



## Bridging Borders: How the Indian Factor Affects Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan after the US-Taliban Peace Accord

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**Abstract:** *Regional and local dynamics in Afghanistan have shifted since the US-Taliban peace pact. Pakistan is concerned about Indian involvement in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is geopolitically and strategically linked with Pakistan. After the US takeover of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India's longstanding rivalry entered a new phase. The pro-Indian regime strengthened Indian involvement in Afghanistan during the US occupation. New Delhi, Islamabad's archival, is trying to put Afghanistan in its sphere of influence to isolate Pakistan from its Western and regional politics. India has become more involved in Afghan issues. Pakistan suffered security, strategic, political, and economic consequences. Pakistan anticipated US exit would cease Indian involvement in Afghan affairs, and install a favourable regime. After the takeover, the Taliban urged Indian investment and good relations with India. Pakistan faces security, political, economic, diplomatic issues with Afghanistan. This paper examines the Indian component in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, and the US- Taliban peace pact using Neo-realism, Balance of Power, and Prisoner Dilemma theories.*

**Key Words:** Afghanistan, Peace Accord, Pak-Afghan Relations, Geopolitics, Proxy War

### Introduction

To end the war on terror in Afghanistan and withdraw foreign forces, an agreement was reached in Doha on February 29, 2020, between the Taliban and the US. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a representative of the Taliban, and Zalmay Khalilzad, a special envoy for the United States, signed the agreement (Chaudhuri, and Shende, 2020).

The US-Taliban peace has changed the dynamics of both regional and international players involved in Afghanistan. It was a sad movement for India as the Taliban is considered close to Pakistan. But Indian policymakers are convinced that it is doubtful that the Taliban will ever stop relying on Pakistan in the foreseeable future. They contend that India would incur far

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more costs by staying out of the current Afghan affairs in the post-agreement era than by becoming engaged. The top risks associated with this agreement for India were first identified, and then the best way to reduce those risks was sought after by Indian authorities and advocates. After extensive consideration, they decided to remain involved in Afghanistan, adopted the policy of wait and see to get a clear picture of the scenario and then have to engage again in Afghanistan. The dynamics of the new struggle for dominance, power, and resources in post-peace accord Afghanistan have been continually changing. The 'New Great Game' has been extended by India and Pakistan, who are now involved in a proxy war, if not outright hostilities, in Afghanistan. The military-security sector, business transactions, and the political-diplomatic sphere all demonstrate this. Both accuse the other of using their nation to exert influence and destabilize the other and accuse the other of using different techniques to further their strategic aims and key interests. Afghanistan has thus once more been used as a battleground in this 'New Great Game' even if the participants have changed (Wani, 2022). It is now being managed on a bigger stage with various rules and actors, including India and Pakistan in addition to the US, China, Iran and Russia.

Since the foundation of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, India has deeply impacted the interests and engagement of their bilateral relations. The increased Indian involvement in Afghanistan has even created a trust deficit between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Though Afghanistan is Pakistan's strategic depth, it is not enjoying good relations with Afghanistan for the last few decades due to multiple internal and external reasons. It has portrayed the distressed relations between the two countries, and gave an opportunity to India to win the empathy of Afghans, especially after the 9/11 attacks (Haqqani, 2005). The

9/11 incident and the US attack on Afghanistan turned as a 'blessing in disguise' for Indian policymakers to re-create its influence in Afghanistan has remained quite restricted in the past during the Taliban regime (Pant, 2011). India's involvement in Afghanistan serves to weaken Pakistan's ambition to become a significant partner of the CARs. Islamabad is also aware of India's perception of Afghanistan as a geopolitical obstacle (Baloch and Niazi, 2009). Islamabad maintains that New Delhi incites unrest in its Baluchistan province and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the opposite side of the border via separatist organizations like the Baluchistan Liberation Army (Perlez, 2021) and Tehrek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Islamabad continues to view India's activities in the country as being against its interests. Both countries' policies towards Afghanistan are fundamentally motivated by their ongoing animosity, which is not encouraging for the chances of reconciliation, peace, and stability in the whole region in general and in Afghanistan in particular.

Afghans may suffer even more if the country serves as a platform for India-Pakistan competition and zero-sum interactions, in which one side's gain is the other's loss. A significant barrier in the relationship between Afghanistan and India is Pakistan's suspicion of India's involvement in the country. According to Ahmad Rashid, about Pakistan's fixation on India's objectives in Afghanistan, Pakistan viewed its Afghan strategy through the lens of denying India any benefit in Afghanistan. Kabul has overnight become the new Kashmir, the new scene of the India-Pakistan conflict (Rashid, 2008). After the US-Taliban peace accord, India's biggest worry following the departure of US-led coalition forces from Afghanistan is that Pakistan will aid and abet a Taliban-Pashtun campaign that drives Indians out of the region. Whatever New Delhi undertakes in Kabul,

whether its economic investments, infrastructure development, or any other connected subject, is a plot against Pakistan, according to a former French diplomat and a prominent authority on South Asian affairs. He also said that Islamabad has made sure to obstruct India's interests wherever and whenever it is feasible. For instance, it has refused to grant transit rights to New Delhi and Kabul for the flow of products through Pakistan (Grare, 2010). Regional-level stakeholders' disparate interests have fuelled the region's volatility, chaos, and instability. Additionally, the unrest in the Af-Pak region has hampered the peaceful settlement of the conflict and the advancement of these nations. They are unquestionably the big competitors in this area, and Afghanistan has been harmed as a result of their rivalry (Hameed, 2012). In order to balance and reduce Islamabad's influence in Kabul, New Delhi seeks to align with anti-Pakistan groups. Its long-standing competition with Pakistan is entwined with its ambitions in Afghanistan. Islamabad worries that Kabul's security may be threatened by New Delhi's close connections with this country. As a response, Pakistan has been attempting to reduce India's influence in Kabul since the 1970s by favouring compliant and benevolent administrations. Divergent interests at the regional level have increased the volatility of Afghanistan, confusion, and instability. They are without a doubt the main rivals in this field, and their competition has affected Afghanistan (Hameed, 2012). India aspires to join up with anti-Pakistan organizations to counterbalance and lessen Islamabad's influence in Afghanistan. Since the 1970s, Islamabad has been making an effort to counter this influence by supporting obedient and submissive governments in Afghanistan.

## **Indian Approach towards the US-Taliban Peace Accord**

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It appears that reconciliation and peace is the most urgent need for both Afghanistan and the world community after the end of a decades-long war and nearly half a century of strife and suffering (Shinwari, 2019). The need for peace in Afghanistan provided for the peace accord between the Taliban and the US. The peace effort in Afghanistan tries to persuade the Taliban to end their armed struggle. But still, Afghanistan continues to be the scene of proxy conflicts among different countries (Zaki, 2018). For a nation like India, the peace accord is certainly not ideal. New Delhi was able to make investments in the country as a result of the American-led coalition's presence. It was in jeopardy after the US-Taliban deal, and India had to quickly adjust its top objectives. Therefore, she sought to increase its interactions with the Taliban in order to look into potential areas of collaboration. There is no doubt that the US-Taliban Peace Accord has privileged both the Taliban and to some extent Pakistan, India's main competitor in the country. Indian policymakers are convinced that the Taliban's dependence on Islamabad can be changed anytime in the near future. So, New Delhi projected new interests, priorities and roles in the post-peace accord Afghanistan. It got increasing engagement with the Taliban to reposition itself in the country. The evidence clearly supports the viewpoint that New Delhi has developed its interests efficiently in the post-peace accord scenario and seems playing on good position in regional geopolitics. Taliban openly declared their intention to build strong connections with New Delhi and said they would require assistance and knowledge if they were to regain power, so Indian interest in the post-peace agreement was further strengthened (Malhotra, 2020; Panag, 2020).

## **Indian Involvement in Post-Peace Accord Afghanistan**

It is a fact that Afghanistan has a crucial role in regional as well as global geopolitics. The US-Taliban peace accord has changed the political landscape of Afghanistan and the nature of engagement of regional powers like Pakistan and India in the country. It has created both challenges and opportunities for India. Many countries attempted to establish their stakes in Afghanistan. The present situation in Afghanistan and its ramifications present a difficult task to domestic, regional, and global players. As a result, India became one of the key regional players with wide goals for the development and reconstruction of the country. Since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, ties between New Delhi and Kabul have steadily improved and Indian involvement in the country increased significantly. India's stand in Kabul was strengthened due to her assistance of the Northern Alliance against the Islamabad-backed Taliban because several of the Northern Alliance's leaders had occupied important federal and provincial positions in the newly installed regime under the leadership of Karzai and then Ashraf Ghani.

All regional countries have strategic interests in the stability of this country (Kiran, 2009). Understanding India's attempt to establish a presence in Afghanistan is crucial before considering the instruments of New Delhi's foreign strategy for projecting influence. India maintains that its expanded participation in Afghanistan is intended to bring about stability, but the true motivations behind this assertion remain a mystery and this appears to be a serious danger to strategic interest and defence of Pakistan. For a long time, Islamabad saw Afghanistan as an important part of its sphere of influence. For this basic reason, she does not want New Delhi to establish itself in the country and surround Pakistan from

two sides. Moreover, New Delhi has successfully demonstrated its soft power in the country, focused on human resource development, energy generation projects on rivers especially flowing towards Pakistan, education, health care, humanitarian aid, communication services, infrastructural facilities development, enhancing security by training Afghan forces, advancement of the agricultural sector, remote areas, and other significant sectors of strategic importance. New Delhi has also increased its trade by making investments in the country. With massive financial assistance, a significant role has been played by India in supporting the previous regime to maintain and strengthen its authority (Javaid and Javaid, 2016).

The peace accord has provided a good opportunity for India to increase its engagement in the country and establish good relations. India is trying hard to create mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan since the inception of the former. The renewed interests and engagement of India have created many challenges for Pakistan and have negatively impacted Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan. The war-like situation in Afghanistan is not good for Pakistan's security, economy and regional objectives. Pakistan is suffering from a security dilemma due to its presence and involvement of India in Afghanistan's affairs. So far as the relations between Pakistan and India have not improved, the pro-Indian government in Afghanistan would be an eyesore for Pakistan. Usman (2012) views Pakistan will retain its policy to have relations with the Taliban and interconnection with the Haqqani network to contain India and safeguard its interests. New Delhi desires a significant soft power role in the country and wants to maintain her assistance and socio-economic advancements. It is continuously attempting to limit and check the role and influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan.

## **Pakistan's Concerns in Post-Peace Accord Afghanistan**

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Afghanistan and Afghanistan are neighbour countries and have cultural, religious, and historical ties. There is a phrase that goes, 'You can change your friends, but you can't change your neighbour. As both countries share long borders and similar cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic ties (Rais, [1993](#)) but there are many issues created by different reasons. Islamabad hopes for a stable regime in Afghanistan as it is in favour of Pakistan. Pakistan had traditionally seen the Indian role and policies in Afghanistan as dubious by nature. Pakistan has also frequently complained about RAW for sending agents into Afghanistan under the guise of doctors and engineers for helping the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), a militant organisation that has carried out numerous attacks against Pakistani citizens and security forces.

Pakistan had played the function of a facilitator in the peace process and encouraged connections between the Afghan government and Taliban leaders as part of its efforts to promote the Afghan peace negotiations. From the beginning, Pakistan had worked to bring peace and stability to the country. In a nutshell, this has included looking for an Afghan government that would be willing to cooperate with Pakistan so that the Pakistani military would have a strategic depth against Indian invasion into territory during a future fight. Thus, the question of strategic depth is really an attempt to justify the pursuit of another objective, namely limiting Indian influence and involvement in Afghanistan following the United States and its allies' withdrawal. Restricting India's ability to establish a potential presence in Afghanistan would have several benefits from the military's perspective on Islamabad. It would restrict New Delhi's ability to apply any major military pressure in conjunction with the

new Afghan government whose objectives might be in line with India's, prevent New Delhi from gaining land-based access to energy-rich countries in Central Asia, prevent it from intelligence information gathering on the Western border of Pakistan, including Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Randolph, [2010](#)). Additionally, it would allow Islamabad to maintain and manage its political, strategic and economic interests in Afghanistan (Ganguly and Kapur, [2010](#)).

## **Post-Peace Accord Changed Political Dynamics in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Policy**

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Political, economic and strategic Afghanistan is very important for Pakistan. Despite changing its stance on the Taliban, Islamabad's Afghan policy continued to be driven by strategic and financial considerations. As a result, significant efforts were taken to strengthen ties with the new Afghan administration and participate actively in the new development that emerged after the peace accord. In the recent past, Pak-Afghan relations see some signs of improvement. The two-way trade has also grown. Works on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project has been resurrected and they announced the signing of a historic tripartite agreement for the construction of a 1400-kilometre pipeline from the Daulat Abad gas reserves of Turkmenistan to Multan city of Pakistan. However, Pakistan also faced its challenge to establish connections with the new Afghan regime. Recognizing Islamabad as a dependable partner has been hampered by its past memories. Pakistan made an effort to convince all Afghan groups that it has a new perspective and would neither support any particular party nor permit any violent action against the Kabul administration on its soil. However, a number of issues including the return of refugees, the release of Pakistani terrorists from Afghan prisons, the transit

trade facilities, and the border clashes continue to sour ties between the two countries.

There is no doubt about the importance of a cooperative Afghanistan for the peace, development, and prosperity of Pakistan in the long term. Peace can enable Pakistan to serve as Afghanistan and Central Asia's most cost-effective and convenient gateway to the outside world. Additionally, it would provide Pakistan with the chance to open up new markets for its products. By using Pakistan as a channel for oil and gas exports, the energy-rich Central Asian Republics will establish themselves as a potential centre for energy (Shah, [2005](#)). Recently in June 2023, the delivery of IPG gas from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has been started to Pakistan through Afghanistan's land-based route. Cooperation between the two nations is essential for the political and financial growth of each other. They are presently working together to fight terrorism, which has grown to be a very contentious topic due to mutual mistrust, false charges, and misperceptions of one another. Challenges Created by Indian Factor for Pak-Afghan Relations after Peace Accord

The parameters of the three-way partnership had significantly changed after the peace accord. The partnership of Afghanistan and Pakistan has been affected by a variety of concerns that have recently come to light. Pakistan, which had doubts about India's involvement in Afghanistan, accuses India of exploiting its bases there to help the insurgency in the unstable Pakistani regions like ex-FATA and Balochistan. On the other side, Pakistan was still held responsible by both Afghanistan and India for continuing to assist the Taliban, which had started to reappear in some areas of Afghanistan. Additionally, Pakistan had declined to offer transit services for products coming from India to Afghanistan due to security reasons.

The previous Afghanistan regime had

joined Iran and India in seeking an alternate economic route via Iran in an effort to escape Islamabad's control. Iran with the help of India is building a new port at Chabahar on the Coastal strip of Makran, which is far nearer to India than the present at Bandar Abbas to Afghanistan. It will have significant geopolitical ramifications. A road reaches Afghanistan from Chabahar and runs parallel to the Pakistani border before joining the main highway that links all of the main Afghan regions. India had promised to construct this section of road in western Afghanistan. Indian officials have completed the survey in Afghanistan and Iran. After reviewing the survey's findings, the Ministry of Transportation moved the work plan for budgetary approval. This road provided India with dependable access to Afghanistan, hence it has to be finished as soon as possible. Additionally, this new route will lessen Afghanistan's historical reliance on landlocked Pakistan for transit commerce (Rajamohan, [2003](#)). Iran and India had formed new coalitions in Afghanistan, and the authority in Islamabad was indeed deeply concerned about these developments because they could further marginalise Islamabad from Kabul's future economic and political dynamics. The fragility of Afghanistan's continuing political arena and the fractured character of Afghan politics, together with Pakistan's resistance to enabling trade between India and Afghanistan, were set to put the endurance of Indian relations to the test (Chandra, [2005](#)). For long Pakistan and India compete with one another for access to the consumer market of Afghanistan. Pakistan views Iran's Chabahar port as a threat to its Gwadar port, which was constructed with Chinese help and support. Chabahar port is developed by India and aimed to exploit as a channel for trade with Afghanistan as well as with Central Asia.

Collaboration in international relations is feasible even when there is a lack of trust, and by using the appropriate techniques,

this situation may be transformed into one of complete cooperation and mutual benefit. Examples of governments collaborating without trusting one another include China-India, Israel-Egypt, and the American collaboration with Pakistan in the fight against terrorism. Although there was some collaboration between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the political, financial, and security spheres, there was not enough confidence, and desertion predominated. Collaboration is constantly restricted in Prisoner's Dilemma due to mistrust, ambiguity, and poor communication. According to the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATT), Pakistan offers Afghanistan a transit trade facility (Usman, 2008). It is crucial for Afghanistan's economic development. Additionally, it gives Afghanistan access to a market for agricultural products particularly fruits and food grains. Both made the commitment to work together in combating terrorism initiatives and joined organisations like the Tripartite Commission to do so. However, it is important to build on these efforts in order to achieve total collaboration based on trust and respect. Such a breakthrough would aid in breaking the prisoner's dilemma and stabilise the economic and security conditions in both nations. The post-peace accord era is notable because it led to the ease of tense Pak-Afghan ties that jeopardised the domestic stability of both nations. The situation was made more complicated by the Taliban's revival in the country, a rise in suicide bombings in both nations, military infiltrations by NATO into Pakistan's tribal regions, which were thought to be safe havens for terrorist militant groups, and the expanding influence of regional players in Afghanistan. These events threatened the stability and peace of the region and had a severe effect on ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Indo-Pakistan contention in Afghanistan is not a new phenomenon but has a long history. India always made an alliance with such groups and personalities

of Afghanistan that could limit the interests of Pakistan. She has always supported separatist movements in the Pashtoon belt of Afghanistan, to create security problems for Pakistan. Since independence India enjoys good relations with Kabul except the Taliban government (1996-2001). In the past, India had maintained good relations with Afghanistan's Communist elements and the Northern Alliance, both against Pakistan and its interests in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic society, during the past several decades both Pakistan and India supported rival leaders of ethnic communities against each other during the Afghan Civil War. The effect was that the political identity of Afghanistan was shaped by ethnic attachment instead of party politics.

The India-Afghanistan alliance is considered by Pakistan a threat to its security. India is striving hard to bring Afghanistan into its area of influence, while Pakistan is trying to stabilize its objectives concerning its maximum security by making strong ties with Afghanistan. Since 1947, Pak-Afghan Relations have always remained under a strong effect of Indian menace, which speaks of the two neighbour-friendly relations in a very critical manner. India and Afghanistan signed many agreements and made an alliance against Pakistan which always remained a matter of concern for Pakistan as India's ambitions are to encircle it. It is not new, since Pakistan's independence in 1947, India gave support to Afghanistan on her claim on Pakistani territory. The Pakhtunistan issue is still considered a threat to the solidarity and unity of Pakistan. India enjoyed good relations with different Afghan governments and all such previous governments were antagonized to Pakistan.

In the history of Indo-Afghan relations for the first time, the Indian government faced an opposite regime in Afghanistan during the Taliban regimes. Afghanistan

always preferred India over Pakistan. There are many rationales behind Afghanistan's policy of preference for India over Pakistan. Afghanistan's preference for India over Pakistan in its relations has some deep-rooted historical reasons including the Pakhtunkhistan issue, border demarcation, ethnic issues and many others. Other concerns that have caused problems between Islamabad and Kabul relations are border conflicts, smuggling, narcotics trafficking, transportation of guns, and backing for extremist groups on both sides of the frontier.

Indian spy agencies have also successfully established links with Afghan refugees living in Pakistan to sponsor terrorism and separatism in Pakistan. Thus, the presence of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan has effects on the relationship between the two countries. Following the USSR attack on Afghanistan, Pakistan began taking Afghan refugees. Pakistan has long seen providing accommodation to Afghan refugees as a religious and humanitarian responsibility rather than a requirement under the law. They are enjoying unrestricted freedom of movement within Pakistan, being allowed to work, do business, and receive education (Ghufran, [2003](#)). For a variety of reasons, such as the militarization of society, crimes and local animosity toward Afghans, Pakistan continuously states for the last couple of years that it is further hesitant to permit Afghan refugees but still due to international requests the government of Pakistan is compelled to bear them.

An unexpected breakthrough in Indo-Afghan ties happened when the two nations inked a strategic partnership agreement in 2011. The strategic partnership agreement included areas of shared interests such as commerce, economic growth, education, defence, and governance (Raiphea, [2013](#)). This was the first formal agreement of its kind that Afghanistan had ever made with

any country after the starting of negotiations between the US and Taliban for a peace accord. The strategic agreement between the two countries was aimed to help ensure Afghanistan's security as foreign troops were supposed to withdraw from this war-torn state after more than a decade of war. Since India is increasing its presence at the western frontier, Pakistan must reevaluate and restructure its military policy. Traditionally, Pakistan has concentrated its defences on the eastern border. Pro-India Afghanistan in the West is a risk to Pakistan security too along with the anti-Pakistan campaign of RAW from Afghanistan against Pakistan. There was fierce rivalry between Pakistan and other regional actors who were already established in Afghanistan, including India. Additionally, Pakistan's security was seriously threatened by the strategic relationships between India and the US, Afghanistan and the US, and Indo-Afghanistan. India served as a spoiler and is still coming up with plans to keep Pakistan and Afghanistan unstable and at war. The friendship between India and Iran, economic links between India and Afghanistan, and support for Afghanistan were all used to diplomatically encircle Pakistan.

India's influence over Pakistan's west side border is much feared. By training, supporting, and arming organisations that may serve as proxies against Pakistani goals. Islamabad is afraid that New Delhi is becoming more capable of destabilising it due to its economic, strategic and political ties with Afghanistan. The consulates of India in Kandahar and Jalalabad were allegedly secretly aiding Balochi militants against Pakistan. Pakistani authorities believe the Taliban provides the best opportunity to offset India's power in the region. The tribal regions of Pakistan along the Afghan border continue to act as safe zones for the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda to plan operations against Afghanistan. India-Afghanistan ties, in Pakistan's



opinion, were harmful to its interest. Numerous security puzzles were brought about in the area by its zero-sum approach to regional integration. This is understood in Afghanistan, where Islamabad frequently receives severe criticism while New Delhi was welcomed there with open arms. Islamabad, which was worried about the strategic alliance between India and Afghanistan. It was anticipated that Pakistan will respond negatively to the India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership. With the purpose of elevating the relations above a simple aid-donor equation to a far higher plane through the training of the Afghan army and police. In the changing regional geostrategic and geopolitical circumstances, India saw Afghanistan as being essential to her security interests. This deal, which Pakistan perceived as an attempt by New Delhi to isolate Islamabad, undoubtedly troubled Islamabad.

There is no doubt that the distrust gaps and never-ending blame game widened during the previous 20 years. The border had consistently shown to be the main source of conflict. But what both countries appear to overlook is the fact that both countries have shared a number of issues and difficulties, necessitating a coordinated strategy built on mutual trust. Both nations' policies toward one another have, for the most part, been ambiguous, contradictory, cloaked in uncertainty, and tinged with mistrust despite the fact that both suffered from the effects of the war on terror and the withdrawal of the US forces without finding a peaceful solution of the Afghan issue. The TTP and many other militant groups in Pakistan were continuously funded by India. The TTP has created a lot of security problems for Pakistan and carried out countless attacks against Pakistani forces and civilians (Rana, [2011](#)). By launching attacks in Pakistan's tribal regions, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, not only strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan but also

established a new front in the battle. Therefore, the rise in TTP activities and the wave of attacks coming over, the border kept casting a shadow over what came following the withdrawal of foreign forces. In reaction, Pakistan started appropriate border control and regulation including border fencing and installed a biometric system at the crossing point.

Indian support and aid for nationalist and separatist groups, as well as the recruitment and aid of terrorist groups in Pakistan, were among Islamabad's security worries over India's expanding engagement in Afghanistan. Afghan officials had promised in public and privately on several occasions that India will not be able to use Afghan territory against Pakistan. But they allowed India against Pakistan. Recent years have seen an upsurge in the intensity and regularity of terrorist strikes against Pakistan. New Delhi had opened its consulates at Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Mazar-e-Sharif, which are close to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. It had installed a greater diplomatic presence in the country than any other nation. Most of the consulates were established along the border of Afghanistan with Pakistan. Along with the embassy in Kabul, Indian consulates were causing worries in Pakistan. Through these consulates, New Delhi was engaged in intelligence and terrorist financing activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan provinces with the intention of destabilising Pakistan.

## **Conclusion**

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Unfortunately, Afghanistan has been a target of regional and extra-regional powers' interference and is still vulnerable to interference by its neighbours despite the repeated announcements made by them to preserve the country's autonomy, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. It has also influenced Afghanistan's relations with its neighbours. Even Afghanistan's future peace

and stability have been undermined by this power politics. For a long time, the Indian factor in Pak-Afghan relations is playing a critical role. The US-Taliban peace accord has added new dimensions to this scenario. The peace accord and Taliban reoccupation of Kabul have added another chapter to the power struggle between Pakistan and India in the country. Both Pakistan and India renewed their interests, engagements and priorities in the post-peace accord Afghanistan. India and Pakistan continue to give importance to Afghanistan for security, economic, and geopolitical reasons. The possibilities of friendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are greatly influenced by the dynamics of power politics between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the one hand and on the other hand by the Indian involvement in Afghanistan. Regarding the tactics and approaches of both Pakistan and India towards Afghanistan, they are caught in the traditional security dilemma, whereby any attempt by either side to improve its security is likely to set off a chain of events that worsens the security of another and regional balance of power.

The behaviour of Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan within their triangle engagement has varied in accordance with their national goals to survive in the regional system and to defend themselves from adversarial neighbours. Anarchy in regional affairs and mistrust in their bilateral relationships are the two main causes that prompted all of them to reach agreements with their particular arch-rivals. To increase their influence in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan have adopted different measures. In the post-peace accord period, both countries are competing for securing greater authority and influence in Afghanistan. The South Asian security web, in which Afghanistan is an outgrowth of Pakistan's policies toward India is required to be considered while examining Pakistan's ties with Afghanistan. As a result, ties between

Pakistan and Afghanistan include a regional component. Pakistan and India have made Afghanistan the focal point of their power politics to improve their regional interest in the post-peace accord context. The involvement of New Delhi in Afghanistan after the peace accord has increased the animosity between Pakistan and Afghanistan. New Delhi Sea Kabul is a profitable and fruitful investment destination as well as a country where it can successfully wonder Pakistan and its interests. This caused Pakistan more anxiety and hinders friendly relations between these two Muslim brotherly countries. Always one between Pakistan and India tried to increase influence in Kabul, and the other invariably responded in kind, which further complicated the situation. Despite having long-standing social, historical, cultural, linguistic, religious, and traditional ties, relationships between Pak-Afghanistan on the diplomatic front are complicated. Owing to the disputed border, the flood of Afghan refugees into Pakistan, and Taliban insurgencies in both countries, they have had strained ties for a long time. The residents of the two nations are still quite connected to one another despite the strained relations. Pakistan believes that a robust Afghanistan with cordial ties and stable conditions is in its favour. She obviously desires to play a significant role in the peace and development of Kabul. In addition, Pakistan views India's involvement in Kabul as anti-Pakistan components and views India's position as dubious by character. In order to successfully calm the region, greater diplomatic collaboration between these three nations is thus required, since it will be challenging to sustain any kind of greater integration if the three nations stay unfriendly to and cut off from each other. Though there are divergent policies of both India and Pakistan in Afghanistan their transformation into a cooperative pattern is

very necessary for regional peace, security and sustainable development. The development of such a cooperative pattern is possible if both India and Pakistan work

together in Afghanistan rather than engaging in power politics against each other.

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