



AP: Advisory Panel

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Issue: The question of the Durand Line

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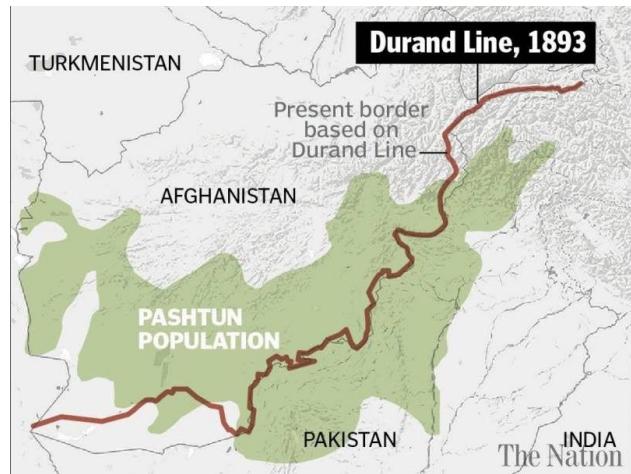
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I. Introduction

The question of the Durand Line has been a relevant topic of discussion in history since the British Empire. The Durand Line is a 2640 km border located between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Originally, the border was created before World War I. However, due to political differences between the two nations, the issue still creates economic and humanitarian crises.

While the question of the Durand Line is definitely a geopolitical conflict, it also is an ethnopolitical one. Due to the different policies taken by the Afghan government and the Pakistani government, Pashtuns - the ethnic group that lives in the northern part of the Durand Line - have been separated for years now.



Picture 1: A Map of the Durand Line

II. Involved Countries and Organizations

Pakistan

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the nation has been having problems with its neighbors. The biggest reason for conflict with their neighbor, Afghanistan, is due to the Durand Line. Pakistan recognizes the Durand Line as the official border between their nation and Afghanistan while the Afghan government does not. This difference has led Pakistan to take action on the Durand Line, such as but not limited to building trenches and a border wall. The Pakistani government most recently dealt with their border being closed for some time due to several security concerns; however, currently, the border between the two nations is open. Pakistan also has a very strict policy on the ethnopolitical conflict stating that they will not recognize Pashtunistan.



Afghanistan

The Afghan government was always a strong opposer to the Durand Line being the border between them and another nation as it meant that the millions of Pashtuns would be living in Pakistan. Between the years 1978 and 2001, the nation of Afghanistan changed regimes multiple times and had multiple civil wars, they did not have a clear policy for their western border. Most recently in 2001 when the new government of Afghanistan was established, the new government stated that they did not recognize the Durand Line as the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan starting the issue once again. Afghanistan has also lost millions of dollars due to the recent border closures.

India

While not a major actor in the conflict, India also has claims on the Durand Line. India's border dispute with Pakistan also affects the issue of the Durand Line.

The United States of America

The United States of America might not be geographically located close to the Durand Line but with their invasion of Afghanistan, they have become an actor in the conflict. The Durand Line and the border zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan became a hotspot for militias and terrorist groups after the fall of the Taliban. Under the Obama administration, the US Airforce conducted operations in the region.

III. Focused Overview of the Issue

1. The Creation of the Durand Line

30 years after their defeat in the first Anglo-Afghan war, the British Empire waged war against the Emirate of Afghanistan. This time they were able to win the war and successfully install a puppet emir -one that took decisions that favored the British on purpose- in charge of the Emirate. This new emir was tasked to meet with the British diplomats to improve trade and diplomatic relations. The new puppet emir of Afghanistan and the British Diplomat Mortimer Durand signed an agreement named the Durand Line Agreement, honoring the name of Sir Mortimer, in 1893. However, this agreement was not to improve trade or diplomatic relations but rather to create a border between the Afghan Emirate and British India. Furthermore, it led to the creation of two new provinces in Pakistan. These provinces are Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Both of these new provinces previously belonged to Afghanistan and had -and to this day still has- Pashtuns as the majority.



2. The History of the Durand Line

The British army used the newly gained provinces to recruit soldiers. They stationed the newly recruited Pashtun soldiers all across the British Indian territory. Due to this, when India gained independence Pashtuns were not unified on the issue of whether they should rejoin Afghanistan or whether they should remain in India. When Pakistan gained independence in 1947, it inherited the Durand Line Agreement signed in 1893; however, no official ratification between the Pakistani state and the Afghan state ever happened. In 1947, the Pashtun people residing in the Durand Line were given a choice to either join the newly created Pakistan or India. This led some political activists, most famously Bacha Khan, to start the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. The Khudai Khidmatgar movement was asking for the creation of a new independent Pashtun state in a Pashtun majority region of Pakistan. Bacha Khan and another leader of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement were then arrested by the Pakistani government. Pakistani government then killed 611 innocent Pashtun people for protesting. This event is called the Babrra massacre.

In 1949 Afghanistan and Pakistan nearly went to war because of the conflicts on the Durand Line. First, Pakistan received cross-border fire from Afghanistan. They responded to this by bombing a village with their airforce. In response to this, the Afghan government released a statement saying that they did not recognize the Durand Line as the legitimate border and that all the previous treaties regarding it, including the Durand Line Agreement, were void. They further accused the British of using coercion on Afghanistan while signing the Durand Line Agreement. In 1976 the conflict was resolved for a short amount of time when the president of Afghanistan Daoud Khan recognized the Durand Line as the official border in order to improve the country's foreign relations. However, in 1978, a coup took place in Afghanistan and replaced Khan with the Communist Party. It is known that after 1978, the Pakistani government worked with the CIA in order to topple the communist Afghanistan regime. Together, they sent militias into Afghanistan over the Durand Line. The United States also speculates that many terrorist attacks in Pakistan at that time were done by Afghanistan with the Soviet Union backing them. While Afghanistan did not have a clear policy on the Durand line between the years of 1978 and 2001 due to the multiple civil wars and the amount of rapid regime changes, Hamid Karzai, the previous president of Afghanistan, stated that no Afghani politician ever recognized the Durand Line. Although this statement contradicts with the decision taken by Khan in 1976, Karzai also states in the same interview that if anyone were to recognize the Durand line that they would "kick him out of the Afghan nation" (Afghanistan Times 2016). This might be a reference to the fact that Khan was assassinated in the coup after he recognized the Durand Line.

3. Recent Border Conflicts Between Afghanistan and Pakistan

Since 2001 both nations have taken actions and have policies regarding the Durand Line. A branch of the Afghan government named AGCHO Afghanistan Geodesy and Cartography Head Office (AGCHO) is



responsible for showing the international borders of Afghanistan, and as soon as the new government officially stated that they did not recognize the Durand Line the agency released a map. In the map, AGCHO has released instead of accepting the Durand Line as the border, they have claimed to regions with the Pashtun majority. In 2003, the two nations clashed when Afghanistan accused Pakistan of creating military bases in their region. In 2007, a right-wing politician Pakistani Fazal-ur-Rehman strongly encouraged the Afghan government to recognize the Durand Line. The same year the Pakistani government built military posts and fences in the Afghan region. They stated that this was done in order to prevent the Taliban and other militias from entering Pakistan. However, the Afghan military quickly dismantled these and the Afghan government stated that in their opinion this was done to further separate the Pashtun people.

The United States of America started flying drones from Afghanistan's side to kill targets on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line. In 2011 Taliban militias crossed the Durand Line and attacked Pakistan twice resulting in the death of 64 Pakistani soldiers. In the same year, 800 rockets were fired from Pakistan to Afghan villages. While the Pakistani government claimed that it was an accident, the Afghan government and experts on the field called it an attack. Also in 2011, the Pakistani forces engaged in a conflict with the NATO forces. NATO forces killed 24 Pakistani soldiers and in response, Pakistan cut Afghanistan's NATO supply lines.

In 2016 Pakistan unveiled their trenches along the Durand Line. While it is currently only trenches, the Pakistani government has plans to also include military bases near these trenches. The Pakistani government has justified these trenches by stating that these will be used to stop smugglers and criminals. In 2017, February 16 Pakistan closed its borders for security reasons after a terrorist attack. Pakistan alleged that the attack was done by terrorists that came to Pakistan from Afghanistan. After the request of the Afghan government a month later, the borders were opened for 2 days so that Afghan citizens could return to Afghanistan and the Pakistani citizens could return to Pakistan. 10 days later the borders were opened once again only to be closed 2 months later. On May 15 Afghan forces attacked a Pakistani research team. The border was opened 22 days later in order to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

4. The Ethnopolitical Conflict

The biggest reason that the Afghan government does not recognize the Durand Line as the legitimate border between the two countries is that it divides the Pashtun people in two. The Afghan government wants to reunite the Pashtun people in one nation. The idea of Pashtunistan has not been around since the Khudai Khidmatgar movement died. However, there are still some nationalist Pashtun who want a fully independent and sovereign Pashtunistan.



5. Border Security

The Durand Line for many reasons is called by many to be one of the deadliest and dangerous borders in the entire world. The biggest reason for this is the number of militias and terror organizations -mainly the Taliban- in the region, and the way both states deal with these groups. Afghanistan and the United States of America have accused Pakistan of funding the Taliban and other militias.



The United States of America has gone as far as stating that the Pakistani government supported the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, even after 9/11. Pakistan has denied all these claims. On the Afghan side of the Durand Line due to political instability and the still ongoing war, there are still many terrorists and militias. Although both the Pakistani government and the Afghan government (with the help of the United States of America) are currently fighting with the aforementioned militias and terrorists; both the Afghan government and the Pakistani government blame each other for not handling the terrorist organizations. The security concerns have led both nations to take action. Pakistan has been building trenches, a wall, and military bases in order to protect its border. Afghanistan has criticized these actions taken by the Pakistani government and stated that the security concerns were only a facade to hide the real reason, further separating the Pashtun people and preventing nationalism to rise in the region. The security reasons were also what lead to the border closings in 2017.

Picture 2: A Map of Pashtunistan

6. Other Actors In the Conflict

While the Durand Line is mostly a regional conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan, two other nations are also actors in the conflict. These two nations are the United States of America and India. The United States of America currently has around 8,600 troops located in Afghanistan. The United States of America has been a major factor in the region since its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The United States of America has clearly shown that they do not tolerate the presence of terror organizations, such as but not limited to the Taliban. In order to achieve its goal, the United States of America has been conducting drone strikes on both sides of the Durand Line for some while now. The United States of America -on multiple occasions- has accused the Pakistani Government of supporting terrorists. However, when it comes to the issue of recognizing the Durand Line as an international border, the United States supports Pakistan instead of Afghanistan. In 2014, the United States Department of State pointed out that the Durand Agreement was still in effect.



The other nation that is involved in the conflict is India. The main reason why India is involved in the conflict is its border dispute with Pakistan. As the Indian government claims the whole of Jammu and Kashmir regions they also claim that they have a border with Afghanistan. Their claim of a border with Afghanistan is seen by many to be a power move to legitimize their claim over the Jammu and Kashmir regions. Pakistan fully denies these claims as they also deny India's claim over the Jammu and Kashmir regions. In 2010 the United States of America caused controversy in the region when the United States Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan claimed that the United States of America did not recognize the border between Afghanistan and India. In 2015 the Indian government once again stated their claim to an Afghan border.

7. The Outcomes of the Conflict

The conflict in the Durand Line has caused both humanitarian and economic loss. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have lost both civilians and soldiers due to the skirmishes the two nations had and terror attacks by the Taliban and other groups. In 2011, around 64 Pakistani soldiers and a number of citizens were murdered and villages close to the Durand Line were destroyed by Taliban forces. In the same year, Pakistani soldiers have killed 42 Afghan citizens and destroyed 120 houses in Afghanistan by firing around 800 missiles to the Afghan side of the Durand Line. Without no doubt, one of the tragic events in the region's history, the Babrra massacre, which took the lives of 611 Pashtun people was also committed due to the conflict in the Durand Line. Most recently, in 2017 when the Pakistani government closed the border due to security reasons a major humanitarian crisis almost took place. Afghan citizens were stuck on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line while Pakistani citizens were stuck on the Afghan side of the Durand Line. These citizens with no way of traveling to their homes were left vulnerable in one of the most dangerous borders in the world. The border closures were eventually lifted in order to prevent an even worse humanitarian crisis. These border closures also had a heavy toll on the Afghan government as the Pakistani government stopped any and all goods entering the nation and almost stopped all trade coming from the east. The WTO (World Trade Organization) has claimed that the Afghan economy lost nearly 90 million dollars due to these border closures.

IV. Key Vocabulary

Ethnopolitical: An ethnopolitical conflict is a conflict that involves both political and ethnic factors. The Durand Line conflict is an example of an ethnopolitical conflict due to the involvement of the Pashtun people alongside the border dispute between the nations.



Pashtun: A Pashto speaking ethnic group that mainly lives in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan and a minority ethnic group in Pakistan. In the early 2000s, there were 36 million Pashtuns worldwide.

Khudai Khidmatgar: A nationalist Pashtun movement with the goal of an independent and sovereign Pashtun state, Pashtunistan. Led by Bacha Khan, the movement became popular when Pakistan gained independence, and Pashtuns were not allowed to create their own state or join Afghanistan. The 611 citizens killed by the Pakistani government were supporters of Bacha Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Although the idea of Pashtunistan is still around, the movement isn't as strong as Bacha Khan's movement.

Coercion: According to Dictionary.com, coercion is the act of using force to obtain compliance.

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date	Event
November 12, 1893	The Durand Line Agreement between British India and the Emirate of Afghanistan was reached.
August 15, 1947	Pakistan gained independence.
August 12, 1948	The Pakistani Government killed 611 innocent Pashtuns, committing the Babrra massacre. Those Pashtuns were protesting the arrest of Bacha Khan, a nationalist Pashtun activist.
August 1976	The President of Afghanistan at the time Daoud Khan recognized the Durand Line as the legitimate border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
April 30, 1978	A coup took place in Afghanistan, completely changing the regime and removed Daoud Khan.
December 2001	With the support of the United States, the Taliban regime was toppled and a sovereign democratic Afghan government was established under the presidency of Hamid Karzai.
2011	Clashes between the Pakistani and the Afghan army occurred.



June 2016	The Pakistani government revealed their trenches and military bases along the Durand Line and stated that they will further continue on building trenches along the Durand Line.
February 2017	The Pakistani government closed its border with Afghanistan after a recent terror attack. The border was opened in order to stop a humanitarian crisis.

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- [The Durand Line Agreement](#)

The oldest and only agreement on the issue. Originally signed between the British and the Emirate of Afghanistan, this agreement gave two Pashtun majority territories to Pakistan and decided on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since Pakistan's independence, Pakistan inherited the Durand Line Agreement however neither the Afghan government nor the Pakistani government officially ratified the Durand Line agreement. This is why in 2020, the Durand Line is still an issue. There is no ratified agreement or treaty between the Pakistani and the Afghan government relating to the Durand Line.

- [Security Council 8147th Meeting](#)

Although it is not a resolution or a treaty, the 8147th meeting of the United Nations Security Council was the only time the issue of the Durand Line was brought to the attention of the United Nations. In the meeting -which had the topic of Conflict in Afghanistan- the Afghan representative mentioned the Durand Line. He mentioned that in order to improve relations with Pakistan the issue of the Durand Line had to be resolved. He further stated "Afghanistan has the will and capacity to defend its territory and our patience should not be tested" (Saikal, 2017). The United Nations has taken no other action regarding this issue as this issue is a regional one and neither of the regional actors has taken this issue to the United Nations.

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

Unfortunately, most solution attempts have been military actions and not diplomatic actions. Both the Pakistani government and the Afghan government have taken actions in the Durand Line region in order to ensure their own safety. These actions vary from building trenches and military bases to launching missiles into villages in the other nation. However, all the security measures taken by both nations is not enough to solve the issue as the region still has many militias and terrorist organizations such as the Taliban. Both nations have been acting alone (or in the case of Afghanistan working with the other Member States) which has led to the slow and inefficient improvement in the region. If Pakistan and Afghanistan want to fully



eradicate the Taliban and other militias in the region to ensure border safety they have to work together. Furthermore, the lack of diplomatic actions taken by either state has also made the territorial dispute unsolvable. The only time this issue was discussed in the international platforms was in 2017 in a United Nations Security Council meeting and that was not even the main focus of the meeting. During that meeting or as a result of that meeting no action was taken which made the only attempt to the issue to international platforms a failure.

VIII. Possible Solutions

There are multiple solutions to the Durand Line issue but for all of them, both Pakistan and Afghanistan have to make some compromise. The first issue is to ask for international mediation. Pakistan and Afghanistan can ask the United Nations, an NGO, or a Member State that is trusted and approved by both nations to mediate peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The territorial dispute has to be solved if the Member States If they wish to eradicate terrorism in their borders. The territorial claim of India should also not be forgotten while discussing territorial claims.

As another possible solution to the issue, the Pakistani government could do a referendum in the two territories they have gained in the Durand Line Agreement to make them special administrative regions. However, in order to convince the Pakistani government high pressure has to come from the international community and a promise to fully help the Pakistani government end terror in the region has to come from Afghanistan. A more controversial take could be to hold a referendum on all Pashtun majority regions -in both Afghanistan and Pakistan- in order to see if the Pashtun people still want a Pashtunistan.

On the other hand, the Pakistani government with the help of the international community could try to discuss with Afghanistan to recognize the Durand Line as the official international border. Pakistan could ask for the United States of America for help as they have previously defended the international border and are vital to the Afghan government.

IX. Useful Links

- The actual text of the Durand Line Agreement. You can read the original agreement between the British and the Emirate of Afghanistan from here:
<http://www.khyber.org/history/treaties/durandagreement.shtml>
- The meeting notes from the 8147th meeting of the United Nations Security Council. You can read the Afghan representative's whole speech about safety in Afghanistan and the response of the other representatives, including the representative of Pakistan:
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13137.doc.htm>



- A simple resource on the Durand Line for any delegate wishing to do further research on the subject:
www.britannica.com/event/Durand-Line



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