakistan to take a new start to their relationship. The allegations of cross border interventions have also reduced in numbers. The Demarcation Process and improved watch on the line has isolated some of the extremist groups that were earlier more agile and mobile, moving to and from to play hide and seek with their hunters. With 125 years history of



existence accepting Durand Line and then managing it well is beneficial to both Afghanistan and Pakistan in number of ways as mentioned above.

Conclusively, the declaration of Durand Line is not as important as its legitimate acceptance both by Pakistan & Afghanistan and also its identity and control over the ground by both countries. CPEC served as the initiation point for physical demarcation, clarity of controls and restricting cross border interventions between Pakistan and Afghanistan – The Durand Line. There have been some loss of lives initially but on geo political and strategic front Pak-Afghan border is much more secure and the communities living along the borders are also much at peace in post CPEC scenario. The governments on both sides increased accessibility between the border belts and the center resultantly more development has also taken course, helping to improve the life style of common man in the tribal belts as well.



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