

## The dynamics of Pak-Afghan relations: an analysis of (mis)trust between the two countries from 2001-2018

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### Abstract

Pakistan and Afghanistan share the contiguity of neighbourhood and bonds of Islam. Despite linguistic, cultural and traditional similarities, their relations have remained in a spin. Pakistan and Afghanistan are geographically so dependent on each other that the effects of war and peace could be felt on both sides of the borders. Many factors are involved in upsetting these relations: the hostility of Afghan rulers and their tilt towards India since Pakistan's independence; Durand Line and Pakhtunistan issues and Pakistan's role during the Soviet-Afghan war (1979-1989) in supporting the Afghan Jihadists. Pak-Afghan relations remained exemplary during the Taliban rule (1996-2001). The paper explores: a) Pak-Afghan relations during President Hamid Karzai's rule; b) the relations under President Ashraf Ghani; c) India's role in sabotaging the relations; and d) Pakistan's efforts in Afghanistan's rebuilding and reconstruction process. The study finds that the dynamics of relations in the post-9/11 era were not cordial and there was a great trust deficit between the two countries during different US-led regimes. The paper is based on historical legacies and an analytical understanding of them. The previous research on the subject did not fully explore the era between 2001-2018, which this study aims to fulfil.

**Keywords:** Durand Line, Pakhtunistan, Afghanistan, Trade Transit Facility, geographical contiguity, anti-Jihadists, Operation Enduring Freedom, War on Terror.

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## **1. Introduction**

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two neighbouring Muslim states of the Asian continent. Both countries share geographic contiguity, religious, linguistic, cultural, and traditional identities (Jalalzai, 2003). Relations between the countries have not been promising since Pakistan's independence. The main reason behind these tense relations is the attitude of Afghan rulers. They are hostile towards Pakistan a) due to growing Indian influence in their country; b) Durand Line legacy; and c) Pakhtunistan issues. Presently, the India and Afghanistan relation are sound and smooth so, she did not want to establish good relations with Pakistan. Pakistan always sought to have brotherly relation with Afghanistan, but the attitude of the Afghan government has not been good towards Pakistan. The main reason for the hostility of Afghanistan is the growing Indian role in their affairs and the Afghan government tilt towards India.

Pakistan took steps to improve the relations, but the response was not positive. Pakistan has always welcomed good relations with Afghanistan has been an important indicator for Pakistan's foreign policy point of view. Quid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah the founder of Pakistan remarked on the occasion of receiving a paper from Afghan representative Sardar Najibullah Khan, "I desire that the relationship between these two brotherly countries would be the greatest and the friendship will be long lasting. I do trust that coming negotiation that may take place will secure and strengthen all the more the goodwill and friendship between our two countries" (Jalalzai, 2003).

For trade activities with other countries, it totally depends upon the seaports of Pakistan while Pakistan's future relations with Central Asian Republics (CAR's) mainly depend on Afghanistan's transit. For this reason, the relationships between the two neighbours need to be smooth. There are five important dynamics which shape the course of Pak-Afghanistan relations, they are: a) The 1983 legacies of Durand Line; b) Geography is the second important dynamic; c) Pakhtunistan and the status of a Pashtun population; d) The Anti-Soviet Jihad. And e) After 9/11 the fifth established factor is the war on terror.

Pakistan and China Belt and Road Initiative (CPEC) would be equally beneficial for Afghanistan and CAR's (Rehman et al., 2018). Pakistan wants to establish trade links with Afghanistan and CAR's because they are rich in mineral resources of Oil and Gas. Pakistan is facilitating them with Trade Transit Facility (TTF) by providing them access to her seaports. But the prospects of all these endeavours are conditioned with peace and stability in Afghanistan and positive and trustworthy bilateral relations. Peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the greater geo-strategic interests of Pakistan. Because so far as Afghanistan will remain unstable it will pose a security threat to Pakistan.

## **2. Historical legacies affecting Pak-Afghan relations**

### **2.1. Durand Line and Pakhtunistan**

Durand Line is a border between Pakistan and Afghanistan 2,640-kilometer (1,640-mile) (Schons, 2011). The agreement was signed before the Indian partition between the British India government and Afghanistan. When the Afghan government realized that the British authorities intend to leave India granting independence to its people it sent a delegation to

London to meet the British Premier and ensured him that the area of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) which was annexed by the British government, should be given the choice either to become independent or to become part of Afghanistan. The Afghan government claimed that those parts of the frontier province (NWFP now as KP) were once happened to be a part of Afghanistan, during the rule of Ahmad Shah Abdali (1747 to 1773) to the river Indus (Burke, 1973).

Afghan leaders wanted to create hurdles for the newly born state. They adopted an antagonistic attitude toward Pakistan. Afghan Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim visited India on 21 June 1947. During an interview he reiterated, that if the majority areas of North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan was not given independence then these areas should be acceded to Afghanistan. It will provide a corridor to the Arabian Sea through which they could promote their trade relation with the world (Jalalzai, 2003). The statement clearly demonstrates the opportunistic designs of Afghanistan. The Afghan political elite thought it to be a good opportunity to fulfil their designs and safeguard their interests.

The negative attitude of Afghanistan towards Pakistan was mainly because of Indian influence in their affairs. She never wished to see Pakistan stable but to create hurdles in the way of her progress. India had never missed the opportunity provided to increase the difficulties of Pakistan. The Afghan government adopted all such tactics to dispute the territories labelled with the issues of Pakhtunistan. They claim to be the parts of Afghanistan during Ahmad Shah Abdali's reign (Burke, 1973).

When in 1947, Pakistan sought the UN membership Afghanistan voted against Pakistan. They conditioned the recognition to Pakistan with the independence of Pashtun of NWFP province from Pakistan (Jalalzai, 2003). So, from the very beginning the Afghan government devised a policy of enmity toward Pakistan. Pakistan cannot afford another enemy on the western frontier because she is already experiencing one on the eastern border in the shape of India 'ten times larger in size and military. Pakistan a newly independent state weak economically and militarily and being in transition faced serious existential threats from India. In October 1947 Afghanistan withdrew her negative vote against Pakistan admission into UN after reconciliation through diplomatic channels (Burke, 1973).

## **2.2. Indian role in Pak-Afghan relations**

India has never wished for good and cordial relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and working to create mistrusts between the two Muslim neighbours. Thus, sandwiching Pakistan between eastern and western security complexes and creating two faced security dilemmas for her. Since independence Pak-Afghan relations are being impacted by Indian threat perceptions which make security an important determinant for Pakistan's foreign policy goals. The post-partition security dilemma of Pakistan in the shape of growing Indian threats heightened the mistrust in Pak-Afghan bilateral relations.

Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan has been much influenced by a security threat in the shape of the India-Afghanistan security alliance against Pakistan. During the Durand Line and Pakhtunistan crises India covertly backed the Afghanistan's stance on the issues (Dupree, 1999). Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the issues have been cooled down yet still they are considered threats (Usman, 2008). The rivalry between both countries is so much deep

rooted that they “lose no opportunity to checkmate each other on the Afghan soil” (Rehman & Khan, 2014).

Apart from the economic and political interests, India has had a significant strategic interest in Afghanistan e.g., the geographical location and its proximity to Central Asia substantially enhanced Afghanistan's importance for India (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2007).

Afghanistan is called “the heart and cockpit of Asia” (Rashid, 2000). India though sharing no direct border with Afghanistan and Central Asia yet considers both a part of the indirect and extended neighbourhood (Rehman & Khan, 2014). Since signing of the “friendship treaty” Afghanistan has great inclination towards India as compared to Pakistan. India and Afghanistan closeness in relations is due to variety of reasons as Nehru (the Indian premier) states that “our relations are based on the memory of past and renewed mutual interest the most powerful factors” (Rehman & Khan, 2014, p. 18). As Rehman and Khan (2014) analysed that India successfully exploited the dictum “enemy of enemy is my friend” (p. 18).

During the 60's due to growing border tensions between China and India and Pakistan's friendship with China Delhi and Kabul came very closer. Hussein exploring the situation remarked, “the growing threat from China and Pak-China closer ties brought Afghanistan and India together (Hussain, 2004). The era witnessed the great commonality and strength of the relations between the two. Mr. Bhutto became so curious about the strengthening Indo-Afghanistan nexus that he warned the Army Chief of Pakistan's Army to “prepare for a two-sided attack from Afghanistan and India” (Mahdi, 1999). Thus, Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan and struggle for establishing a friendly and co-Pakistan government are part and parcel of “the strategic depth in Afghanistan” to counter Indian influence on the western frontier.

India since 1947 till the rise of Taliban (1996) supported and influenced almost all governments against Pakistan. It was only for a short time before the Taliban regime when the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan were trustworthy and understandable. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan India supported the rise of communist lobbyists and anti-Jihadist elements in Afghanistan which were against the interests of both Pakistan and the U.S. After the defeat and withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan the country was set free to a civil war (Salim et al, 2018; Shaffan et al, 2020). India was managing its affairs with Russia, Iran and Tajikistan to support the Northern Alliance against the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan (Siddique, 2011).

Different analysis suggests that the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Global War on Terror (GWOT), most specifically the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan provided India with a fresh opportunity to regenerate her strategic designs in Afghanistan. The Indian Embassy was reopened after a seven year interval, after the overthrow of the Taliban regime (Siddique, 2011). Since then, onward India has remained busy in Afghanistan by launching financial support programs and reconstruction projects in roads and dams etc. A rare analysis suggests that till now India has pledged 1.2 billion USD to Afghanistan making it the largest regional donor and a top five global contributor (Bajoria, 2009). Beyond, an estimated more than 4000 Indian citizens are busy in different reconstruction and developmental programs in Afghanistan (Siddique, 2011, p. 42).

A research study analysing the current Indo-Afghan alliance and its future prospects explores, that India and Pakistan have highly desperate goals for Afghanistan – Delhi is striving hard for sustenance of Kabul government and integrating Afghanistan into a wider regional, political and economic structure. “By strengthening Afghanistan, India advances its own national security objectives namely, eliminating a critical safe haven for terrorists and continue plotting to do so in the future, projecting power throughout South Asia (and beyond), and gaining access to Central Asian trade and energy resources” (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012).

The Indian hearty involvement in Afghanistan reconstruction and development a more importantly the activation of Chabahar sea port in Iran are all lofty goals of India to access the energy rich CAR’s region. The signing of India–Afghanistan–Central Asia trade agreement in 2003 are important strategic programs (Siddique, 2011). Pakistan is easy with Indo-Afghanistan trade and economic relations and reconstruction projects but when it comes to security cooperation between them Pakistan perceives it to be a threat and the creation of a second front which she cannot accept. During the long history after partition till now India has used Afghanistan against Pakistan which has severely impacted the course of Pak-Afghan mutual relations (Vestenskov, 2017).

### **3. Trust and mistrust: a theoretical understanding**

There has been a history of trust deficit between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Their relations have always been characterized by the maxim of “trust and mistrust.” Countries tend to establish relations under their geostrategic concerns. The theory of trust and mistrust was developed by Andrew H. Kydd in his book “trust and mistrust in international relations” published in 2006. The war and peace phenomenon are based on trust and mistrust among the nations. Trust is a requirement for states to remain at peace while mistrust can lead countries to war Kydd (2006) discusses the dynamics of trust and mistrust in the cold war era.

The theory further says that trust between the states can lead them to cooperation while mistrust can bring effects of war. In international relations, the conflict represents that the states involved are untrustworthy while cooperation among the states develops trust in them though there is a possibility of conflict even between the trustworthy states “cooperation has reassuring effects” which means the process of trust building. Another dynamic is “mutual reassurance” which means two parties are involved in confidence building and easing mistrust. In the process of trust building, reciprocating cooperation is necessary which means being moderate on the part of one - to live and let live in peace (Mulaj, 2007).

### **4. Methodology**

The article presents the state of bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan during 2001-2018. The analysis is drawn based on historical events in descriptive manner, the major questions to find out is: Why there was a lack of trust between the two countries during the course of time? and what are the factors that influenced the relations? The literature presents analytical and historical method of research in content analysis format.

### **5. Post 9/11 changing dynamics and Pak-Afghan relations**

Soon after the terrorist attacks on world trade centre the US agencies put allegations that Al-

Qaeda was behind the terror. US president George W. Bush stressed the Taliban regime to hand over Bin Laden (of Al-Qaeda), and mastermind of 9/11 attacks or otherwise prepare consequences. The US was also pressing Pakistan to cut off diplomacy for the Taliban and support the GWOT. It was a very critical moment for the Pakistan policymakers on one side Pakistan had friendly relations with Kabul regime and on the other hand the world and UN pressure. Pakistan agreed to take part in GWOT due to international support for the US cause and Security Councils resolutions asking UN member countries to support GWOT. Pakistan provided all sort of assistance to the US-OEF “including aerial, logistic and intelligent sharing” (Idrees & Naazer, 2021). Pakistan had no other option but to join GWOT against Al-Qaeda and Taliban. Once again Pakistan becomes a front-line actor serving others (US and her allies) interests in South Asia taking U-turn in her foreign policy.

### **5.1. Relations during President Hamid Karzai**

After overthrowing the Taliban government in Kabul, the US and allies installed an interim government in Kabul which Islamabad assured to fully support. The government of Pakistan fully recognized the new Afghan set up and making her policy clear to cooperate in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Afghanistan’s strategic significance could be measured in its positioning as a gateway to CARs which was exploited by powerful countries in the name of the war on terror. In February 2002 the Afghan president Hamid Karzai during his visit to Islamabad discussed bilateral relations with Pakistan. Pakistan reaffirmed her commitment to assist the newly elected Afghan government in all major dimensions (Durani & Khan, 2002).

In April 2002 President Musharraf during his visit to Kabul announced \$100 million aid for Afghanistan’s reconstruction purpose. Pakistan also sponsored Multi Donor Conference for raising funds and getting support for Afghanistan’s reconstruction. Pakistan also extended support in the presidential election in 2004 and parliamentary elections 2005 by sealing the Pak-Afghan border to avoid the risk of uncertainty in Kabul from Pakistan border. Relations deteriorated when President Karzai alleged Pakistan of assisting the Taliban and sponsoring terrorism in Afghanistan. So, it becomes obligatory for the international community to cut off all the sources and roots to defeat terrorism (Durani & Khan, 2002, p. 52). The statement disturbed the sentiments of Pakistani authorities who had been supporting the electoral and democratic process in Kabul.

In March 2006 Pakistan’s Interior Minister during his visit offered Karzai to fence the border and plant mines to stop the terrorist outflow on both sides but Karzai did not agree to the proposal. To intact the western border security Pakistan deployed 80,000 military and Paramilitary troops. Pakistan does not favour instability in Afghanistan but wants a stable and prosperous neighbourhood.

The Afghan president Karzai with forty members delegation came to Pakistan on February 17, 2006 in the funeral ceremony of the nationalist politician Abdul Wali Khan the son of the great Bacha Khan (the Pashtun leader who launched the Khudai Khidmatgar movement during the British rule in India), during a press conference he reiterated, “if they don’t stop the consequences will be ... that the region will suffer with us equally. In the past we had suffered alone; this time everybody will suffer with us. Any effort to divide Afghanistan ethnically or weaken it will create the same thing in the neighbouring countries. All the countries in the

neighbourhood have the same ethnic groups that we have, so they should know that it is a different ball game this time” (Siddique, 2011).

Pak-Afghan border skirmishes continued for years, and the Afghan security forces violated the Pakistani border hundreds of times. The increased Indian involvement in their affairs was setting a new challenge for Pakistan’s policymakers. After a short period of trust and cordiality the affairs were again disturbing. India since 2001 OEF has become a major investor in Afghanistan and destabilizing Pakistan through her spy agents and sponsoring cross border terrorism into Pakistan. Turkey since long has been trying to appease the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Turkey arranged head of state level meetings and ministerial level meetings between the two countries. During a meeting in 2007, Musharraf and Karzai agreed on working group for CBM between the two countries (Setas, 2013).

After the 2008 general elections the government changed in Pakistan and Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) came into power. The PPP expressed a strong desire to normalize the relations between the two neighbours. Afghan President Karzai participated in the oath ceremony of President Asif Zardari of Pakistan. The leader made a commitment during their meeting to support each other in countering terrorism. Zardari’s reciprocal visit to Kabul in 2009 brought the two countries in further collaboration and signed countering terrorism agreement. The assurances were followed by September 2010 Foreign Ministerial level meeting on countering terrorism agendas (Katzman & Thomas, 2013). A recent study reveals that during President Hamid Karzai’s government, the gaps in mistrust and continuous blame game grew (Khan, 2015).

## **5.2. Role of diplomacy and confidence building**

Civilian-level initiatives or diplomacy have always worked in bringing relations to normality between the two hostile countries. To reduce the tensions and build confidence a delegation of prominent non-Pashtun leaders Abdullah-Abdullah (former foreign minister), Ahmad Zia Masood, Rashid Dostum (Uzbek warlord) with other delegates travelled to Islamabad and discussed the options for bilateral cooperation. Pakistani authorities welcomed the initiative and reiterated her full support and cooperation for the peace and stability of Afghanistan. “Friendly ties between Islamabad and Kabul are vital not only for the two, but also for the region, in the old sense of exporting peace but also in light of enhancing connectivity in South Asia” (PIPS Conference Brief, 2018).

In 2012, British PM David Camron visited Kabul he brought Pakistani PM and Afghan president together in a trilateral meeting. During this meeting the leadership agreed to establish a joint investigation commission about the border clashes. On the side-lines of UN annual meeting in New York both leaders met and discussed contentious issues Karzai also agreed to sign a strategic pact with Pakistan. These efforts eased the tensions and Pakistani government coordinated her efforts for peace building and reconciliation with the Taliban and insurgents. For the last couple of years, the joint meetings of Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) have been held with Pakistani authorities. During these meetings different peace building strategies has been discussed in connection with intra-Afghan peace process.

The Afghan foreign Minister visited Islamabad in December 2012 during his meetings with Pakistani counterpart they discussed Roadmap 2015. Pakistan released 15 Taliban leaders as

peace gestures on this eve. The reciprocity was followed by Afghan intelligence head in December 2012 who met and discussed different issues of common interests including intelligence sharing. He was followed by Afghan defence Minister Bismillah Khan in January 2013; he met General Kiyani who agreed on Afghan's military training at Pakistani Military Academy (Ahmad, 2013). The trilateral meeting arranged by the British government facilitated restoring peace-dialogues with Taliban within six months and giving permission to the Taliban to open office in Qatar with HPC. The meeting was attended by Pakistan's president Zardari and general Kiyani while President Karzai was also present. During the same the Pakistani authorities stressed upon the Afghan authorities to roll back the strategic pact with India which was not accepted by Karzai.

In May 2013, amid of compromised and wishes for trustful relations a very sad incidence of firing on the Pakistan military check posts by the Afghan forces. Pakistan army retaliated the attack with same coin the clashes killed policemen and paramilitary persons on both sides. The guns were silent, but incident was enough to speak for its brutality and invoking anger.

### **5.3. Restoration of relations between Karzai and Sharif**

In the 2013 general elections in Pakistan PML-N came to power. President Karzai was the first head of state who telephoned to congratulate PM Sharif on winning the election. Both the leaders exchanged words of goodwill and expressed hopes for betterment of the relations. They also reiterated their commitment to cooperate each other in War on Terror (WOT). PM Sharif wanted to restore routine business with Afghanistan sent his foreign policy advisor Sartaj Aziz to Kabul where he discussed bilateral issues and forwarded invitation to Afghan president to visit Pakistan. In compliance of the request Karzai came to Pakistan in August 2013. The visit provided an opportunity to discuss strategic and trade relations. Pakistan also expressed its interests to help in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. As a goodwill gesture Pakistan released several Taliban leaders in September 2013 (Katzman & Thomas, 2013).

Pakistan's finance Minister visited Kabul in 2014 and participated in joint economic commission meeting. During his visit the Pakistani FM stressed upon Afghanistan to join the Tajikistan transit trade agreement to make it trilateral venture. He also told that Pakistan wants to expand trade relations with other countries of the region via Afghan transit.

The US-Embassy Islamabad sponsored "Afghan Women Entrepreneurs' Conference" in Islamabad in 2015, joined by businessmen and entrepreneurs. The venture provided opportunity to both countries' women to come closer to each other and understand each other's stance on bilateral engagement. In June 2014, Afghan National Security Advisor Dr. Sapanta visited Pakistan. The visit provided an opportunity to understand and discuss the security related issues between the countries, enhance cooperation and destroy the terrorist networks and their sanctuaries in both sides of the borders without discrimination. Sapanta also met foreign advisor to PM where he agreed to expand trade and economic relations between the two countries. During his meeting with Pakistani Chief of Army Staff in the general headquarters, he discussed security related issues.

### **5.4. Ashraf Ghani's five circles policy**

In Afghanistan, presidential elections were held in 2014 two top contenders were Abdullah-



Abdullah (National Coalition) and Ashraf Ghani (Independent). The Afghan constitution suggests that if a candidate secured 50% of total votes, he will be the president. In case no candidate scores up to the percentage, then second round of elections is held between the top two contenders. Because no candidate secured a marginal majority in accordance with the constitution a second round of election was held between Ghani and Abdullah finally Ghani won the election (Idrees & Anwar, Pakistan and Afghanistan after 9/11: A Case of Failing Bilateralism, 2017). A very disturbing situation arose when the runner up candidate Abdullah rejected the election results by calling it a fraud. With the help of friendly countries, a unity government was formed in Kabul in which Ashraf Ghani was nominated president while Abdullah-Abdullah was chosen as Chief Executive (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). Pakistan president participated in the oath ceremony of the president where hopes were expressed to renew the course of bilateral relations.

President Ghani after assuming his office emphasized on the four angles of his foreign policy. The policy objectives of President Ghani were mainly: a) Relations with immediate neighbours; b) Islamic countries; c) Western countries; d) the Asian countries; and e) International Organizations (Daud, 2016). In the policy objectives the neighbours firstly meant those countries who shared borders with Afghanistan but later on due to Indian and possibly Russian lobbyists he changed 'neighbours' into 'neighbourhood' to include the most important countries. He also invoked and re-established some suspended agreements with India.

About the dimensions of Pak-Afghan relations and Indian factor, Raheem Ullah Yousafzai (senior journalist, expert on Afghanistan), told:

Afghanistan is no longer neutral in terms India and Pakistan relations it is taking the side of India. For example, Afghanistan boycotted the SAARC summit in Islamabad following the footsteps of India. So that is Pakistan's biggest concern that Afghanistan is taking sides, supporting India against Pakistan and this is one reason that Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan are not improving because there is a lack of trust between the two countries (Personal communication, December 14, 2019).

He envisaged that countries geography could not be changed so the vitality of neighbours of Afghanistan would be political and economic benefits. Relations with Islamic countries were due to shared faith, values and culture and the events which effect Afghanistan. The relations with the West which is totally based on military cooperation must be transformed into enduring political, economic, and cultural relations "how Afghanistan will become a model of cooperation between China and the United States and the rest of NATO-ISAF" (Daud, 2016, p. 03). The fourth circle mainly attaining the medium to long-term objectives of the National Unity Government (NUG) "paving the way for an Asian Continental economy, at the heart of which will be China and India" (Daud, 2016). The fifth circle which includes international organizations, non-governmental organizations and global institutions which influence the working of governments would ultimately influence Afghanistan.

A month after being elected as President Ghani came to Pakistan with a hundred member delegates. The Pakistani authorities received the guests at Chaklala Airbase with great warmth. During the finance Ministers meeting a compromise was made to enhance bilateral trade from \$2.5 to \$5 billion in the coming three years. During his two days visit head of states and

government level meetings were held in which commitments were made to expand bilateral trade and economic and security cooperation.

Both countries would cooperate in WOT and Pakistan would help in the political reconciliation process with Afghan Taliban and train and equip the Afghan army in Pakistan Military Academy. PM Sharif was also of the view that Pakistan would play her best possible role in peace and stability of her Muslim neighbour. The leadership expressed their commitment not to let their soil to be used against each other. Both leaders watched Pakistan and Afghanistan cricket match with other guest delegates. President Ghani also met Gen. Raheel Sharif in GHQ and discussed security related matters and to enhance security cooperation between the two countries (The Guardian, 2014).

In December 2014, Army Public School Peshawar was hit by a painful incident. When terrorist entered the school and killed 132 innocent children and some teachers (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). The incident created great sorrow and mourned all over the world. The people of every sect condemned the barbarism and demanded the government to take tougher measures against the culprits. The Pakistan's Army media wing ISPR told that TTP was involved in the massacre (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). The Pakistani government and military authorities demanded the Ghani government to take action against the TTP operating from Kunar province of Afghanistan the ISAF commander and Afghan authorities ensured to cooperate in this connection (Dawn News, 2014, December 18). In April 2015, Chief Minister KP province visited Kabul and discussed the refugee issue and return of illegal Afghan refugees from KP to their homeland. Afghan Army Chief was invited to the passing out parade of Pakistan Army who participated in the event as guest during meeting with Pakistan Army Chief they discussed the options for cooperation on the subject terrorism and border security.

### **5.5. Strained relations after Kabul Airport incident**

Trust building has been a difficult task throughout the history of Pak-Afghan relations, and nothing more than blame game has disturbed the course of bilateralism. In July 2015, a suicide attack by the Taliban hit the Kabul Airport leaving 29 dead and several injured (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). The Afghanistan authorities held Pakistan responsible for the terrorist attack. President Ghani words were harsh and intolerable. In a press conference he said:

Pakistan's soil has been used for harbouring terrorism against Kabul and Taliban's bomb producing factories are still working there – the happenings of the last few days bears witness such possibilities and that they hope for peace yet they are receiving message of war from their neighbour (Khaleej Times, 2015).

The blame game once again brought a drift into the bilateral engagement between the countries and "bilateralism met another setback which was neither in the interests of Pakistan nor Afghanistan" (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). Pakistan condemned the attack in a strong rhetoric and denounced the state sponsoring act of terrorism abroad. In September 2015, advisor Sartaj Aziz made a visit of Kabul where he assured the Kabul authorities that peace in Kabul means peace in Pakistan, he provided documentary proofs of Indian spy activities in Balochistan province through their channels in Afghanistan. He briefed the Afghan authorities of the benefit of mutual trade and economic activities and the usefulness of China-Pakistan economic corridor

for both neighbours (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). The relations were further disturbed due to terrorist attacks in Kabul (Haider, 2015). The Afghan media launched a campaign blaming Pakistan for the happening while President Ghani said that attacks were orchestrated in Pakistan (The Nation, 2015).

The relations were restored in December 2015 when President Ghani visited Pakistan. Prior to the visit Pakistani PM Sharif and Ghani had met on the side-lines of environmental conference in Paris. Later, Pakistan Army Chief paid one day special visit to Kabul where he discussed different security related issues including restoring dialogue process with Taliban and establishing hotlines between the two countries (Idrees & Anwar, 2017). Pakistan's facilitating the peace negotiations with Taliban has been raising hopes of settlement of the Afghanistan issue (Idrees *et al.*, 2019). The surety of peace would make possible the safe and peaceful return of the Afghan refugees to their homeland. But there needs strong commitment from both sides to achieve this goal – there required bilateral efforts and a joint repatriating framework (PIPS Conference Brief, 2018).

### **5.6. Pakistan's role in Afghanistan rebuilding**

Pakistan supports building and equipping the Afghan national army in this connection Pakistan has providing training to the Afghan army. In January, 2010 Pakistan Chief of Army staff invited the Afghan National Army to participate in the training program organized by the Pakistan Army Institution in Brussels. In March 2010, during Karzai visit to Islamabad relations were further enhanced in transit trade, reconstruction program and technical support. According to the bilateral agreement Pakistan will develop communication networks in Afghanistan, trade volume will be increased to \$15 billion a year by the year 2015.

Beyond, in education sector students exchange programs will be introduced and Pakistan will increase scholarships for the Afghani students in Pakistan's educational institutions. In the agriculture sector Pakistan and Afghanistan food bank is agreed to meet the food shortages. In energy sector the cooperation has reached far beyond the borders and joint strategies would be launched for functionalizing trans-Afghan energy projects and particular focus would be Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA-1000) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) gas pipeline project. Pakistan has facilitated Pak-Afghan transit trade ventures wherein Afghanistan would use Pakistan's Port Qasim and Gwadar for transit trade and also carryout trade activities with India via Pakistan's roads. In reciprocity Afghanistan will facilitate road transit to CARs. For the reconstruction and rebuilding of Afghanistan Pakistan has provided assistance. The aid will be utilized in rebuilding railway track, roads, schools, universities and hospitals (Siddique, 2011).

Pakistan has supported Afghanistan in the economic and social spheres and in the development of the country. Pakistan is actively assisting in Afghanistan rebuilding process by building hospitals in Kabul and Logar regions, establishing universities and schools in Balkh and Kabul and building Nishtar Kidney Hospital in Jalalabad. During Sharif's premiership the Afghan development fund was increased from \$385 million to \$500 million. The government was also interested in building two ways highway from Peshawar to Jalalabad and connecting it with Peshawar motorway. The Finance Minister Ishaq Dar during his visit handed over the key of Nishtar Kidney hospital a \$7.5 million worth project to the Afghan government (Dawn News, 2014, February 26).

### **5.7. Afghan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS)**

In the year 2018 an agreement was signed to bring both countries closer and resolve the disputes between the two countries through comprehensive bilateral efforts. A separate working group was designed and mandated with powers to deal these areas differently: “political and diplomatic, military, economic and trade, intelligence and refugee’s issues” (PIPS Conference Brief, 2018). The plan is envisaged to bring relations to normality and build trust. Women participation would also be encouraged to further socialize the ambitious APAPPS move.

In April, 2018 President Ghani and Pakistani PM Abbassi agreed on seven key principles (Afghan Biographies, 2018):

Pakistan would support an Afghan initiated peace process owned by Afghanis; Both countries would take strong measures against irreconcilable and fugitive elements who are posing security threats; Both countries would not allow any form of aggression from their territories against each other by external powers; The agreed plan would be jointly supervised and coordinated by Liaison Officers; Both countries would avoid territorial and aerial violations of each other’s sovereignty; Both would avoid blame game and would use the mechanism of APAPPS to understand and resolve the mutual issues; To arrange necessary mechanisms for implementing the APAPPS format and agreed principles.

The APAPPS provided both countries with an opportunity to avoid further disconnection in relations and continue diplomacy to discuss all matters of mutual mistrust and interest. The leadership of both countries is now at one page regarding violations of borders. They are agreed for mutually beneficial projects of Quetta-Kandahar-Heart and Peshawar Jalalabad rail and road, construction of Peshawar to Jalalabad highway, emphasized early completion of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran (TAPI) and CASA-1000 projects and Pakistan connection to CARs (Tolo News, 2018). The Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and trust building initiatives were welcomed by the Afghan elite and HPC in the mid of high criticism on Pakistan policy towards Afghanistan. The political commentators consider Pakistan policy till now as based on “deceit and lies” (Amiri, 2018).

The successful implementation of the APAPPS according to journalists would help the two countries to achieve common objectives of eliminating terrorism, peace and stability and development of the people (Hafeez, 2018). The extended bilateral and security cooperation, people to people contact and scholarship program for Afghan students in Pakistan’s higher education institutions would create interdependence and trust between the two neighbours (PIPS Conference Brief, 2018). The Chinas intention to extend the CPEC beyond Pakistan’s borders into Afghanistan is being considered a very positive move towards regional economic integrations and it would also bring Pakistan and Afghanistan at ease (Hafeez, 2018).

## **6. Conclusion**

Due to various factors discussed above the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have always been contesting. Except for some short intervals their business never remained compromising. Both cannot survive without each other peace and prosperity in one country

would mean progress in the other also. They are geo-politically and economically so dependent on each other that the effects of war and peace are felt on either side of the border. Pakistan politically and economically supported the regimes of Karzai and Ghani but due to strong Indian hands the relations did not remained cordial. The bilateral relations between the two has been characterized by trust and mistrust. The trust deficit which has disturbed the routine business between the two countries during the length of time was greatly overcome by Pakistan by trust building gestures e.g., her efforts in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, allowing the Afghan refugees on its soil and providing corridor to Afghanistan. Pakistan cannot afford mistrust with Afghanistan because of her strategic depth against India – she will try to increase her cooperation with Afghanistan for the better prospects.

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