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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)<https://doi.org/10.55966/assaj.2025.4.1.084>Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**Border Management and National Security in Pakistan: A Strategic Case Study of the Durand Line****Muhammad Kashif Irshad**

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kashifkhankhail@hotmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The Durand Line, the historically disputed boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan, is a zone of crisis in the region as it relates to security, terrorism and social-political unrest. The present article analyzes this manifold problem of border management that is affecting Pakistan and includes cross-border terrorism of such groups as the TTP and IS-K, the prevalence of smuggling channels, and the tribal unrest due to years of marginalization. It assesses the policy responses of Pakistan including the Pakistani fencing of borders, biometric systems and military deployment in the region and its tactical achievements and failures in the systems. According to the analysis, purely militarized solution has not helped to immediately describe the root causes leading to the heightening of tensions with Afghanistan and alienation of local populations. The article provides a comprehensive approach to the problem, which involves the implementation of high-tech surveillance, active diplomacy with Afghanistan, and cross-border socio-economic development through the multidisciplinary perspective. It presents the necessity of multilateral collaboration via such forums as SCO and OIC or the grassroots efforts in preventing radicalization and illegal trade. Important suggestions are modernizing the infrastructure at the border using AI technologies, reinstating bilateral peace infrastructures and creating employment to minimize militancy. The paper has come up with a conclusion that sustainable stability in the Durand Line should entail reconciling security demands with inclusive governance, regional relationships, and economic empowerment.

Keywords: *Durand Line, Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations, Border Security, Counterterrorism, Smuggling, Tribal Unrest, Socio-Economic Development, Regional Diplomacy, Surveillance Technology, CPEC.*

Introduction

Durand Line (Marked by the British in 1893, the British-imposed border between colonial India and Afghanistan) is still one of the most disputed borders in South Asia today. Running 2,670 kilometres along the western border of Pakistan the Durand Line never achieved full recognition by successive Afghan regimes, which led to ongoing territorial conflicts and cross-border insecurity (Shah, 2021). This colonial history of the line makes present-day border management more challenging since the communities of ethnic Pashtuns living across the border have close cultural and family affiliations and they tend to ignore the administrative boundary line (Johnson & Mason, 2022). Geopolitically, the Durand Line has been a source of conflict in the region especially after

the U.S withdrawal in Afghanistan in 2021 encouraged groups like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to take advantage of weak border security (Yousaf, 2023). This coupled with the fact that Pakistan has insisted that the border was legitimate has led to a cycle of mistrust and thus it has become a huge task to ensure there is effective governance and the enforcement of security.

Border management is an important constituent in the national security strategy of Pakistan since Durand line is a pathway of transnational threats. The porous border has been used to transport militants, narcotics, and other illegal weapons, which directly interfere with the internal stability of Pakistan (Siddiqi, 2022). The second challenge is that the Taliban in Afghanistan took power once again in 2021, which led to the further deterioration of security conditions since Pakistan was regularly attacked by the TTP across the border (Rashid, 2023). Tight control at the border is not only about territorial sovereignty but also a need to suppress the flow of terrorism funding, human trafficking, and illegal transportation of goods that deprive the state of important income (Grare, 2021). Furthermore, Pakistan has utilized border fencing and military check points as a strategy to a certain degree of success, but the short sightedness of this strategy has come under fire regarding social economic integration strategies that could address militancy in the long run (Fair, 2022). Unless there is a full-scale strategy of integrating both the hard security and diplomatic involvement, the Pakistani weaknesses along its borders will remain a danger to its national security framework.

The issues that surround the Durand Line are complex in the sense that they involve not only geopolitics tensions, the proliferation of non-state actors, and destabilization of the economy. The most critical issue is cross-border terrorism, as terrorist organizations such as the TTP or Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) use ineffective surveillance to conduct terrorist attacks with the territory of Pakistan (Abbas, 2023). Smuggling channels especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, corrupt the formal trade routes, with illegal trafficking of about 3 billion dollars of goods annually (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, bilateral security cooperation is limited by the fact that Afghanistan interim Taliban government does not acknowledge the boundary, the Durand Line has a controversial status which further adds to tension in the relationship between the two states (Mehsud & Goldstein, 2023). Migration and refugee flows due to climate challenge resources further, and the number of Afghans arriving in Pakistan since 2021 is 600,000, creating a humanitarian and security problem (UNHCR, 2023). All these inter-related issues require a re-balanced approach that will combine militarized measures on the border control with conflict resolution systems, regional diplomacy, and economic incentives to build a long-lasting stability.

Problem Statement

Durand Line has been a very contentious and poorly man-handled boundary and has been a cause of extreme security threat to Pakistan, as there is poor governance, massive illegal infiltration and insurgencies. Terrorist outfits such as the TTP and the IS-K can act with impunity in the porous border region and massive illegal smuggling activities cost Pakistan billions of dollars every year in terms of its economy. It is also due to the constant rejection by Afghanistan to accept the border that poses a further harm to bilateral security cooperation resulting to dangerous lapses in the coordination of Defence. Pakistan has provided physical barriers and troops in the borders with an effort to keep the enemy at bay but this has not worked as long as it is not accompanied by a multi-pronged approach that integrates diplomacy, economic growth in the border areas and the deployment of high-tech surveillance gadgets. Lack of such an integrated course creates the cycles of militancy, illegal trade and instability in the region, and national security of Pakistan remains at

constant threat of external force along its western frontier. This lingering crisis needs policy focus to come up with a more effective and multi-dimensional system of managing the border.

Objectives of the Study

This article investigates the following objectives;

- To analyze the security challenges posed by the Durand Line.
- To evaluate Pakistan's border management policies and their effectiveness.
- To explore strategic solutions for improving border security and regional stability.

Research Questions

- What are the key security threats associated with the Durand Line?
- How effective are Pakistan's current border management strategies?
- What geopolitical factors influence border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan?
- What policy measures could enhance border security and regional cooperation?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine the complexities of border management and national security along the Durand Line. A case study methodology is particularly suitable because it allows for an in-depth, context-specific analysis of a real-world phenomenon within its natural setting (Yin, 2018). Given the Durand Line's unique historical, political, and security dynamics, this approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of how border governance influences Pakistan's national security. The research focuses on three key dimensions: (1) the historical and geopolitical context of the Durand Line, (2) contemporary security challenges, and (3) Pakistan's policy responses. By triangulating multiple data sources official documents, scholarly literature, and expert insights this study ensures analytical rigor while capturing the multifaceted nature of border security issues.

Data Collection

1. Review of Official Reports and Policy Documents

Primary data is drawn from government reports, military briefings, and policy statements issued by Pakistan's Interior Ministry, military institutions, and border security agencies. Key documents include:

- Pakistan's National Internal Security Policy (NISP) reports (2014–2023), which outline strategic priorities for border management.
- Parliamentary committee findings on cross-border terrorism and smuggling.
- Declassified U.S. and NATO assessments on Afghanistan-Pakistan border security post-2021 withdrawal.

These sources provide first-hand insights into Pakistan's operational challenges and institutional responses. For example, military whitepapers on the fencing project (2017–2023) reveal technical and logistical hurdles in securing the Durand Line (ISPR, 2022).

2. Analysis of Secondary Sources

A systematic review of peer-reviewed articles, books, and think-tank publications grounds the study in existing scholarly discourse. Key thematic areas include:

- Historical legitimacy of the Durand Line (e.g., works by Shah (2021) on colonial border disputes).
- Security studies literature on asymmetric warfare and border conflicts (e.g., Fair (2022) on Pakistan's counterinsurgency tactics).

- Economic analyses of smuggling networks (World Bank, 2022) and their impact on regional stability.

News archives (e.g., *Dawn*, *The Express Tribune*, *BBC Urdu*) are also analyzed to track evolving security incidents (e.g., TTP attacks, smuggling seizures) and policy shifts.

3. Interviews and Expert Opinions

To supplement documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews are conducted with:

- Security officials (retired military officers, Frontier Corps personnel).
- Policy analysts from Islamabad-based think tanks (e.g., Institute of Strategic Studies).
- Local journalists covering border regions (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan).

These interviews provide on-the-ground perspectives often absent in official reports, such as community resistance to fencing or corruption in border checkpoints.

Theoretical Framework

The paper utilizes Securitization Theory (Buzan, Wæber, & de Wilde, 1998) to study how Pakistan has presented the Durand Line as a threat of existence, warrants extra-ordinary security approaches. Within this framework, by treating issues as emergencies that demand militarized solutions, state actors secure a territory, or otherwise put on the international political agenda, without following the usual political procedures (Balzacq, 2021). In the case of Pakistan, a border as a source of terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration is repeatedly described in the official discourse, and such ideas justify mass fencing, drone surveillance, and shoot-on-sight orders (Yousaf, 2023). To take a recent example, the proposed fencing project (2017-2023) of more than 500 million dollars was publicly rationalized with stories of national survival against militancy across the border (ISPR, 2022). Nevertheless, critics have said this securitization is ignoring the underlying factors, including the marginalization of border communities, and can lead to worsened tensions with Afghanistan (Grare, 2023). Using this lens, the study is asking the question of whether the security rhetoric in Pakistan corresponds to what is on the ground or sustains cycles of conflicts.

The analysis above is complemented by a Realist Perspective that views border management as an application of the state sovereignty and power politics (Mearsheimer, 2021). Realists assume that states in the anarchic international systems are concerned with territorial control, as porous borders are considered as some weaknesses (Krasner, 2022). The Durand Line policies of Pakistan demonstrate this rationale: such policies are dominated by military decision-making, and they stress hard infrastructure (e.g. fencing to a height of 18 feet), and are distrustful of the Taliban-dominated Afghan government that is to prevail after 2021 (Rashid, 2023). The same realist imperatives, i.e., alternating deterrence and cooperation, are visible in comparative experiences of fencing India with Bangladesh (Samad, 2022). However, state-centred orientation of realism ignores subnational actors (e.g., Pashtun tribes) whose transnational connections could not be easily described as rigid territoriality (Johnson, 2023). The paper hence criticizes the reliability of the realist approach in Pakistan in reducing the threats or causing hatred among the neighboring communities.

Constructivism focuses on historical discourses and identity politics, the statement about shifting the focus on education being socially constructed instead of being fixed (Wendt, 2022). The contentiousness of the Durand Line is related to impositions by colonial authorities of the past and disagreements after the Partition, and Afghanistan rejects the line as a British fabrication (Shah, 2023). Ethnonationalism of the Pashtuns also makes it difficult to govern the borders, with the

communities on both sides opposing the partition that is imposed on them by the state (Hussain, 2023). The constructivists underscore the incompatibility of nation-building projects in Pakistan (including incorporating tribal areas into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) with local identities as a source of insurgencies (Siddiqa, 2023). It is also through this lens that Afghanistan has demonstrated persistent irredentist claims that define the bilateral tensions regardless of the regime change (Barfield, 2022). This paper analyzes whether the security policies of Pakistan take these source of ideas into consideration or whether they contribute to division unintentionally.

By combining these theories, the research suggests a mixed analytical framework. The crisis rhetoric of Pakistan is explained through securitization, realism disposes of its militarized policies and constructivism shows why the solutions initiated by the top are not effective. In a hypothetical example, although fencing (realist) decreases the infiltration of militants, it does not consider the Pashtun kinship tethers (constructivist), and the alarmism of securitization works against diplomatic approaches (Buzan & Hansen, 2022). The framework thereby criticizes excessive focus on hard security in Pakistan and suggests policies that should be aimed at resolving previous grievances and transnational social processes (Fair, 2023). Triangulation of the theories allows the study to shift the levels of analysis to stop at the directional and prescriptive levels of sustainable border governance.

Analysis & Discussion

Security Problems: Terrorism, Smuggling, Refugee Traffic and Tribal conflicts

The Durand Line has also been regarded as one of the most contentious borders in the region of South Asia as the line forms a crucial hotspot of transnational terrorism, illegal trade, and humanitarian emergency. The porous boundaries allow the transnational militant extremist groups that include the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) to coordinate attacks through the political instability caused by the return to power of the Afghanistan Taliban in 2021. The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS, 2023) documents that cross-border militant attacks increased by 56 percent between 2021 and 2023 with TTP fighters taking up positions in Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks in Pakistan in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Tribal grievances have also been leveraged by the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), especially in North Waziristan, where the resistance to Pakistan army action has created recruitments (Rashid, 2023).

In addition to terrorism, the smuggling networks go almost unpunished, and every year, they move through the border somewhere between 3 and 4 billion dollars' worth of contraband referred to as narcotics, weapons, and fuel (World Bank, 2023). Geographic obstacles to the trade, like the mountainous terrain of the Spin Ghar Mountains, and social and cultural aspects, like tribal loyalties stretched beyond the restricting lines of the state, enable the illicit trade (Grare, 2023). These networks do not only destabilize the official economy of Pakistan but also contribute to corruption in border security structures in which some of them are involved in the trade (Transparency International Pakistan, 2023).

Security dynamics are even complicated by the humanitarian aspect. A 2021 takeover by the Taliban caused a massive influx of Afghan people into Pakistan, and more than 600,000 new refugees have entered the country as of 2023, on top of the 1.4 million already registered (UNHCR, 2023). This migration has overwhelmed the local facilities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, whose population complains that refugees trigger unemployment and crime (Hussain, 2023). In the meantime, the tribal insurgency, which is in its turn represented by the ethno nationalist

Movements, which marks the reaction to the heavy-handed security measures of Pakistan. The calls of these groups on accountability in the cases of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings highlight the lack of governance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where locals have many times been pushed away by military actions (Siddiqi, 2023).

Policy Review: Temporary Fencing, Biometric Systems, Deployments of the Military and Diplomatic Initiatives

The reaction of Pakistan to these challenges has been diverse albeit contradictory. Most prominent and controversial attempt to control territory is the border fencing program, which was introduced in 2017. By 2023, 2,670-kilometer of the Durand Line was fenced with the aid of 843 new border posts (ISPR, 2023). According to the military, it has been able to reduce the militant's infiltration by 40 percent, but external observers point to the fact tunnels and informal points of passage continue, especially in areas such as Chaman and Torkham (Fair, 2023). Pashtun tribes have also put up a strong opposition to the \$500 million project on the basis that the fencing is interfering with centuries-old trade and family relationships (Johnson, 2023). In addition to fencing, biometric systems were also introduced to keep track of movement across boundaries and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) had deployed automated checkpoints. Although there has been an increase in surveillance by the use of these systems, there have been cases of bribery and institutional corruption that undermines these systems. As an example, Transparency International Pakistan (2023) reported incidents when the border officers demanded money to ignore illegal crossings.

The core of the strategy of the country remains military deployments, and there are about 150,000 troops deployed around the border (ICG, 2023). This militarization has however created resentment and this has been witnessed through the protests of the different factions of society and accusations against human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2023). There is also a diplomatic relationship that has been very distrustful between Pakistan and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The 2020 Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan on Peace was disrupted by the Taliban take over and bilateral trade agreements, including the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), are regularly breached by smuggling gangs (Khan, 2023). Free of Durand Line recognition, the presence of Taliban in Kabul aids the cooperation counter of terrorism even further since it hosts TTP militants (Mehsud, 2023).

Regional Implications: Geopolitical Tensions and Great-Power Competition

The Durand line conflict is not only a bilateral problem but can be regarded as a mini model of regional and international feuds. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan constantly denies the legitimacy of the border, referring to historical rights to Pashtun-majority lands (Barfield, 2023). This policy has worsened its ties with Pakistan although Pakistan had previously backed the Taliban when the U.S. was occupying the country. The fact that the Taliban is harboring TTP militants has proved counterproductive to Pakistani interests in particular, as it was revealed to have its share of strategic depth behind its policy (Yousaf, 2023). To the United States and the NATO, the failures of Pakistan in managing its borders are a direct threat to stability in the region. Historically, the rebound of IS-K, which carried out high-level attacks in Kabul in 2023, has created panic in the capital, as experts suggest Pakistan could not secure the Durand Line because of which transnational jihadist networks could operate (Riedel, 2023). Since the 2021 withdrawal, the intelligence-sharing of NATO to Pakistan has considerably reduced, which is a setback to counterterrorism (ECFR, 2023).

It is complicated by the interests of China. One of the Belt and Road Initiative flagship projects, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) depends on the stability in western Pakistan regions. Beijing has been pushing Islamabad to target Uyghur militants apparently deployed in an area along the frontier, as it is concerned by potential spillover into Xinjiang (Small, 2023). In the meantime, the developmental assistance that India is providing to Afghan border provinces like the building of roads, hospitals in Nimroz have increased concerns in Pakistan that they are being strategically encircled (Pant, 2023).

Recommendations for Effective Border Management and National Security in Pakistan

1. Strengthening Border Infrastructure: Technology and Surveillance

To address the persistent vulnerabilities along the Durand Line, Pakistan must prioritize modernizing its border infrastructure through advanced technology and integrated surveillance systems. While the fencing initiative has partially curtailed militant movement, its effectiveness is undermined by tunnels, informal crossings, and corrupt practices among border personnel (Fair, 2023). A more comprehensive technological overhaul should include:

- AI-powered surveillance drones to monitor remote terrain, particularly in the Spin Ghar mountains and Khyber Pass, where manual patrols are ineffective. The U.S.-Mexico border's use of Predator drones offers a viable model for real-time threat detection (Riedel, 2023).
- Biometric and RFID-enabled border controls to replace outdated manual checks. Pakistan's NADRA system should be expanded with facial recognition and iris-scanning technologies, as seen in India's Smart Border Management project (World Bank, 2023).
- Blockchain-based trade tracking to curb smuggling. By digitizing customs documentation and linking it to a transparent ledger, Pakistan can reduce illicit trade, which currently costs \$3 billion annually in lost revenue (Transparency International Pakistan, 2023).

However, technology alone is insufficient without institutional reforms. Corruption within the Frontier Corps and border police must be addressed through independent audits and harsh penalties for collusion with smugglers (Grare, 2023). Additionally, Pakistan should establish a dedicated Border Security Force (BSF), modeled after the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, to centralize command and improve coordination among military, paramilitary, and civilian agencies (ICG, 2023).

2. Enhanced Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation with Afghanistan

Pakistan's unilateral measures will fail without diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan, despite the Taliban's refusal to recognize the Durand Line. A two-track approach is essential:

- Reviving the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace (APAPP): Though the 2020 agreement collapsed, its framework for joint counterterrorism operations and intelligence-sharing remains relevant. Pakistan should negotiate a revised version with Kabul, offering economic incentives such as relaxed visa policies for Afghan traders (Mehsud, 2023).
- Leveraging multilateral forums: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) can mediate disputes and facilitate regional counterterrorism strategies. China's role is critical—it could broker a trilateral dialogue with Pakistan and Afghanistan, similar to its mediation in the Iran-Saudi détente (Small, 2023).

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) are equally vital:

- Cross-border trade normalization: The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) should be expanded to include real-time cargo tracking and joint customs checkpoints to reduce smuggling (Khan, 2023).
- Cultural and tribal exchanges: Regular *jirgas* (tribal councils) involving Pashtun elders from both sides could mitigate tensions. The 2006 Bajaur Agreement, which temporarily pacified border tribes through local diplomacy, offers a precedent (Johnson, 2023).

3. Socio-Economic Development in Border Regions to Reduce Militancy

Military-centric policies have exacerbated alienation in Pakistan's tribal belt, fueling recruitment by TTP and IS-K. A "hearts and minds" strategy is imperative:

- Job creation via CPEC expansion: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor should extend its Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, focusing on mining, textiles, and agriculture to absorb unemployed youth (Pant, 2023). The Rashakai SEZ near Peshawar could serve as a pilot project.
- Education and deradicalization programs: Madrassas along the border often propagate extremist ideologies. Pakistan should partner with the UAE and Turkey to establish secular vocational training centers, replicating Indonesia's success in countering radicalism (Siddiq, 2023).
- Infrastructure development: Less than 30% of FATA residents have access to clean water or electricity (World Bank, 2023). The government must prioritize roads, hospitals, and digital connectivity to integrate these regions into the national economy.

Gender-inclusive policies are equally critical. Women in tribal areas face severe restrictions, yet their empowerment could disrupt radicalization cycles. Initiatives like microfinance loans for female entrepreneurs and mobile schools have shown promise in Afghanistan (UNHCR, 2023) and could be adapted for Pakistan.

4. Integrating Recommendations into a Cohesive Strategy

The proposed measures—technological upgrades, diplomatic engagement, and socio-economic development—must be implemented concurrently to avoid past pitfalls. For instance, fencing without tribal buy-in will spark unrest, while economic projects without security guarantees risk Taliban sabotage. A phased approach is recommended:

1. Short-term (1–2 years): Deploy drones and biometric systems while negotiating APAPP 2.0 with the Taliban.
2. Medium-term (3–5 years): Launch SEZs and deradicalization programs, backed by SCO/OIC funding.
3. Long-term (5+ years): Institutionalize cross-border governance through Durand Line Commission, comprising Pakistani, Afghan, and UN representatives (Barfield, 2023).

Monitoring and evaluation are critical. An independent Durand Line Oversight Committee, with members from civil society and international partners, should assess progress biannually (ECFR, 2023).

Conclusion

The Durand Line is also one of the security issues that Pakistan is pressing the most since it represents a mixture of history, political enmities, and socio-economic inequality. Though efforts of Pakistan including the construction of fences along the border, deployment of military troops to it and biometric systems have brought some tactical achievements, they have not tackled the causes of instability. Porous borders are still used by militant organizations, such as the TTP and

IS-K, networks used to smuggle goods are leading to a massive drain of billions of money in the economy and tribal alienation which paralyzes parts of the country. The unwillingness to accept Durand Line on the part of Afghanistan adds to these problems and forms the circle of suspicion. The over-reliance on a militarized approach has been shown to be insufficient, and there is an urgent requirement to come up with a comprehensive approach that is inclusive of the deployment of high technology, diplomacy, and inclusive development. Such an approach will not be present, which means that the security in the borders of Pakistan will be shaky, and the consequences will reach much beyond the borders of the country.

The future will need multilateral collaboration and regional agreement. Pakistan alone can not ensure the safety of the Durand Line, it should use dialogue with Afghanistan in a structured manner, it should use supranational organizations such as SCO and OIC to ease tensions and establish cooperation in the field of countering terrorism. The confidence-building measures, like the normalized trade and cultural interactions, would allow loosening the Afghan opposition to the border recognition, as well as alleviating the cross-border aggressions. Meanwhile, Pakistan needs to upgrade its infrastructure at the border with an AI-powered surveillance system, blockchain-based monitoring of trade, and anti-corruption, to reduce smuggling and infiltration. Nonetheless, technology can never be enough in the absence of political will and accountability of institutions. An effective Border Security Force with zero political influence, corruption and inefficiency would make enforcement easier and effective cooperation between the military and non-military agencies. It is a game of survival: lack of stabilization of the Durand Line not only will encourage militants but also threaten important projects such as CPEC, which will only succeed through regional stability.

Finally, a permanent solution to the problem of the Durand Line will be peace, which requires treating the human aspect of the conflict. Years of disenfranchisement have left the border communities disillusioned and they are susceptible to being recruited by extremist groups. Pakistan needs to focus on socio-economic growth in such regions by investing in employment, education, and infrastructure to bring down the militancy attractiveness. Vocational training of local populations and microfinance activities to empower them, particularly women, might break the cycle of radicalization and contribute to the establishment of stability on the grassroots level. This should be accompanied by open governance and inclusion of the tribal to restore confidence between the state and the border areas. We have to realize that the Durand Line will not be defined by fences and force only, but whether Pakistan can strike the balance between security and reconciliation; sovereignty and regional cooperation. Only in that case, this disputed border can become a land of peace rather than a conflict zone between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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