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Pakistan-Afghanistan Relation: Analyzing Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Challenges Since 2021-2024

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Abstract

This study examines the traditional and non-traditional security challenges to Pakistan from Afghanistan after the US withdrawal through the lens of neo-classical realism. Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, the relationship of Afghanistan and Pakistan is marked by continuous disagreements and disputes leading to mistrust and enmity. This study analyzes the traditional security challenges like state sponsored terrorism and Durand Line issue as well as non-traditional security challenges being faced by Pakistan after US withdrawal. Using qualitative approach, data is collected from various primary and secondary sources including government reports, security reports by think-tanks, academic journals and expert interviews. The finding indicates that traditional and non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism, Durand Line issue, drug, water conflict, refugee crisis and smuggling of arms and drug trafficking are key irritants that are being faced by Pakistan, which is overshadowing the diplomatic efforts. This study discusses the status of both traditional and non-traditional security challenges, while the international and domestic factors which is shaping the behavior of the states. This research briefly discusses the Afghan perspective and proposes strategies to address these problems.

Keywords: *Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations, Traditional Security Challenges, Non-Traditional Security, Regional Stability, Post-2021 Dynamics*

Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan, neighboring Muslim countries, share a 2640-kilometer land border called the Durand Line. Over centuries, this border has been crossed daily by thousands of individuals, fostering extensive people-to-people connections, trade, and economic interactions.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country, but it serves as an important link between South Asia and the Middle East. Due to its geostrategic significance and location, Afghanistan is a gateway to the resource-rich Central Asian states. It provides one of the most efficient and cost-effective air and land routes for accessing the natural resources of Central Asian states from other regions and globally (Qassem, Ahmad, & Durand, 2008).

Afghanistan and Pakistan not only share a border but also have a historical, ethnic, and cultural relationship with each other. Pashtun resides on both sides of the border and speaks the same language. However, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is not smooth as one of the major reasons is the Durand Line. Durand Line is considered as an international border by Pakistan between both countries while no Afghan government has yet considered it as a border and wishes to assert control over the Pashtun-speaking parts of Pakistan (Feuerstein et al., 2024) Afghanistan is called the heart of Asia, and it served as a buffer zone during Cold War. Afghanistan has been a battleground for years where great powers fought. Soviet Union (USSR) had its forces on the ground in Afghanistan in the late 1970s where it fought against Mujahideen who were assisted and trained by Pakistan and the United States. The US, for the containment of communism, assisted local fighters called Mujahideen and provided them with military assistance. Geneva Accord was signed in 1988 when the USSR agreed to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. After their withdrawal, civil war erupted among different factions of mujahideen. The power vacuum left by the USSR was filled by the Taliban, an Islamist group that believes in the implementation of Shariah Law. The assumption of power by the Taliban in 1996 was the first time the Taliban consolidated power in Afghanistan. The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan was smooth during the Taliban's rule. As Pakistan had strategic interests in Afghanistan, it assisted in the formation of a government that was going to fulfill its strategic interests. The policy of strategic depth by Pakistan shaped the relations with Afghanistan. The strong relations between Pakistan and the Taliban contributed to the strained relations between Afghanistan and India. The Taliban's assumption of power came to an end in 2001 when the incident of 9/11 happened. The launch of Operation "Enduring Freedom" by NATO led by the US against Al-Qaeda (who were supported and protected by the Taliban) with the support of Pakistan changed the geopolitical scenario. The security situation in Pakistan deteriorated after 9/11 and the American launch of the operation in Afghanistan. Other than the Durand line issue, terrorism is another major challenge that has emanated from the land of Afghanistan. Both countries have accused each other of terrorist and militant activities. Before 2001, Pakistan had not faced any suicide attacks. However, by the conclusion of 2009, the nation had experienced over 200 suicide attacks, with 87 occurring in the same year. Additionally, there were nearly 500 instances of bomb explosions and IED detonations, primarily concentrated in the Northwestern Frontier Province (NWFP) and FATA regions. The year concluded with a fatal attack on a Muharram procession in Karachi. The total casualty counts for the preceding eight years had soared to an alarming 25,000, with 2009 alone contributing approximately 3,025 casualties, encompassing militants, police, military personnel, and civilians (Humanitarian Library, 2014). Since 2001, Pakistan has collaborated with the United States in the Global War on Terror. However, this partnership has imposed significant burdens on Pakistan, including substantial economic losses amounting to \$130 billion and the tragic loss of approximately 80,000 lives. This

loss is still occurring in terms of bombing, suicide attacks, militancy, terrorism, and phases of violent extremism that prevail in society (Naz, 2024). Post 9/11 relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained strained. Other than terrorism, there are many conflicting issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The water dispute between both countries is one of the non-traditional security challenges and has not been solved yet. The dispute on the Kabul River is a challenge that Pakistan has faced since its independence. The Treaty of Kabul, signed in 1921, stands as the final official agreement between the involved parties before the partition occurred. As outlined in Article II of the treaty, Afghanistan consented to granting British officers and tribespeople on the British (present-day Pakistan) side of the border access to the River Kabul for navigation and affirmed the preservation of established irrigation rights. In more recent times, amid strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the latter has contended that, given Pakistan's status as a new state emerging from British India rather than a successor state to Britain, it does not possess the rights (Ranjan & Chatterjee, 2020). The refugee crisis and its influx in Pakistan is one of the core issues. Overtime, whenever Afghanistan faced challenges in the form of foreign intervention, or transition in government (in 1990 and 2021), a huge influx of Afghan refugees in Pakistan was recorded. Pakistan hosts the highest number of Afghan refugees in the world. Illicit trafficking is another major challenge that Pakistan faced from Afghanistan over time. It includes the trafficking of goods, humans, and drugs. Due to the porous border, the trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan to Europe and other countries has increased. Afghanistan is one of the largest producers of opium poppy and heroin. During American presence in Afghanistan, various operations were carried out to eradicate poppy fields but the high dependence of the economy of Afghanistan on opium production made it impossible to uproot it (Whitlock, 2022). Climate change is one of the major issues that the world is facing and both Afghanistan and Pakistan are not immune to it. However, in the case of Afghanistan, the country is facing different crises on multiple fronts and the spillover effect is faced by Pakistan. Due to the environmental crisis, shortage of water, and shrinking of economic activities due to floods and drought, Afghanistan is trying hard to preserve the resources for self-help and is compelled to migrate internally and externally (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2023).

As Afghanistan remained unstable due to foreign intervention and civil wars, different sources of instabilities spilled over in Pakistan over time. However, in 2021, the US and Taliban signed a peace deal in February 2020 (Qazi, 2020). In August 2021, the US completely withdrew its troops from Afghanistan leaving the country militarily vulnerable and politically unstable. The power vacuum was filled by the Taliban. When the Taliban came into power, it was expected that the strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan would be normalized, and bilateral relations would be enhanced. However, the bilateral relations between Taliban-led Afghanistan and Pakistan faced mounting challenges. The western border of Pakistan has been active since the Taliban takeover having both traditional and non-traditional security challenges for Pakistan. This research examines the traditional and non-traditional security challenges for Pakistan from Afghanistan after the US withdrawal. Through descriptive analysis, the research delves into the contemporary dimensions of Pak-Afghan relations, analyzing the security challenges that

Afghanistan perceives from Pakistan. This research also explores the status and trend of traditional and non-traditional security challenges between both countries.

Literature Review

Rashid (2008) and William argue that the fall of the Taliban in the 1990s was a strategic debacle for Pakistan because the Afghan government under Hamid Karzai, who was educated in India, reduced Pakistan's influence in Kabul. Constantino (2020) highlights that during the early 1990s, the Afghan jihad redirected toward Kashmir, intensifying the insurgency in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Grare (1970) emphasizes the economic dimension, contending that India opposed the Taliban due to the threat they posed to energy projects, particularly the Central Asian gas pipeline. By consolidating power, the Taliban could have obstructed this project, undermining India's strategic interests. Accordingly, India supported successive Afghan governments to divert Pakistan's assistance away from Kashmiri insurgents.

Jones (2018) argues that Pakistan played a decisive role in enabling the Taliban's survival and resurgence after their fall in 2001, asserting that the group's consolidation would not have been possible without Pakistan. Similarly, Siddique (2015) notes that Pakistan's establishment envisioned the Taliban as "a fortification against India to the east," making their rise integral to Islamabad's strategic depth doctrine. Nemat, cited in Kumar (2023), observes that India and Pakistan have been locked in a long-standing struggle for influence in Afghanistan, and the Taliban's return to power in 2021 backed by Pakistan spooked India, as Pakistani dominance threatened Indian interests. Gowdara (2022), however, argues that the Taliban are now attempting to reduce reliance on Pakistan and develop ties with India, representing a departure from their earlier policies.

Other scholars also highlight the domestic and bilateral tensions shaping Afghanistan–Pakistan relations. Ahmad and Majeed (2016) stress that Pakistan's interest in Kabul has historically been linked to ensuring that Afghan territory does not become a hub of Pashtun nationalism, while Afghanistan has attempted to use border disputes to challenge Pakistan's legitimacy. Tariq, Rizwan, and Ahmad (2020) argue that India has used Afghanistan as a proxy arena against Pakistan, sponsoring militant activity that destabilized Pakistan's border regions. Violence escalated significantly after the U.S. withdrawal, with over 100 civilian officials, journalists, and social workers killed in 2020 alone (Abed & Gibbons-Neff, 2021). Reports also indicate that following the Taliban's return, they released over 2,300 Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants from Afghan prisons, including senior leader Maulvi Faqir Mohammad (Z. Khan, 2021). Analysts caution that TTP has since formed connections with Baloch separatists, threatening Pakistan's internal security (I. A. Khan, 2023).

Moreover, Maqbool (2022) and Tariq, Amir, and Bano (2021) argue that Pakistan's foreign policy has hardened post-U.S. withdrawal, as Islamabad imposed strict visa regulations, refused new refugee camps, and increased border security, citing decades of economic and social burdens. Pakistan has simultaneously faced heightened risks of separatism and militancy in tribal areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. These developments underline that the Taliban's return has not only reshaped Afghanistan's internal dynamics but also exacerbated Pakistan's domestic and regional security challenges.

Theoretical Framework: Neo-Classical Realism

Neo-classical realism, introduced by Rose (1998) and further developed by Snyder and Lobell, provides a suitable framework for analyzing Pakistan–Afghanistan relations. It blends the systemic focus of neorealism with the domestic considerations of classical realism, emphasizing that foreign policy is shaped not only by international constraints and opportunities but also by domestic politics, leader perceptions, and societal pressures (Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies, n.d.). This “Innenpolitik” approach incorporates cultural, social, and political dynamics into foreign policy analysis. Davidson, cited in Paul (2015), argues that the influence of domestic actors, such as nationalist groups and the military, can determine whether a state adopts an aggressive or defensive posture in its foreign policy.

Applied to Pakistan–Afghanistan relations, neo-classical realism highlights both external and internal drivers. Internationally, disputes over the Durand Line remain unresolved. Pakistan recognizes it as an international border, while Afghan governments, including the Taliban, have refused recognition. Pakistan’s fencing of the border was meant to curb terrorism and trafficking and to formalize the Durand Line, but the Taliban government opposed it, framing it as a colonial legacy (Maqbool, 2022). Domestic factors, such as Pashtun identity and cross-border tribal ties, also shape perceptions and policies. Pakistan’s long-standing strategic depth doctrine has further fueled its support for the Taliban, though this policy has been complicated by the Taliban’s role in fueling TTP insurgency inside Pakistan (Tariq et al., 2021).

The interplay of domestic and systemic pressures has produced mixed policy outcomes. On one hand, tribal communities favored free cross-border movement, while Pakistan’s security establishment pushed for restrictions, leading to tensions with Kabul. On the other hand, efforts at temporary ceasefires with TTP, mediated by the Afghan Taliban and tribal leaders, collapsed, escalating violence and forcing Pakistan to deport thousands of Afghan refugees (Maqbool, 2022; Tariq et al., 2021). The announcement of Operation *Azm-e-Istehkam* further illustrates the role of domestic divides within Pakistan’s leadership, as conflicting positions among the military and civilian leadership complicate decision-making.

Thus, neo-classical realism demonstrates that Pakistan’s Afghanistan policy cannot be explained solely by systemic pressures such as India’s influence or U.S. withdrawal. Domestic factors—nationalist sentiment, tribal identities, refugee crises, and civil–military relations—have equally shaped Islamabad’s policy trajectory, reinforcing the complex, multi-layered nature of Pakistan–Afghanistan relations in the post-2021 era.

Research Objectives:

- To analyze the traditional and non-traditional security challenges between Pakistan and Afghanistan after the US withdrawal.
- To explore the status of the traditional and non-traditional issues between both countries.

Significance of Study:

This research helps in understanding the hindrances in Pak-Afghan relations that keep both countries from cooperating. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan could not develop good relations due to various traditional and non-traditional security challenges. This study aims to address the traditional and non-traditional security challenges that Pakistan is facing and help in

understanding the perception of security challenges that Afghanistan perceives from Pakistan. In addition to this, the exploration of the status of traditional and non-traditional issues between both countries provide valuable insights into identifying and prioritizing security issues that require immediate attention.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology is divided into further components.

Research Design:

The design of the research is descriptive and explorative. Both primary and secondary sources have been used to transcribe the information and to explore the trend and status of security challenges between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Research Method:

A qualitative research approach is used in this research. The sources that used in this research paper mainly come from secondary sources as well as primary sources. Secondary data include news articles, journals, social media, and books. Primary sources include discussions with relevant experts, academicians.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive and exploratory data analysis is used. Content analysis and exploratory data analysis is used to see the current trend and status of issues between both states.

Traditional Security Challenges from Afghanistan Towards Pakistan

Traditional security refers to a state's ability to protect its sovereignty and survival from external and internal threats, mainly through military preparedness (Afzal, 2021). Pakistan's traditional security challenges from Afghanistan can be explained using the Neo-Classical Realist perspective, which emphasizes both international and domestic factors in shaping state behavior and foreign policy (Burki, 2010). Since Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long border, security issues are amplified, and these concerns deepened after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The power vacuum created by this withdrawal was filled by the Afghan Taliban, leading to intensified threats such as terrorism and territorial disputes. Moreover, groups like the Pakistani Taliban publicly praised the Afghan Taliban's takeover, framing it as a victory for the wider Islamic world, which further complicates Pakistan's security environment (Deccan Herald, 2021).

Security Concerns: The Enduring Threat of TTP and Islamic States (IS)

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban, was officially formed in 2007, but its roots go back to the Cold War period when Pakistan's tribal areas, especially FATA, were used as training grounds for Mujahideen fighters against the Soviet Union (Burki, 2010). The weak administrative system under the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), combined with poverty, religious sentiments, and tribal traditions, created favorable conditions for Talibanization. After 9/11, when the U.S. launched Operation Enduring Freedom, Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters sought refuge in FATA, which soon became a hub of militancy (Ismail Khan, 2021). The Pakistani Taliban allied themselves with the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda, sharing the common goal of imposing Sharia law (Deccan Herald, 2021). When the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021, the TTP celebrated, and its leader Mufti Noor Wali pledged loyalty to the Afghan Taliban leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada (Tribune, 2022). The United Nations reported that the Afghan Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and TTP cooperate closely, with financial, logistical, and

operational support flowing to TTP from across the Afghan border (Al Jazeera, 2022). Since its formation, the TTP has targeted civilians, security forces, schools, and mosques, causing mass casualties and directly challenging Pakistan's sovereignty (Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies [PIPS], 2022).

After the Taliban takeover in Kabul, many imprisoned TTP fighters, including senior leaders, were released, strengthening the group's ability to carry out attacks in Pakistan (Gulwareen Khan, 2023). Although peace talks were attempted, including ceasefire agreements in 2021 and 2022 brokered by the Afghan Taliban and tribal elders, these failed, leading to renewed violence (Tribune, 2022; Ismail Khan, 2021). By 2023, Pakistan saw a 69% rise in terrorism-related deaths, most linked to TTP, which also attacked security posts in Chitral near the Afghan border (PIPS, 2023). Alongside TTP, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) has also re-emerged, carrying out attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan after the U.S. withdrawal (Wilson Center, 2019). Reports show that TTP, ISKP, and the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) together accounted for nearly 78% of terror incidents in Pakistan in 2022–2023 (PIPS, 2023). Pakistan has repeatedly urged the Afghan Taliban to take action against TTP safe havens, but Kabul denies hosting them and insists the issue is Pakistan's internal problem (Ayaz Gul, 2023; Latif, 2023). Analysts argue that due to ideological ties and security concerns, the Afghan Taliban are unlikely to act against TTP, which continues to be a major hurdle in Pakistan–Afghanistan relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

Durand Line Dispute

The Durand Line dispute remains the most serious issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan. While Pakistan considers it the legal international border, Afghanistan rejects it, calling it a product of colonial pressure (Bezhan, 2014; Begum, 2017). Over the years, the issue has shifted from "Pashtunistan" and "strategic depth" to militancy and cross-border terrorism, especially after 9/11 (Khan & Wagner, 2014; Iqbal, 2024). Pakistan fenced most of the border by 2021 to stop smuggling, illegal crossings, and attacks, but the Taliban oppose the fencing and deny the border's legitimacy (Samadi, 2024; Khan, 2022). This has led to repeated clashes, such as the 2023 Chaman and 2024 Kurram incidents (BBC, 2023; RFE/RL, 2024). Pakistan links the dispute with rising TTP attacks, while Afghanistan insists on free movement across the line. Despite the tension, Afghanistan has never taken the issue to the UN, keeping it a bilateral problem that continues to fuel mistrust and security challenges between the two neighbors (Iqbal & Ishaq, 2024).

Non-Traditional Security Challenges from Afghanistan to Pakistan

Non-Traditional Security (NTS) challenges refer to threats that usually require non-military responses but can still lead to conflict, such as disputes over scarce resources, transnational crimes, trafficking, smuggling, and refugee flows. Unlike human security, which focuses mainly on individuals, NTS considers both the state and individuals as key actors in security, with particular concern for vulnerable groups like non-state actors and displaced populations. These challenges are cross-border in nature and often overwhelm the capacities of developing nations like Pakistan. After the fall of Kabul, when President Ashraf Ghani fled and the Taliban took control, Pakistan initially expected smooth relations due to its historic support for the group.

However, instead of stability, new non-traditional threats emerged, including Water Conflict: A Looming Non-Traditional Security Challenge, Refugee Crisis, and Smuggling and Trafficking.

Water Conflict: A Looming Non-Traditional Security Challenge

Water disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially over the Kabul River, have become a serious non-traditional security challenge. Afghanistan depends heavily on the river for its freshwater needs, irrigation, and energy, while Pakistan relies on it for drinking water, agriculture, industry, and electricity generation in regions like Peshawar Valley and the Warsak Dam. After the Taliban took power, they continued earlier Afghan plans to build multiple dams on the Kabul and Kunar rivers to improve irrigation, boost the economy, and gain political leverage. However, since Afghanistan and Pakistan lack a water-sharing treaty, these unilateral moves threaten to reduce water flows into Pakistan, worsening tensions between the two states (Iqbal, Ishaq, & Khan, 2019; Britannica, 2023).

Several past attempts to negotiate a water agreement failed due to poor data sharing and political mistrust. Although initiatives by Pakistan, USAID, and the World Bank in the 2000s tried to mediate, no treaty was finalized. More recently, India's growing role in Afghan infrastructure projects, such as the Shahtoot and Friendship dams, has further worried Pakistan. The Taliban's acceptance of Indian involvement adds to Pakistan's concerns, as it sees both reduced water access and increased Indian influence in the region. For Afghanistan, however, dam construction is seen as a necessary step to address water scarcity, droughts, and the impacts of climate change, even if it risks worsening bilateral relations (Kakakhel, 2017; Naseemullah & Gul, 2022).

Refugee Crisis:

For more than forty years, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees, making it the country with the largest refugee population in the world. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, around 600,000 more Afghans have entered Pakistan, adding to the already large population of 3.2 million, most of whom are women and children (UNHCR, 2024). Pakistan's main concern has been that some refugees are linked with militancy, especially after attacks like the 2014 Army Public School incident, where Afghan safe havens were blamed (Shirazi, 2023). Security fears increased further in recent years when Pakistani authorities confirmed Afghan nationals were involved in multiple terrorist attacks, including the 2023 Zhob and Sui incidents and the 2024 Bisham suicide bombing (Gul, 2024). As a result, in October 2023, Pakistan announced the deportation of undocumented refugees, despite criticism from international groups (Hussain, 2023). Public opinion also strongly favored this move, as most Pakistanis believed that repatriation would improve national security and bring domestic peace (Afzali & Koser, 2021).

At the same time, Afghan refugees have shaped Pakistan's society and economy. Many work as laborers, small vendors, or business owners, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, but they also place financial strain on Pakistan's weak economy since they lack citizenship and do not pay taxes (UNHCR, 2024). Pakistan's "jus sanguinis" law prevents Afghan refugees from gaining nationality, limiting their rights while increasing the state's responsibility to provide healthcare, education, and public services. Pakistan views refugee management through the lens of national security and strategic interests, while the Taliban accuse Pakistan of using refugees as leverage against them over the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issue (Afzali & Koser, 2021). Critics, including Afghan leaders and civil society, argue that deportations are harsh, especially

during winter, and call for more respectful treatment to maintain Pakistan's international image (Hussain, 2023).

Smuggling and Trafficking: An Escalating Crisis

Smuggling and trafficking of drugs, arms, and goods from Afghanistan pose a persistent non-traditional security challenge for Pakistan. Despite the Taliban's ban on opium cultivation, Afghanistan has remained a global hub of narcotics, with 85% of the world's opium originating there until 2022. Although opium production reportedly decreased by 95% in 2023 from 6,200 tons to 333 tons the trafficking of methamphetamine surged, as Afghan groups adapted by extracting ephedrine from the ephedra plant and diverted chemicals (Jha, 2023). Pakistan, sharing a porous 2,400 km border with Afghanistan, has become a major transit route for these drugs, facilitated by weak border management, difficult terrain, and local complicity. Reports highlight that 40% of Afghanistan's drugs pass through Pakistani routes, exacerbating domestic challenges such as rising drug addiction among students, with every tenth student allegedly affected (Abbasi, 2023; Fazli, 2023). Seizure operations by Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and Customs confirm the scale of the crisis; for example, authorities intercepted drugs worth billions at the Torkham border and in Khyber operations in 2023–24 (Afridi, 2024a; Afridi, 2024b). While Pakistan has tightened its anti-smuggling measures including imposing restrictions on goods under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) trafficking networks continue to exploit the economic vulnerabilities of marginalized communities and the separatist unrest in Balochistan (Rana, 2023; Stone, 2022). Afghan traffickers and Pakistani intermediaries, including local mafias and militants, operate in highly organized networks, often using children and refugees as carriers (Fazli, 2023). Although Taliban counter-narcotics operations dismantled 585 heroin labs and seized 1,799 tons of drugs, the lack of alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers' risks pushing them toward methamphetamine production or other illicit economies (Press Releases, 2024). This escalating crisis highlights the intertwined security and socio-economic challenges faced by Pakistan, where narcotics proliferation not only destabilizes border areas but also threatens social institutions, particularly the education sector (Abbasi, 2023; Dawn, 2023).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

Conclusion:

Since the independence of Pakistan, both Afghanistan and Pakistan have certain disagreements and due to this, the cooperation between both countries have been fluctuating overtime. Afghanistan has been the battlefield of major powers, and it has acted as buffer state. Due to the instability in Afghanistan, various traditional and non-traditional security threats are emanating and due to the spillover, the neighboring and regional countries have been affected. Pakistan being the neighbor of Afghanistan can't isolate itself from the changing global dynamics and the challenges being faced by an Islamic country with whom Pakistan shares common language, ethnicity, culture and religion.

The challenges that Pakistan is facing from Afghanistan are the result of rivalry between superpowers, their competition to rule the world, and the legacy of colonization. Taliban were ousted from power in 2001 and after twenty years, they are again ruling Afghanistan, but this time, only few countries gave recognition to them. The lack of recognition is due to the fact that Afghanistan have been the hub of terrorist and militancy. In addition to this, the violation of

human rights is another reason why Afghanistan is unable to gain recognition in the world. Pakistan is considered as the closest ally of the Taliban; therefore, it was expected that the relation between both states will be smooth and will flourish. Contrarily, Pakistan is facing major traditional and non-traditional security challenges from Afghanistan.

The most imminent challenge that Pakistan is facing from Afghanistan is the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It is the ideological partner of the Taliban which is operating in Pakistan, and it is based in Afghanistan. Military operations carried out by Pakistan Army had weakened the roots of TTP. However, when Taliban came into power, TTP reorganized itself and have been carrying out deadly attacks in Pakistan. Though Taliban rejected the claim that it is providing safe haven for TTP but reports from different independent organizations and thinktank have confirmed the support of Taliban to TTP. Likewise, the rise of ISIS in the region after US withdrawal from Afghanistan is also a challenge to Pakistan. The reorganization of ISIS in Afghanistan can be predicted by the deadly attacks carried out by ISIS during the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and power transition from the Afghan Government to the Afghan Taliban. After the Taliban came into power, different terrorist attacks were carried out in Pakistan by ISIS. After TTP, ISIS hold second position in carrying out deadly attacks in Pakistan. the most important security challenge that Pakistan is facing is the challenge to the sovereignty of the state, Taliban's non-recognition of Durand Line. After the Taliban came into power, questions have been raised about the legitimacy of Durand Line. Though Durand Line is an internationally recognized border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, however, Taliban has not accepted yet. The fencing of Durand Line by Pakistan has been destroyed at various points from Afghan Taliban and harsh words have been used against it. Though major power like US has clarified its position over Durand Line, but Taliban has not recognized it yet and demanding open border between both countries with less restrictions.

The non-traditional security challenges that Pakistan is facing from Afghanistan have strong links between traditional security challenges. An important non-traditional security challenges that are originating from Afghanistan towards Pakistan is water conflict. The two major source of water in Pakistan are Indus River and on the other hand, Kabul River. Despite the agreements and Indus Water Treaty, India is constructing dams in Illegally Indian Occupied Kashmir (IIOK), thus resulting in the reduction of water flow towards Pakistan. After the Taliban came into power, Afghanistan has approved the construction of dams on Kabul River. Pakistan being a lower riparian country, has certain rights over the Kabul River. However, the unilateral decision of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is putting large number of people's lives at stake. Another traditional security challenge from Afghanistan is the refugee crisis. When US left Afghanistan, the vacuum of power was filled by the Taliban. Due to the strict governing practices of Taliban and violation of human rights, thousands of Afghans left Afghanistan and majority of them went towards Pakistan. Pakistan who was already hosting millions of Afghans since the Soviet Invasion, faced another influx of a third wave of refugees from Afghanistan. The economic, political situation of Pakistan were inadequate to handle large number of refugees. However, the security concerns of Pakistan overshadowed the economic and political condition and Pakistan took decision of repatriating unregistered Afghan refugees. The decision was taken amid the attacks on security personnels by TTP. The deteriorated security situation of Pakistan after the Taliban

came into power has been the fundamental reason of the strained relationship between both states resulting mistrust and non-cooperation. The other significant non-traditional security challenge being faced by Pakistan is the smuggling of drugs, weapons. Afghanistan is considered as the world's major contributor in the opium production, as it produces more than 80%. After the Taliban came into power, they promised to eradicate poppy fields to discontinue the supply of opium to the world, as it does not align with the religious teaching of Shariah law. In the first year of Taliban's governance, no reduction in opium production was recorded. As per the reports, from 2023-2023, there is a significant reduction in the production of opium and wheat is being harvested in place of opium. However, the production of opium has reduced but the production of Methamphetamine which is synthetic drug produced by a plant called Ephedrine abundantly found in Afghanistan. Though Taliban has put restrictions on opium production, but alternatives of such drugs are available in the market. Major trade route for trade or any other purpose goes through Pakistan therefore, drugs are easily accessible and are used by youngsters in educational institution. The Pakistani authorities are seizing drugs from different crossings of Pak-Afghan border, which clearly signifies that the drug trafficking has penetrated deep into the markets of both countries. In addition to this, arms are also smuggled through Afghanistan. As Pakistan is facing nationalist movement within Baluchistan, the arms are therefore smuggled through the porous borders and are used by separatists and militant.

Policy Recommendation:

- The major challenge that Pakistan is facing, is from the security front. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is not an insurgent movement rather it's a challenge to the writ of the state of Pakistan. Security analyst Rana (2024) says that since TTP is not an insurgent movement, therefore, there should be no negotiation with TTP rather surrender should be the last option for them. Therefore, a greater role of the Afghan Taliban is needed to convince TTP to avoid attacks for peace in the region as it is inevitable for Afghanistan as well. Initiatives such as rehabilitation, reintegration and resettlement of TTP member should be launched (Rana,2024).
- Security analyst Gul Dad (2024) see TTP as an imminent threat to Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan should opt for "carrot and stick approach." The presence of TTP members in Afghanistan is a continuous threat. Therefore, Pakistan should make efforts to bring them back in the country and deal with them.
- The domestic issues of Pakistan are giving space to the terrorist outfits to solidify their foot in the country. The crisis in Baluchistan is giving free space to pose both traditional and non-traditional security threats to Pakistan. Baluchistan crisis needs a political reintegration. Solving the concerns of nationalist and separatist movements need a comprehensive approach from state institution. The insurgency in Baluchistan is also increasing the traditional and non-traditional security threats. It gives a free space for external forces to pose significant challenges to Pakistan. To avoid further deepening of the issues, it is important to work on the national cohesion of Pakistan. Therefore, the institutions of the state must come up with a comprehensive policy of political reintegration of Baluchistan.

- The role of religious scholar will be significant in countering extremism. Therefore, the religious scholar must play their role in promoting state cohesion. Government should encourage the teachings of Islam that promote cohesion and social harmony. In Muslim countries, the religious scholars have the utmost power to change the perception of the people at large scale without using any force. Their involvement is crucial in fostering moderate interpretations of religious teachings, enhancing social harmony and supporting national unity. Therefore, it's important to realize the significant position of religious scholar in countering extremism and de-radicalization.
- To combat non-traditional security challenge like smuggling and drug trafficking, the security of the border should be increased with proper checking on the crossing points. The intelligence capability should be enhanced to identify those individuals who facilitates arms and drug smuggling, and strict actions should be taken against them. The matter of bilateral issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be resolved on priority base. Both the countries should engage in diplomatic efforts and promote confidence building measures. It's important for both countries to realize that in the world of interdependency, two neighbors who share common religion, culture language and interest, can't keep itself isolated from each other. Therefore, both countries should resolve their bilateral issues.
- The issue of Durand Line must be resolved by the involvement of third party. The water conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be resolved and a treaty or an agreement like an Indus Water Treaty between Pakistan and India should be provided as per international law. This will help both the states to lessen the bilateral conflicts between each other. Terrorism is a transnational security threat, therefore, the regional countries must consider it as collective responsibility to eradicate terrorism. The terror attacks against Chinese nationals in Afghanistan and Pakistan indicate that terrorism is a threat to every country and its not bound by geography. Recent attacks in Iran by Islamic States reveals that terrorism have deepened its roots. Therefore, a comprehensive and collective policy is needed to exterminate terrorism.

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