

An Enigma of Pak-Afghan Border Security

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Abstract

The conundrum of Pak-Afghan border security is not new. It's among those contentious issues that became an impediment in the governance of both states. In recent times, this issue has emerged yet again, but there is no substantial stratagem embedded to deal with complex security border management. This lack of border management, especially on the status of international recognition of the Durand line, is rejected by the successive governments of Afghanistan, has created a power vacuum which is again a security predicament of governance for both states. Previously, Pakistan proposed border security arrangements which were rejected by Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan was blamed for harboring militancy, cross border terrorism, drugs and trafficking in Afghanistan. In order to address the allegations from the Afghan government and to secure the border from insurgency directly harming Pakistan's internal security paradigm, Pakistan's military has suggested and constructing a border fencing mechanism which is the most pertinent arrangement to bar further border security issues. This paper would analyze the reservations over the constructions of fencing across the Pak-Afghan border from the Afghanistan's government and security agencies, while it has been a consistent demand from their side for Pakistan to provide with a border security mechanism. Any indiscretion over border management would cost Pakistan at the highest stake, because as being the immediate neighbor, this security management fallout would have a spill over impact on Pakistan.

Keywords: Border Management, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Security Dilemma, Governance issue

Introduction

Border of any country is the integral part of any security arrangement as they have to face various occurrences which might be good or bad for that state. Border security management is important for the stability of daily operations of a country. Therefore the security of borders is the essential for state's security. The imperatives of border security are the state forces which are expected to secure territorial integrity and secure the borders as well. Therefore, the border management; both in War and Peace is the crucial part of the Pakistan security policy. With the complex interdependence, globalization and changing dynamics of political culture, the management of border areas increased dramatically. It's a complex phenomena which involve numbers of factors and challenges such as concentrated actions by the administrated body; legal, economic, security, intelligence agencies and human rights etc.

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Friendly and well-disposed relations among the neighboring countries are considered as an essential part of any state's foreign policy, particularly, when the two states had a similar conviction framework and ethnicity. The social, cultural and religious similarity between states makes a feeling of belongingness and security which are viewed as crucial for survival in the international system. Regardless of having the close geographical proximity; a common fringe (Durand Line) of 2230 KM, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan were never genial. Historical legacy constantly assumed a crucial role in forming the conduct of the two states. Unfortunately, both states, since long are confronting the internal and external challenges, which eventually have an adverse effect on their bilateral relations. The internal crisis such as political insecurity, financial backwardness and lack of cohesion between the two states create a trust vacuum which empowers the other forces to act more purposely in augmenting these distinctions. Afghanistan, being a landlocked state, is of great interest for imperialist powers. Afghanistan also played a buffer zone between Britain and Russia over the region of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Amid the British guideline an accepted demarcation was marked in 1893 between British India and Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan as an approach to separate their sphere of interest. Afghanistan repudiated to formally recognize the Durand Line as the legitimate demarcation between two states (Omrani, 2009, p. 190). After the independence in August 1947, the relations between two states oscillated due to various reasons, but in particular border security management and militancy in the bordering regions caused sour relations.

Pakistan due to its geo-strategic location has already understood that the security and stability of the region depends on the peaceful relations between two states. Over the course of history, both states have witnessed the ascent and fall of their relations. Despite the fact that the Pakistani government adopted measures to normalize the relations, nevertheless, those developments have reversed due to 9/11 attack and Pakistan's association as a Front line State in 'War against Terrorism'. Since 9/11 the relations among both states are incessant failing which further hampered the process of bilateral relations.

Historical Background

Pakistan after its independence in 1947, believed in the Islamic ideology of brotherhood and solidarity among Muslim states., therefore, maintaining cordial relations with Muslim states was always a fundamental principle of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan successfully produced its amiable relations with most of the Muslim state. Afghanistan, however, has acted indifferently since the beginning. It was the only state who opposed Pakistan's membership in the United Nations due to Pashtun territories on the Pakistani side of the Durand line (Frederic, 2006). This situation was further depreciated when a coalition was made between New Delhi and Kabul in 1970s. To deal with the situation, Pakistan has supported Afghanistan in 1979's war against the Soviet Union and Pakistani government supported the Taliban government

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in order to improve the relations, but this effort brought no fruitful results (Frederic, 2006).

The downfall of bilateral relations was started when King Shah was removed from power and replaced by Sardar Muhammad Daoud Khan, a fervent advocate of Pashtonistan, called it as “the Lost Lands”. The USSR was among the first states to recognize the Daoud’s government as they weren’t very fond of King Shah for his (PW) Pro-Western policy (Ghous, 1988). Soon after Daoud’s government, the hostile relations between both amplified. Both blamed each other for increasing security threats and irritants in their states. Even the Afghanistan President refused to attend the summit of the Organization of Islamic States (OIC) in 1974 and sent his representative to raise the issue of Pashtonistan.

In later years, both Pakistan and Afghanistan understood the need of good relations between in any case, soon the Z.A. Bhuttos' administration was toppled. The Russian attack of 1979 opened new skylines of 'bilateralism' for them. Pakistan collaborated with US to train Afghan Mujahedeen against the Russian intrusion. Until the incidence of 9/11, Pakistan kept up great relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan with the end goal to anchor its strategic depth and the risk of strategic encompassing from the neighboring nations. The 9/11 event and the USA assault on Afghanistan brought deadly ramifications for Pakistan, for example, radicalism, outskirt security, religious fanaticism and sectarianism. Moreover, Pakistan role as a Frontline partner changed the Afghanistan policy approach in Pakistan and another blame game has begun from the two sides.

Durand Line: Beginning of a Controversy

The main disagreement between both states is Afghanistans’ rejection to recognize the Durand Line as a legitimate international border and continue demand of ‘Greater Pakhtunistan’¹. This demand is challenged by Pakistan time and again. Pakistan sees Afghanistan as strategic depth for defense, i.e. Pakistan cannot afford to have two aggressive front i.e. India and Afghanistan. However, Pakistan’s policy of strategic depth in Afghanistan is opposite to Afghanistan’s quest of Pakhtunistan. The issues of Pakhtunistan and Durand line are the expansion of each other. These issues are consequential of both states bilateral relations. Afghanistan has ethnic and social ties with the Pashtun populace of Pakistan and as this was once part of Afghanistan, a prior British rule in the subcontinent. The British government made forged document and annexed this area with the subcontinent². The recent claim of Afghanistan for

¹ A social development that tried to rejoin the Pashtun clans of British India and Afghanistan in a free state called "Pashtunistan.

² British coined Pashtuns in their system through various policies of land income. The land income framework has become a permanent property for those Pashtuns who could manage the cost of the high tax rate.

greater Pashtunistan is supplemented by social and ethnic ties with the Pashtun group of Pakistan. Here likewise, the conflict of interests is a deciding variable for the Pak-Afghan (Poullada, 1975). So, the issue of Durand line is important to investigate the Pak-Afghan relations. Afghanistan follows the argument that the Durand Line was an imposed accord and they were compelled to follow it, so now, the Pukhtuns living in those areas should give the right of self-reassurance. Furthermore, they argued, since the Durand Line divided the area into two separate nations, it actually divides a country into two pieces, which should be re-integrated according to the demand of the general population (Griffiths, 1981). Pakistan rejected such claims because in 1947, the Pushtuns population voted in favor of Pakistan, so the authenticity of Afgan argument is ambiguous. Besides, shockingly, Afghanistan just considers Pakistan side of Pushtuns as "Pushtunistan". They don't consider the Pushtuns of their side as a major part of "Pushtunistan"(Caroe, 2011).

Energy Deposits of Central Asia: New battle Field

Central Asia is a landlocked and full of natural resources, so it became an important strategic location for the major powers of the world. That's why Central Asian states under the expansionist motives, were controlled by major powers such as Britian, USSR and China. In the middle of the 19th and 20th century, the Central Asian location, including Afghanistan was a zone of the major conflict between British-Russian Czars Empire, which was termed as the "Great Game" of that time. The tension over the energy resources were augmented during the Cold War when both Russia and the USA fought over the natural and raw resources of 3rd World states (Ebel n Memon, 2000). With the Russian disintegration in 1991, five new states emerged, i.e. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The central Asian natutal deposit was discovered in late 1990s, so this region again became the flashpoint of energy resources in which both international and regional players have their substantial interest (Usha, 2012). In the same way the significance of Pakistan and Afghanistan has also increased for major powers as Afghanistan is the passage to Central Asia, a New Great Game has begun within the area and major stakeholders have their contending interests with both states, which makes the situation worse.

Cross Border Terrorism: Pakistan-Afghanistan Security Obligations

Another significant factor contributing intense Pak-Afghan relations is the aftermaths of Soviet intrusion of Afghanistan in 1979 which resulted in subsequent cross border terrorism. The purpose of this territorial invasion was to subdue Jihadist and non-state actor's power and to help stabilizing the Afghan government Russian influence in the region against the USA can be extended. The invasion was strongly condemned by USA and its allies (Qazi, 2001). In United States pursuit of curbing the communist ideology, Pakistan turned into a US partner and Frontline state against, created Mujahideen and Jihadist culture in Afghanistan. These Jihadis weren't only acknowledged, respected and honored by the Madrissa and orthodox school, but also

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provided with financial, ideological and logistical support by the US, Western States and Arab world. After the USSR collapse in 1991, the Taliban government was made up in 1995 and it was instantly recognized by Pakistan, the US and its Western Allies. The inclusion of Afghan Taliban in the state's administration raised serious concerns, i.e. radicalization, human rights violation, cross border terrorism, drugs, and trafficking etc issues. The radicalism, cross border terrorism and extremism, that both states are facing today are the repercussion of Afghan jihad (Coll & Shah, 2013).

After the 9/11 incident and the US Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the security predicament of both states deteriorated due to the nexus between Afghan irritants and the tribal areas in FATA and KPK with sectarian motives. South and North Waziristan and Bajaur offices have been the sanctuary for al Qaeda, Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Under U.S, Pakistan started military operations against aggressors in FATA in 2002. Periodic however destructive U.S. invasions into South and North Waziristan and Bajaur have added the presence to the extremism in FATA and bordering regions. A more violent Jihad outlook was added to the collaboration of Al-Qaeda and Central Asian militants, against the US influence and Pakistan's military operation (Riedel & Brookings Institution, 2012). On October 2009, U.S. Hellfire rockets struck a madrassah in Damadola (Bajaur), in which 82 people were killed; most of them were students (The Nation, 2009). Within one week, Taliban propelled their first suicide assault against Pakistani security forces and NATO Allies and launched asymmetric terrorist attacks (Christine Fair, Crane, S. Chivis, Puri, & Spirtas, 2010).

Pak-Afghan Border Fencing: A New Dimensional in Border Security Management

The latest development over the security issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan is border management. Border security involves continuous evolution due to the evolving threat and peril in the world. These emerging threats persuade the states to adopt more concrete border security management protocol. National security specialists continuously highlight that the hesitation and incapability within immigrants' concerns and fringe vulnerability leaves the nation helpless to considerably more prominent national security challenges. Border security is one of the most important components of the Border Security Management. Border security doesn't restrict to illegal immigrant movements, but also extended in illegal drugs movement, human trafficking, weapons, terrorism and militancy. With the advent of sovereign states, border management exhibit the extend of power and state writ.

With the emergence of transnational terrorism groups, state sovereignty is at stake. In the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan, weak political control in these areas and mounting external influence has brought tribal life at the brink of the wreck. It was estimated that at one point both Pakistan and Afghanistan faced unprecedented cross border movement where more than 50,000 people crossed borders. Most of them came from Afghanistan to Pakistan (Daily Times, 2016). At first the border management issue wasn't the highest priority of both states. Until the Afghan State's disapproval of the fringe and increment in militancy in Pakistan, prompted a purpose

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inside Pakistan to advocate for viable administration and guideline of its fringe. To keep an eye on militant activity and to guarantee security in the area, General Pervez Musharaf proposed to fence the Afghanistan-Pakistan border (The Dawn, 2007). Afghanistan response over this proposition wasn't welcoming as they were of the view the fence will part the families across the Puchtun belt, however Pakistan is determined to build this fence to bar the cross border militancy.

In the June 2016, under new border Management Pakistan initiative, Pakistan vow to facilitate new border management to restrict militancy, drugs and human trafficking. Gate construction at Torkham crossing would allow the monitored movement across the border with valid travel documents. In February, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan were completely closed for one month after the constant militant attack which killed almost 100 people (Dawn, 2017).

The military estimated Rs 56 billion (\$532 million) for the fencing, while they are intended to make 750 border posts and utilize hi-tech surveillance to keep away any irritation. "(The fence) is a paradigm change. It is an epochal move in the border control administration," said an armed force officer in charge of South Waziristan amid a presentation to foreign media (The Express Tribune, 2017). The military has fenced almost 200 km area and it included the most violent areas of FATA besides that the army has planned to recruit thousands of new troops to guard those areas. A previous attempt was made to fence at the border a decade ago, but that wasn't successful but knows rigorous efforts are being made because the fencing of the Durand line holds the country's security (The Express Tribune, 2017). Since 2017, a pair of 3-meter chain link barrier, with a 2-meter gap topped with pointed wire, has been installed along more than 200 kilometers of the border. Besides that, more than 150 new border posts and forts of 443 facilities have been built, the rest will be completed by 2019 (Gul, 2018). Border agreements have occasionally resulted in hostile encounters. A Pakistani official said "A stable western border is in the interest of Pakistan and synchronized efforts are in hand on a fast track basis to complete this daunting mission because it is vital for the security of Pakistan and it will also end the blame game,". On the other hand Afghan government, despite of their allegations, still not favoring the fencing as they rejected to recognize the former British-era demarcation of 1893, claiming that the barrier further deteriorated the problems for divided ethnic Pashtun families (Gul, 2018). Omar Zakhilwal, Afghanistan Ambassador said "We do oppose the barbed wire. That is against the closeness of the population on both sides and the interdependency that exists [between them]," he said. Pakistan, on the other hand, of the view "It is not fencing against the people of Afghanistan, but it aims to impede the terrorist flow. We are spending 76 billion rupees [\$600 million] of this poor [Pakistan] nation on the border fencing," said army spokesman Gen. Ghafoor (Gul, 2018).

Conclusion

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Border Security is one of the most crucial management in recent political trends. This concept is, even though not new, but the complexities of international system make this issue of high importance for state's security. Border security is important for Pakistan both internally and externally. There are security compulsions e.g. Indo-Afghan nexus, funding militants for cross border terrorism, refugee's etc persuaded Pakistan to adopt strict security measures e.g. border fencing. Even though this action was taken to reduce the instances of militancy, which is again favorable for both states, however, Afghanistan didn't support the idea. Border security management is very important in a state survival. Pakistan and Afghanistan as neighboring state can utilize this geographical proximity in their favor. The integrated border management not only beneficial for both states to monitor security predicament, but also help them in increasing the productivity of both states in various fields. Cooperation and coordination would help them in decreasing the security challenges and thus it will increase the trust level of both states.

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