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BORDER MANAGEMENT AND GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES: THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE AND THE DURAND LINE

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Abstract
This study examines the Taliban government's position on Pakistan's border management policies and the securitization of the Durand Line. With border fencing representing a primary point of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the research explores the Taliban's response to these measures, their perception of the issue, and potential future actions regarding the Durand Line's fencing. Given the Taliban's recent consolidation of power, understanding their stance is critical for assessing bilateral relations and the broader strategic implications for Pakistan-Afghanistan ties. The study employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through 32 in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions involving five distinct stakeholder groups, including journalists and Taliban officials. The data were thematically analyzed to identify key patterns and insights. Findings indicate that the Taliban largely maintain a stance consistent with previous Afghan governments, with minor modifications to justify their position. They express strong reservations regarding Pakistan's border fortification and do not fully recognize the Durand Line as an official demarcation. Nevertheless, the study reveals that the Taliban are open to negotiations with Pakistan, emphasizing border management based on mutual consent and cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to understand the official and unofficial position of the Taliban regarding the fencing of the Durand Line. Afghanistan's current frontier, drawn largely under its Amir, Abdur Rehman's (1880-1901), rule, owes its demarcation to the British colonial policies in the region and the Afghan ruler's attempts at securing and retaining their independence. As Pakistan's Northern frontier with Afghanistan, the 2640 km long Durand Line, has long remained a bone of contention hampering the two countries' relationship. Demarcated by the British Empire in 1893 when Afghanistan was under the rule of Amir Abdur Rehman, the Durand Line was soon contested by the Amir's grandson, Amir Amanullah Khan, who assumed responsibility for state affairs after the death of his father, Amir Habibullah Khan, in February 1919. He declared the country an independent sovereign state, took an anti-British stance, and opposed the impact of British foreign policy on his country. He did not accept the

agreement by claiming that all such agreements made by the previous rulers were individual acts and did not have the support of the Afghan government and the public (Biswas, 2013). Boundaries began to be questioned and the later Afghan rulers claimed parts of British India, including the Khyber Pass and the bordering communities of Kurram, Pishin, and Sibi to be given back into Afghan custody (Iqbal, 2010).

Even though the Durand Line Agreement gave the British colonial authorities effective political control of some of this area, the locals were mostly left independent and were given 'spheres of influence,' which gave them some autonomy. The outcomes of Amir Abdur Rehman's negotiations with Sir Mortimer Durand were generally unsatisfactory for the people and rulers in Afghanistan. They claimed that the Afghan Line Commission's (1885–87) delimitation was essentially forced upon the Amir. It was argued that the Amir was highly susceptible to pressure when he received Sir Mortimer Durand in Kabul and that he was forced to sign that agreement (Lambah, 2011). The legal contestations, however, have remained unaddressed since then.

Following Pakistan's establishment in 1947, Afghanistan maintained a position of non-recognition of the Durand Line as a border demarcating Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was maintained that the British should have given the Pakhtun regions the choice to join either India or Pakistan in a 1947 referendum. After British India was divided and the British left, the agreement expired between the British Indian government and the Amir because Pakistan could not inherit the rights of an 'extinguished person,' which was the British Indian government in India (Clifford, Mary 1973).

On the contrary, Pakistan has never agreed with Afghanistan's position and has urged and pressured successive Afghan governments to recognize its borders (Kakar, 2006). It was maintained that "Afghanistan had repeatedly acknowledged and confirmed the Durand Line to be the legal international boundary (in 1905 and 1919); that Afghan sovereignty and its influence over the communities residing east of the Durand Line was ended by the Durand Line; and lastly, that Pakistan, as British India's successor state, had all the rights and responsibilities of a successor state, including full sovereignty over the region and its people" (Baqai &Wasi 2021).

Shortly after Pakistan's independence in 1948, the two countries' relationship became so tense that Pakistan had to increase its armed strength on its borders. On July 26, 1949, the Afghan government unilaterally declared the 'Durand Line to be an imaginary line' and its agreements not tenable because of Loya Jirga's resolution that reneged on all treaties made with the British Indian governments (Biswas, 2013). Subsequent governments in Afghanistan, including Zahir Shah and his cousin, Daoud (a vocal supporter of the Pakhtunistan Movement), as well as the Communist regime, contested the border demarcation. Later on, the Mujahideen government as well as that of the Taliban also towed the previous Afghan governments on the issue of the Durand Line and its acceptability. In the post-2001 period, the Karzai government's period was also plagued by the Durand Line issue, besides the influence of the Indian government and meddling in each other's internal affairs, which led to failures in developing genial relations (Durani & Khan, 2009). In 2012 once again, the Afghan government dismissed claims that the Durand Line was a permanent border, asserting that the status of the border was of great importance to the Afghan people, and demonstrated a firm commitment to its historic position (Azizi, 2019).

In the wake of worsening security and control over illegal movement across the border, the government of Pakistan, decided to undertake a policy of hardening its Northern border with Afghanistan. This new Border Management Policy began with the declaration on January 1, 2017 requiring all Pakistanis and Afghans to have a valid visa in their passports for crossing the border. In order to manage and control various forms of illegal activities and movement on both sides of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan began to construct a border fence. In retaliation, the then-Afghan Foreign Ministry clearly stated that they were against any type of unilateral actions taken along the Durand Line' without their government's confidence and declared all such actions to be 'ineffective, impractical and impossible' (Gul, 2017). Moreover, The Afghan

Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs also called for the disputed border fence to be stopped. The Deputy Ministry of Borders and Tribes of Afghanistan stated, "The Durand Line is not an international and recognized border with Pakistan in Afghanistan. We are on both sides of the border to counter Pakistani aggression along the border. We are in close contact with different tribes" (Times, 2017). The Pakistani state's policy of closing its borders has raised questions among the Afghan people, and Pakistan was not supposed to fence the border without taking into consideration the will of the Afghan government. It was believed that the President Ashraf Ghani's government was not taken on board by the Pakistani government when it decided to start the fencing of the Durand Line and some scholars allege that the Afghan President went silent on this issue. The Pakistani state's policy of closing its borders has raised questions among the Afghan people and has added to their woes, especially those who have to cross the border frequently for varied reasons (Fetri, 2017).

The Taliban has assaulted Pakistanis working to erect the fence because they do not recognize the Durand line's legality. They contend that the Durand line prevents the Pashtun community from moving freely and affects trade, dividing them between two nations (Jan, 2022). The response of the Taliban has been dubious since they came to power. Bilal Karimi, the deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, recently said that "The Islamic Emirate still prefers to resolve all issues (including that of Durand Line) through talks". Their stance was to solve the "issue" of the Durand Line diplomatically, while the local commanders and members of the Islamic Emirate destroyed fencing in the eastern parts of Paktia and Nangarhar. It was reported in 2022 that the force members tell their Pakistani military to cease erecting the fence or they will suffer harmful repercussions. As a result, Islamic Emirate forces and Pakistani border guards are said to have engaged in combat along the border (Jamal, 2022).

Securitization of Borders:

According to traditional analyses, borders are rigid and absolute entities and create exclusions both within society and across state boundaries. Securitization of borders is part of the process where states securitize their borders out of insecurity. This insecurity creates a fundamental difference between "us" and "them" within and outside the border. Vaughan-Williams suggests that it is "At the border key decisions are made about who is 'legitimate' and who is 'illegitimate'; who is 'trusted' and who is 'risky'; who can be allowed to cross freely and who is excluded." Therefore, to understand why the practices behind border security can create not only a society of exclusion but also insecurity (Vaughan-Williams, 2008).

Securitization" of borders is, achieved through a variety of means, fencing borders and creating tight control over the movements of those wanting to cross over for medical, economic, educational, and other issues, shifting the responsibility of preventing irregular migration to countries of departure or transit. This is done to ensure that border control no longer takes place at the physical borders of the countries of destination. This is done in violation of the human rights of all the people to cross the borders of the states for education, healthcare, employment, to meet relatives and other purposes (François, 2013).

The Pakistani military's construction of a security fence along their shared border was halted by Taliban soldiers in Afghanistan. Despite objections from Kabul, which has consistently disputed the British-era boundary demarcation that separates families and tribes on either side, Pakistan has fenced the majority of the 2,600 km (1,615 miles) frontier since their rise to power in 2021. According to Enayatullah Khwarazmi, a spokesman for the Afghan defense ministry, Taliban troops prevented the Pakistani military from building an "illegal" border fence around the province of Nangarhar in the East. A senior official was shown in a video that went viral on social media advising Pakistani soldiers stationed in security posts in the background not to attempt to fence the border again after Taliban forces had taken control of spools of barbed wire. Under the condition of anonymity, two Taliban sources told Reuters that the encounter between Taliban and Pakistani soldiers over the border incident was tense. They continued by asserting that, mortar fire crossed the border from Pakistani

territory farther North along the border into the Afghan province of Kunar. If the instances are connected is unknown. According to the officials, helicopters from the Afghan military were spotted patrolling the region. Before Pakistan started to create a metal fence four years ago in 2017, which it has finished 90% of, the lawless mountainous border was fluid. For Pakistan, the trend has caused concern. Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar, Director General of the ISPR, pledged that the fencing would be finished as scheduled because "blood of martyred soldiers has been spilled while erecting the fence"(Ahmad, 2022).

The worry is, ever since the Taliban took control, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has reemerged with enhanced internal cohesiveness and renewed political strength, which has alarmed Islamabad as the insurgents gather split elements back into the fold. The potential for TTP cooperation with the Afghan Taliban follows this trend. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Taliban's substantial yet covert presence in Pakistan might serve as a Trojan horse for Afghanistan in Pakistan, especially in light of the Taliban's increased ferocity in the wake of Kabul's fall. After all, the TTP's leader, Noor Wali Mehsud, has sworn loyalty to the Afghan Taliban leader, Maulvi Hibatullah Akhundzada. In addition, the Taliban leadership recently, in 2021, freed a large number of TTP commanders, including Maulvi Faqir Muhammad, a former deputy leader. Such a risk taken by the Taliban administration would weaken Pakistan's backing for a secure Afghanistan, especially if security circles saw a positive resurgence of militancy in Swat that undercuts the Pakistan Army's ten-year counterinsurgency campaign to drive out the TTP. This may be one of the causes for Pakistan's alleged (albeit unconfirmed) bombings in eastern Afghanistan, which may have been done to warn the Afghan government not to provide shelter for militants there (Ansari, 2022).

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021, clashes have taken place between its security forces and those of Pakistan, while militants have attacked Pakistani forces. According to a spokesperson for the interior ministry under the Taliban administration, border forces from both sides were involved in a fight, in 2021. He stated that the incident was being investigated and that it was the result of a "misunderstanding." The media arm of Pakistan's military, according to a spokesperson, is investigating the incident to determine what took place. According to Zehri, the clashes began when a man approaching from the Afghan side of the border crossing shot and killed a member of the Pakistani security force and wounded several others. It was not immediately clear how many people had been killed on both sides in total. Locals and government officials claimed that hundreds of goods-laden trucks were stalled on both sides. Conflicts between Afghanistan's security forces and Pakistani forces and militant attacks on Pakistani forces have occurred since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021 (Hashimay, 2023).

The Pakistani military's construction of a security fence along their shared border was halted by the Taliban soldiers in December 2021 in an intense standoff. The worry is, ever since the Taliban took control, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has reemerged with enhanced internal cohesiveness and renewed political strength, which has alarmed Islamabad as the insurgents gather split elements back into the fold. The Pakistani Taliban are said to owe allegiance to the Afghan Taliban. Scholars predict that such geopolitical tensions and scuffles between the Taliban government and Pakistan will trigger new sets of conflicts in the region (Watkins, 2022). The new border policy under the securitization debate has aggravated relations between the two countries. Therefore, it is essential to understand the official and unofficial position of the Taliban government about border fencing and securitization of the Durand Line.

Research Methodology

The study is exploratory and analytical in nature as it attempts to understand the stance of Taliban regarding the securitization of border fencing of the Durand Line. The study employs qualitative research methodology for collecting data from primary and secondary sources. For primary data collection, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions were conducted. People were interviewed individually and focused groups have been categorized in five broad categories: Taliban

government office holders, former Afghan government officials, representatives of Afghan political parties, academicians from Afghanistan and Pakistan, journalists and civil society members. The researcher interviewed about 31 respondents from the mentioned categories. At least 2 focus group additional interviews were conducted in each group.

Official Stance of the Taliban

The Taliban, an Islamic group that controlled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, refused to recognize the Durand Line as the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite being widely acknowledged to be under Pakistani influence when they ran Afghanistan, they maintained a stance of refusing to acknowledge the Line as an international border. They affirmed this position by declining to endorse the Durand Line when the Taliban's Interior Minister, Abd-ur-Razzaq, and his delegation visited Pakistan in the summer of 2001, according to a report by The Friday Times, based in Lahore.

The Taliban's refusal to recognize the Durand Line as the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is rooted in historical, political, and ideological factors. Historically, the Pashtun tribes that lived in the region were not consulted when the Durand Line was drawn, and the line divided the Pashtun homeland, leading to a sense of injustice and alienation among the Pashtun people. Politically, the Taliban saw the Durand Line as a symbol of British colonialism and an infringement on Afghanistan's sovereignty. Ideologically, the Taliban believed in the unification of the Pashtun tribes and the establishment of an Islamic state that would transcend national borders. Despite the Taliban's refusal to recognize the line, the Durand Line remains the internationally recognized border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, the issue of the Durand Line has continued to be a source of tension between the two countries, with Afghanistan refusing to recognize the line as the official border and calling for the Pashtun territories to be reunited with Afghanistan.

We asked our respondents about the legitimacy and legality of the Durand line and their responses were either based on different claims about it. In response to the question, a Taliban commander was drawing their claims about the line from the people of Afghanistan. He conditioned their policy and official position to the will and wishes of the people of Afghanistan. It means the official stance about the recognition or non-recognition is upon the people of Afghanistan who must decide whether to do it or not. Another commander, Sayyed Jaffar, called the Durand Line a "hypothetical line" and "an injustice to the Afghans", believing that the British coerced and forced Amir Abdul Rahman Khan into signing the agreement without consulting with the Afghans (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024). Jaffar attributes their stance on the Durand line to the historical background of the Durand Line agreement, recognizing the weak position of the then ruler of Afghanistan against a backdrop of political, economic and military fragmentation (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024). Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, he added, "did not want the Afghans to live in war and hardship any longer" and successive Afghan governments have since struggled against and opposed this imposed line on the Afghans (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024).

The historical "injustice" aside, the Taliban are viewing the Durand line through the lens of their recent lived experiences on the border that makes them resistant. Jaffar argued that "travel to Pakistan was free until the last years of President Hamid Karzai, and Afghans were not asked for passports or any kind of identity card, but recently, many and serious restrictions have been imposed by the government of Pakistan. They tried to create all kinds of problems for the Afghans and are still doing it" (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024). This lived experience has created bitterness regarding the Durand Line.

For Jafar, the third factor was the ethnic identity of Pashtuns across the Durand Line. "Pashtuns," he opined, "living on both sides of the Line, are one nation and they have kinship and friendship among themselves. The line separated them from each other and the vast area of Afghanistan was separated" (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024). In short, he said, that the imposed hypothetical line of Durand is "not acceptable to any Afghan or any Pashtun".

Sayyed Abdul Latif Manauri, the official of the Ministry of Information and Technology, had a different view justifying the refusal to recognise the Durand line as the geostrategic need of the Durand line for the British Empire that compelled the then government of Afghanistan to accept the agreement. To quote him, "Durand is a hypothetical line, if you look at the history, this line was drawn in the heart of Afghanistan and it would be said that 100 years ago there was no country called Pakistan, but here the British ruled India. They were in conflict with the Tsar, so the government wanted to create a barrier that could keep the Tsar at the distance from them" (S. A. L Manauri, personal communication, February 02, 2024). For Sadiq Ullah, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the cause, in addition to the official stance of the Afghan governments, is a Tribal refusal on both sides.

The second question of the interview was to inquire about the official stance of the Taliban government regarding the Durand line. We asked, *what is the official position of the Taliban/ Afghan government on the Durand Line?*

A Taliban commander, Jaffar's response was such:

Taliban government accepting the hypothetical Durand Line is not acceptable in any way. The Pakistani government has repeatedly tried to extend the wire on the Durand Line, but the Afghan Taliban has repeatedly prevented it. There have been fierce and bloody battles between the two sides on this line and it is strictly forbidden to extend the wire. They have not taken any official action yet. Looking at the time and opportunity, Inshallah, the Taliban will also publicly clarify their official position regarding the Durand Line to all Afghans and international community. Be fully satisfied that all Afghans and Pashtuns are eager and waiting for the clarification of the sacred position of the Taliban. (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024)

This indicates that the Taliban have not publicly accepted or clarified their position on the Durand Line; although, they had several skirmishes and attacks on the line in recent times, mentioned above. The same view is shared by Shahid Rahimi, who said, "The Islamic Emirate has not yet published its official position on the Durand Line, but from its actions it seems that it is not ready to accept the mentioned line, as they built many military posts along this line" (S. Rahimi, personal communication, February 19, 2024). It seems that the Taliban have not been able to announce their official position as far as the Durand Line but they are practically preparing themselves for any misunderstanding or times of crisis.

According to Noor Akbar Rohani, "we should look at the old map of Afghanistan and draw the border line through that line. If the Durand Line is the border in that map, we should accept it and if that is not the case, we should reject the Durand Line and struggle for justice" (N. A Rohani personal communication, January 04, 2024).

Another respondent, Asad Ullah Adil stated, "the position of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is that they do not recognize the line signed by Amir Abdul Rahman Khan without consultation" (A. Adil, personal communication, January 26, 2024). For Sayyed Abdul Latif, "The Taliban's official position regarding the Durand Line is that it is the territory of Afghanistan, and whenever they get an opportunity they will take it back" (S. Ullah, personal communication, February 02, 2024). The Latif response seems to be very radical as he claims to be waiting for the right opportunity to take the "occupied" territory back from Pakistan.

Saddeeq Ullah offered another justification for the Taliban's position. To him, "after 1893, the Durand Line Agreement was signed by the British Indian government and the Afghan Emir (Amir Abdul Rahman Khan) to enforce restrictions in their territories. These areas were occupied by the British and the Taliban are planning to take it back" (S. Ullah, personal communication, January 20, 2024).

3.2 Legitimacy of the Taliban Government:

To know about the position of the government placed after 2021 in Afghanistan, we asked our respondents: "*Does the Afghan/ Taliban government accept its existence as legal and logical? If yes, why? If no, why?*" to which multiple Taliban officials have responded differently.

Sayyed Jafar argued,

"The Taliban government indeed considers its existence legal and it is legal because it is based on Islamic Sharia. They do not rely on the hand-made

constitution, he has always tried to implement a completely Islamic system in Afghanistan, and he has succeeded in this effort. Also, after taking over the government of Afghanistan, the Taliban has established security in the country in a complete and very good way. The Taliban have engaged in large economic activities with no possibilities, and by doing these activities, they have won the hearts of the Afghans, it is clear that no matter how the Taliban has taken over the government by force, without the consent of the people, they could not rule properly. It can be said that the Taliban government in Afghanistan is legal and logical". (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024)

The respondent asserts that the Taliban government considers its existence legal due to its adherence to Islamic Sharia. It highlights the Taliban's rejection of a hand-made constitution in favor of implementing a system based on Islamic principles. Sayyed claims that the Taliban has been successful in implementing a completely Islamic system in Afghanistan. This suggests that the group has sought to govern the country in accordance with its interpretation of Islamic law. He mentions that the Taliban, after taking over the government, has established security in the country effectively. This implies that, from the perspective presented, the Taliban has been successful in maintaining law and order. He further states that the Taliban has engaged in significant economic activities, winning the support of the Afghan people which suggests that economic initiatives have contributed to gaining public approval, despite the government's assumption of power through force. The conclusion of the response asserts that, regardless of how the Taliban came into power, whether by force and without the consent of the people, it is considered legal and logical. This seems to reflect the viewpoint that the Taliban's governance is justified.

Asad Ullah Adil, on the other hand, said, "The Afghan government considers its existence to be legal because there are international principles for the government, such as the establishment of an inclusive government. I do not accept that it is one of the international principles that insulting one's religion and its sanctities is prohibited, but unfortunately, those who make such demands from the world are neither principled nor do they accept our blessed religion, Islam" (A. U. Adil, personal communication, January 26, 2024). The response appears to convey a perspective on the Afghan government's legitimacy and the clash between international principles and cultural or religious values. He begins by asserting that the Afghan government considers its existence legal. The justification provided is the existence of international principles for governments, with a specific mention of the establishment of an inclusive government. The term "inclusive government" suggests a form of governance that includes various factions or ethnic groups, reflecting a commitment to diversity and representation.

Shahi Rawan held the following views, The Taliban considers their government to be legitimate. In my opinion, there are several reasons behind their assertion of legitimacy. Firstly, the Taliban had a government in Afghanistan before the U.S. and its allies used the 11th of September as a pretext to invade and overthrow their regime, replacing it with a republican system. Despite this, the Taliban persisted in their struggle, eventually compelling the U.S. to sign an agreement in Doha. As part of the agreement, the Taliban agreed to peacefully leave Afghanistan, and upon the withdrawal of U.S. forces, they returned, relinquishing control. Secondly, numerous countries worldwide have governments that came to power through force, be they family-based monarchies or republics where power is concentrated within a specific group or family. Similarly, the Taliban did not participate in elections, but their government includes individuals from various backgrounds, and a significant portion of the Afghan population accepts and supports it, even though it may not constitute a majority. Furthermore, the Islamic Emirate, as it is now known, has complete control over the entire territory of Afghanistan. They have bolstered security measures and strive to provide essential services to the best of their ability, akin to any legitimate government. These are just a few reasons among many that the Taliban can use to justify their claim to legitimacy". (S. Rawan, personal communication, January 26, 2024)

The Taliban's claim to legitimacy as the government of Afghanistan is rooted in its historical presence in the country. Prior to the US-led invasion in 2001, the Taliban held power in Afghanistan. They governed the country under a strict interpretation of Islamic law and maintained control over much of the territory. Despite the intervention by the US and its allies, the Taliban never fully disappeared from Afghanistan. They continued to operate as an insurgency, challenging the new government and the foreign forces that supported it. One significant event that contributed to the Taliban's claim to legitimacy was the signing of an agreement in Doha with the US in 2020. As part of this agreement, the Taliban agreed to peacefully leave Afghanistan, and in return, the US committed to withdrawing its forces from the country. This agreement was seen as a recognition of the Taliban's status as a legitimate actor in Afghanistan and a signal that the international community was willing to engage with them.

Sayyed Abdul Latif had something different to say. He asserted, “The Taliban considers the existence of their government to be legal and logical for the following reasons: The Taliban government is inclusive. In the Taliban government, a lot of development work is being done in the country and has been done. The Taliban government does not use the land of the beloved country to the detriment of anyone else. The Taliban government is trying to have good relations with all the countries of the world, especially with the neighbouring countries” (S. A. L Manauri, personal communication, February 02, 2024). He begins by stating that the Taliban government considers itself legal and logical, with inclusivity mentioned as one of the reasons. This implies that the government may be portraying itself as representative and accommodating of diverse perspectives within the country. He asserts that the Taliban government is actively engaged in development work within the country. This suggests that they are positioning themselves as a force for positive change and progress, aiming to contribute to the betterment of Afghanistan. It is mentioned that the Taliban government does not use the country's land to the detriment of anyone else. This could be an attempt to emphasize responsible governance, suggesting that the Taliban is mindful of the impact of its actions on both its citizens and neighboring countries. He states that the Taliban government is working towards establishing good relations with all countries, especially neighboring ones. This highlights a diplomatic aspect, indicating a desire for positive interactions on the global stage, particularly with neighboring nations.

Sadeeq Ullah provided a brief overview of the historical context in Afghanistan, highlighting the Taliban's control over the country and their efforts in establishing an Islamic system. He said, “After 40 years of severe wars and troubles in the territory of Afghanistan, the Taliban has created a system that controls the entire territory of Afghanistan. They established an Islamic system in the entire country, and for this Islamic system, they made an unprecedented sacrifice and is still ready to make.” (S. Ullah, personal communication, January 08, 2024) He begins by acknowledging the challenging history of Afghanistan, specifically mentioning "40 years of severe wars and troubles. This likely refers to the series of conflicts Afghanistan has been subject to, including the Soviet-Afghan War, civil wars, and the more recent conflict involving the Taliban. He asserts that the Taliban has managed to establish control over the entire territory of Afghanistan. This implies a consolidation of power by the Taliban, suggesting a significant political and military influence. Sadeeq emphasizes that the Taliban has implemented an Islamic system throughout the country. This implies a governance model based on Islamic principles and laws, aligning with the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic governance. He claims that the Taliban has made an unprecedented sacrifice for the establishment and maintenance of the Islamic system. This suggests a commitment and dedication to their cause, possibly involving significant human and material sacrifices. He concludes by stating that the Taliban remains ready to make further sacrifices for the Islamic system. This reinforces the notion that the Taliban sees its governance as a long-term commitment and is willing to endure challenges to maintain it.

Amin Wali Safi shared his views as, “First of all, I would like to say that the tribal areas of Pakistan, which are now under the control of the Pakistan

Army, are illegal. According to the Durand Agreement and other documents, it is proven that these areas will be free, no army will be stationed here. Militias will take care of their own security, but Pakistan still sent the army here without all this and built posts and military bases or outposts instead" (A. W. Safi personal communication, February 04, 2024). The issue of the barbed wire fence along the Durand Line is also controversial. While the use of barbed wire to demarcate borders is not uncommon, there are concerns about the manner in which it has been used in this case. The fence was erected without any consultation with the Afghan government or the local communities on the Afghan side of the border. This has led to accusations that Pakistan is unilaterally changing the status quo along the Durand Line and encroaching on Afghan territory.

Noor Akbar presents a perspective on the Afghan government's legitimacy and right to recognition based on meeting international commitments, avoiding connections with certain groups, and emphasizing its commitment to national sovereignty and Islamic principles in international relations. As with any political statement, different perspectives may exist, and opinions on the legitimacy of the Afghan government may vary. He said,

Although the Afghan government has not been recognized by the world, after meeting the conditions of all international commitments, the Afghan government has the right to be recognized. And they call their existence legal because they have no secret or open connections with any foreign corrupt or terrorist group and they have the right to live in their own land and no one can take this right away from them, because they are interested in international relations within the framework of Islam and want to have healthy relations with the whole world". (N. A Rohani personal communication, January 04, 2024)

He asserts that, despite not being recognized by the world, the Afghan government believes it has the right to be recognized. This suggests a perceived legitimacy that may be based on meeting international commitments. The paragraph states that the Afghan government has met the conditions of all international commitments, implying that they have fulfilled the requirements set by the international community. This is presented as a basis for the government's claim to recognition. He highlights the Afghan government's assertion that it has no connections, either secret or open, with foreign corrupt or terrorist groups. This is likely intended to dispel concerns about the government's associations and emphasize its commitment to avoiding such connections. The paragraph emphasizes the Afghan government's claim to the right to live in its own land, suggesting a commitment to national sovereignty and autonomy. The assertion that no one can take this right away reinforces the government's position on its legitimacy. He concludes by stating that the Afghan government is interested in international relations within the framework of Islam. This indicates a desire to engage with the international community in a manner consistent with Islamic principles, possibly reflecting a diplomatic approach rooted in religious values.

3.3 Fencing the Durand Line

To understand the perspective and perception of the Taliban about the fencing of the border, we asked *"What are your opinions about Pakistan's fencing of the Durand Line?"* The respondents' strong disapproval of Pakistan's installation of barbed wire on the Durand Line emphasizes the shared cultural, religious, and familial ties between the residents on both sides. The author questions the necessity of such barriers, particularly in the context of Islam, which does not recognize borders.

For Sayyed Jafar,

The installation of barbed wire by Pakistan on the Durand Line is unacceptable to me and to all Afghans, particularly the Pashtun tribes, who are divided into two parts. The customs, rules, rituals, traditions, religion, language, and all aspects of the residents on both sides of the line are the same. Importantly, the residents on both sides of the line are related to each other, and some friendships have been forcibly separated. Another crucial point to consider is the legal basis upon which the government of Pakistan extends the barbed wire. If we examine the official religion of Pakistan, which is Islam, there is no concept of borders in Islam. Therefore, the question arises: why is there a need for barbed wire? Furthermore, when considering

international laws, have any other countries engaged in actions similar to what the government of Pakistan is doing, where citizens are forcefully harming their fellow citizens? If such actions had occurred elsewhere, they would likely have faced severe international reactions, as is the case with the government of Pakistan today. We, along with all Afghans, especially the Pashtun people, cannot tolerate the expansion of barbed wire, and we unequivocally reject it". (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024)

The concern extends beyond cultural and religious considerations to the legal basis for Pakistan's actions. The author questions the justification for extending the barbed wire and compares it to international norms, raising doubts about whether other countries have undertaken similar measures that involve harming their own citizens.

The passage suggests that if such actions occurred elsewhere, they would likely provoke severe international reactions. The overall sentiment is one of rejection and intolerance toward the expansion of barbed wire, and the author asserts solidarity with all Afghans, especially the Pashtun people, in opposing this development. The tone is critical and seeks to draw attention to what the author perceives as an unjust and unnecessary imposition.

Latif, on the other hand, had something else to say. He argued, "The installation of barbed wire by Pakistan on the Durand Line is unequivocally unacceptable, and Afghans will never endorse this barrier. The implementation of such barbed wire has resulted in the separation of tribes and relatives within our beloved country, a consequence of actions taken by the previous corrupt system. This decision was made during the tenure of the previous regime, which was closely associated with the United States" (S. A. L Manauri, personal communication, February 02, 2024). He conveys a strong and unambiguous rejection of Pakistan's installation of barbed wire on the Durand Line. The use of the term "unequivocally unacceptable" emphasizes the author's firm stance against this measure. The phrase "Afghans will never endorse this barrier" reinforces the sentiment that the local population is united in their disapproval.

Sadeeq provides insight into the complex geopolitical issue surrounding the Durand Line and the installation of barbed wire. He argued, "The fact that the request of the Pakistan government to formalize the Durand Line has not been accepted by Zahir Shah, Dawood Khan, Taraki, Karmal, Dr. Najib, Mujahideen, and the Taliban makes the placement of barbed wire a significant issue. The passing of barbed wire was initiated during the rule of President Ashraf Ghani, and with the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the government of Pakistan ceased the practice of allowing barbed wire to pass." The fact that the request of the Pakistan government to formalize the Durand Line has not been accepted by a list of Afghan leaders and groups (Zahir Shah, Dawood Khan, Taraki, Karmal, Dr. Najib, Mujahideen, and the Taliban) underscores the political disagreement and resistance to defining or legitimizing the border. The comments suggest that the installation of barbed wire is a consequential matter. The use of the term "significant issue" implies that the placement of barbed wire is not merely a physical act but holds broader political and symbolic implications, likely related to the contested nature of the Durand Line. The mention of various Afghan leaders and groups, spanning different periods, adds a historical dimension to the issue. The persistence of opposition across different political regimes indicates a longstanding disagreement over the status of the Durand Line. The statement notes a shift in policy regarding the passing of barbed wire during the rule of President Ashraf Ghani. This suggests a change in approach or agreement under Ghani's administration, which was later reversed with the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The statement implies that with the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the government of Pakistan ceased allowing the passing of barbed wire. This highlights the changing dynamics and policies under different Afghan administrations.

Noor Akbar reflects a critical perspective on a particular matter, likely related to border delineation between two countries. He argued, "In reference to this matter, we consider it to be devoid of meaning and unofficial. Currently, it has been delineated as an unofficial demarcation between the two countries, taking the form of a temporary border, forced upon

Afghanistan by Pakistan. We hope to overcome this through just and equitable means in the future" (N. A Rohani personal communication, January 04, 2024). The phrase "devoid of meaning" suggests that the matter in question is seen as lacking importance or relevance. This could indicate a dismissal of the legitimacy or significance of the issue. The characterization of the matter as "unofficial" implies that it lacks formal recognition or authorization. This may suggest a rejection of any established or agreed-upon protocols in handling the issue. Describing the situation as a "temporary border" indicates a belief that the current arrangement is not permanent or legally recognized.

To know about the reasons behind the fencing, we asked: "*Why do you think the Pakistani government is fencing the border? Reason?*"

Aqeela Asad conveyed a specific perspective on Pakistan's actions regarding the installation of barbed wire. He argued, "In my opinion, Pakistan's purpose in installing barbed wire is to protect the land it has seized from Afghanistan under one pretext or another" (A. Asad, personal communication, February 25, 2024). He suggests that Pakistan's primary motive for installing barbed wire is to protect land that it has taken from Afghanistan. This implies a belief that the barbed wire serves as a defensive measure to secure control over territories acquired through various justifications. The use of the phrase "under one pretext or another" implies a degree of cynicism or skepticism. It suggests that the speaker views the reasons given by Pakistan for acquiring the land as potentially misleading or insincere. The statement implies an accusation that Pakistan has seized land from Afghanistan. This accusation may reflect historical or ongoing territorial disputes, and the speaker appears to link the barbed wire installation directly to this alleged land seizure. The perspective expressed is likely aligned with a nationalistic stance, emphasizing the protection of Afghanistan's territorial integrity. It assumes that Pakistan's actions are seen as a threat to Afghanistan's sovereignty, prompting defensive measures. It's important to note that the statement doesn't provide explicit evidence for the perceived motive but rather reflects the speaker's interpretation or opinion.

The Taliban commander, Jaffar, provides a comprehensive view of the situation, highlighting the contested nature of the Durand Line, the persistence of Pakistan, Afghan opposition, and the perceived negative consequences of the barbed wire installation. Offering insight into the complex dynamics and implications of this ongoing issue, he argued,

Our perspective on why Pakistan is installing barbed wire along the Durand Line is rooted in the belief that the Durand Line is considered fictitious, with no international recognition from Afghans. Despite this, the Pakistani government persists in attempting to fortify it with barbed wire and establish it as the official border. However, continuous opposition from Afghans has thwarted their efforts, preventing the extension of the wire and thwarting their plan. Afghans have confidently resisted the imposition of barbed wire, signaling their firm opposition. The Pakistani government, in response, presents the Afghans' acceptance of the borderline to the international community, attempting to legitimize the barbed wire extension by portraying it as mutually agreed upon. The consequences of this action are viewed negatively, as it is believed that a significant portion of Afghanistan's land, which has been unofficially and forcibly taken until now, will be permanently and officially separated from the sacred soil of Afghanistan. This separation is seen as a destructive and irreversible loss for Afghanistan. (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024)

He points out that despite the perceived lack of legitimacy, the Pakistani government persists in attempting to fortify the Durand Line with barbed wire and establish it as the official border. This implies a proactive effort on Pakistan's part to assert control over the disputed area. The analysis notes that continuous opposition from the Afghans has impeded Pakistan's efforts to extend the barbed wire and establish the Durand Line as the official border. This underscores the ongoing resistance and disagreement on the part of the Afghan population. The passage emphasizes that Afghans have confidently resisted the imposition of barbed wire, indicating a strong and unwavering opposition to the perceived infringement on their territory. The analysis suggests that, in response to Afghan

opposition, the Pakistani government attempts to present the Afghans' acceptance of the borderline to the international community. This implies an effort to gain legitimacy and support on the global stage. The consequences of the barbed wire installation are portrayed as negative. There is a belief that a significant portion of Afghanistan's land, which has been taken unofficially and forcibly, will be permanently and officially separated. This separation is described as destructive and irreversible, emphasizing the gravity of the situation for Afghanistan.

Sayyed Munawwari, another commander of the Taliban argued that in his opinion, "Pakistan installed this barbed wire in the area to lend legal recognition to the presumed Durand Line, although it has yet to materialize."(S. Munawwari, personal communication, February 08, 2024)) He provides an analysis of the perceived motive behind Pakistan's installation of barbed wire along the presumed Durand Line. In the speaker's opinion, Pakistan's motive for installing barbed wire is to give legal recognition to the Durand Line which implies an attempt to formalize or legitimize a border that may not have been universally acknowledged or accepted. The term "presumed Durand Line" indicates uncertainty or controversy surrounding the legitimacy of this boundary. The use of "presumed" suggests that there might be disagreement or lack of clarity about the authenticity of the Durand Line itself. The statement implies that, despite the efforts to install barbed wire and gain legal recognition for the Durand Line, the desired outcome has not yet materialized. This could suggest challenges, opposition, or an absence of international acknowledgment for the claimed border.

Ahmed , a higher level Taliban commander, portrays a complex situation where the unity of Pashtuns is at odds with the actions of the Pakistani government, which is seen as employing barbed wire to keep these communities apart, despite their shared heritage. The use of security reasons as a justification is viewed with skepticism, hinting at underlying concerns or motivations behind the physical separation. He argued, "Pashtuns inhabit both sides of the Durand Line and have no desire to live separately from each other. The people on both sides share common customs, traditions, and language. However, the government of Pakistan seems unwilling to let these two tribes coexist, employing barbed wire to keep them apart. The government claims that this wire is for security reasons" (Ahmed, personal communication, January 21, 2024). He emphasizes the unity of Pashtuns living on both sides of the Durand Line. The shared commonalities in customs, traditions, and language suggest a strong cultural and social connection between these communities.

Rohani , an official of the Taliban government, indicates a dual motive: the desire to establish a permanent line and the subjective attribution of official status to it. The statement also places this practice in a broader context, suggesting that the use of barriers for territorial delineation is a widespread practice among nations, not limited to a specific country. He said that "Pakistan aim to establish this line as permanent. Another reason is that, in their own perception, they have acknowledged it and bestowed upon it the status of an official demarcation, even in the absence of any supporting evidence. It is not just Pakistan that employs barbed wire along the line; every country seeks to delineate and safeguard its territory through the use of such barriers" (Rohani, personal communication, January 17, 2024). He indicates an intention to make the line permanent, suggesting a desire for a lasting and recognized boundary. This could imply efforts to formalize a territorial border with enduring significance. The mention of "in their own perception" suggests that the acknowledgment and official status attributed to the line are subjective and might not be universally accepted. This could point to a self-declared legitimacy that might lack broader consensus.

3.4 Securitization of the Line

To gauge their understanding of the securitization, we asked "*Do you accept the fencing of the Durand Line in the name of securitization? If not, why?*"

Shahid Rahimi, an official, suggests a critical viewpoint on the use of barbed wire for security purposes in Pakistan. The speaker questions the effectiveness of this measure, pointing out a long-standing presence of barbed wire without corresponding improvements in the security

situation, leading to a skepticism about its efficacy. He expressed, “No, it is not acceptable for someone to enhance their security through the use of barbed wire. This is because, as far back as I can remember, I have not heard the voice of peace in Pakistan. Despite the presence of the same barbed wire over the years, there has been no improvement in the security situation in Pakistan, neither in the past nor in the present” (S. Rahimi, personal communication, February 19, 2024). Rahimi outright rejects the idea of using barbed wire to enhance security. This suggests a skeptical or negative stance towards the effectiveness of such physical barriers in promoting safety. The statement links the use of barbed wire with a perceived absence of peace in Pakistan. The speaker expresses that, as far back as they can remember, peace has not been prevalent despite the presence of barbed wire. The mention of the "same barbed wire over the years" implies that the physical presence of barbed wire has been consistent for a considerable period. This consistency is juxtaposed with the lack of improvement in the security situation, emphasizing the ineffectiveness of the measure. The phrase "neither in the past nor in the present" provides a historical perspective on the security situation in Pakistan. It implies a continuity of security challenges, suggesting that the use of barbed wire has not brought about positive change over time. The overall tone of the statement carries an implicit critique of the security measures in place, highlighting a perceived disconnection between the presence of barbed wire and the actual enhancement of security.

Saad Hasan Adil had the following to say:

Pakistan claims that by extending the barbed wire, their goal is to strengthen security; however, they have absolutely no right, and it is an unsuccessful policy. The extension of barbed wire can never, in any way, enhance security. The presence of wolves on both sides of the line, causing occasional uprisings and refusing to accept the line, leads to conflicts and numerous problems. If the government of Pakistan genuinely desires peace, they should refrain from extending the fence, allowing people to relax, and, thereby, establishing peace. Without extending the wire, proper security measures can be implemented. The assertion by the Pakistani government that they are extending the barbed wire to maintain peace is incorrect. Instead, it represents a failed and baseless policy with underlying motivations that will never succeed. (S. H. Adil, personal communication, February 19, 2024)

He challenges Pakistan's assertion that extending barbed wire strengthens security. He categorically states that Pakistan has "absolutely no right" to make this claim and describes the policy as "unsuccessful." This suggests a clear skepticism about the effectiveness of this security measure. The statement strongly asserts that the extension of barbed wire "can never, in any way, enhance security." This indicates a belief that physical barriers alone, represented by barbed wire, are insufficient to address security concerns. The mention of "wolves on both sides of the line" serves as a metaphor for local challenges and opposition to the border, leading to occasional uprisings and conflicts.

Manauri asserted, “I don’t accept this, as before the installation of barbed wire, this area was still safe, indicating that many incidents did not occur. However, now, day by day, these incidents are increasing in Pakistan, and people are becoming increasingly frustrated. The Durand Line is merely a fictional boundary used for legal claims, and the installation of barbed wire is also a means to encroach upon certain areas” (S. A. L Manauri, personal communication, February 02, 2024). This statement provides a critical analysis of the situation, particularly focusing on the impact of barbed wire installation and its perceived consequences. The statement begins by asserting that the area was safe before the installation of barbed wire. This implies a belief that the security situation in the region was better in the absence of physical barriers. The statement suggests a correlation between the installation of barbed wire and the increasing incidents in Pakistan. The use of the words "day by day" indicates a gradual worsening of the situation, linking it to the introduction of barbed wire. The mention of people becoming "increasingly frustrated" implies that the perceived increase in incidents is having a negative impact on the local population, leading to dissatisfaction and discontent.

Our next question to the respondents was: "*How would you respond to the claim of Pakistan that securitization is necessary for peace?*"

Adil responded by saying, "This is correct, but they should first think about what else is necessary for peace. In my opinion, the consent of the people is necessary for peace and the common people of Pakistan are strict Muslims, but the government's laws, principles, regulations... are all in conflict with Islam. So these principles are not acceptable to the common people of Pakistan, which is a Muslim nation" (A. Adil, personal communication, January 26, 2024). He provides a nuanced perspective on the idea of peace, emphasizing the importance of considering additional factors beyond correctness. He suggests that correctness alone is not sufficient and prompts the need to think about additional elements crucial for peace. This implies a deeper consideration of the complexities surrounding peace beyond surface-level correctness. The assertion that "the consent of the people is necessary for peace" highlights the significance of public agreement in achieving a peaceful society. This aligns with democratic principles that emphasize the importance of collective consent. The analysis introduces a contrast between the common people of Pakistan, described as "strict Muslims," and the government's laws, principles, and regulations, which are depicted as being in conflict with Islam. This contrast sets the stage for the subsequent argument.

Ahmed's response provided critical examination of Pakistan's claim regarding the necessity of securitization for peace, particularly in the context of its relationship with Afghanistan. He said,

Pakistan's assertion that securitization is necessary for peace is valid, but it raises questions about the specific side of the Durand Line where they seek peace. It is unclear whether the Pakistani government aims to establish peace in Pakistan or Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, there is currently a positive atmosphere of peace and harmony, with people living freely and contentedly. Pakistan's history with Afghanistan has not been characterized by goodwill, as the government's actions towards Afghans were not merely futile but covertly malicious, involving theft and a lack of sincere efforts for the welfare of the Afghan people. Furthermore, if the goal is to achieve peace in Pakistan by addressing the concerns of the Pakistan Taliban, it remains a separate issue not directly related to Afghanistan. The Pakistan Taliban's fight is for governance, aspiring to establish a free and independent Islamic system similar to that in Afghanistan. In situations where the aim is to establish an Islamic system, especially when dealing with those influenced by foreign dominance for an extended period, achieving peace may not be the primary goal. Instead, force may be necessary to seize control of the government and establish a lasting peace and Islamic system. (Ahmed, Personal communication, January 21, 2024)

He acknowledges the validity of Pakistan's assertion that securitization is necessary for peace. This suggests a recognition that security measures can play a role in fostering a peaceful environment. The statement raises questions about the specific side of the Durand Line where the Pakistani government aims to establish peace. This introduces an element of uncertainty and prompts consideration of whether the peace efforts are directed towards Pakistan or Afghanistan. The acknowledgment of a positive atmosphere of peace and harmony in Afghanistan challenges the notion that peace efforts are urgently needed in that country. This observation adds complexity to Pakistan's claims and implies that Afghanistan may not require external interventions for peace at the moment. The analysis offers a critical perspective on Pakistan's historical interactions with Afghanistan, characterizing them as lacking goodwill. The mention of covertly malicious actions, theft, and insincere efforts suggests a negative assessment of Pakistan's past behavior towards Afghans. The analysis distinguishes the goal of achieving peace in Pakistan, specifically addressing the concerns of the Pakistani Taliban, as a separate issue not directly related to Afghanistan.

Dardmand Haqqani, a Taliban official and commander, observed, "It is a natural thing that securitization is necessary for peace, but the usurpation of other countries' lands turns peace into war" (D. Haqqani, personal communication, February 25, 2024). For Roohani, on the other hand, "It is indeed true that securitization is essential for peace. However, when there is no peace within a

country, achieving peace becomes challenging because peace fundamentally relies on the relationships among the people of a nation. In the absence of a harmonious societal structure, the tendency is towards insecurity within a country. The key elements necessary for fostering peace include a shared national identity among all citizens and education that envelops a nation in the cloak of tranquility. Progressing towards peace and security requires the commitment of the entire populace to a common national vision. For Islamic countries, the paramount factor is the implementation of Islamic principles both internally and externally. This ensures that a nation upholds comprehensive rights, contributing to the establishment of peace on all fronts." (A. Roohani, personal communication, January 10, 2024). The analysis, thus, reflects a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of peace. It acknowledges the foundational role of securitization while highlighting the intricate dynamics of internal peace, societal structure, and the pivotal role of shared identity and education.

3.6 Allegations of Cross border terrorism

To investigate responses to Pakistan's justification for securitization against the claims of cross border terrorism, we asked "*How would you respond to the allegations that terrorists are entering Pakistan from Afghanistan?*"

Aqeela Asad said, "the accusation of Pakistan is completely false because they do not have any clear evidence in this regard and we do not agree with them" (A. Asad, personal communication, February 25, 2024). Jaffar discredited the allegations with his views that

Pakistan accuses Afghans of allowing terrorists to enter Pakistan from Afghanistan. However, this accusation is baseless, as the presence of security posts on both sides of the border raises questions about the effectiveness of Pakistan's security measures. If terrorists were truly entering Pakistan from Afghanistan, why are these security posts unable to prevent their infiltration? Furthermore, Pakistan should present evidence to the Afghan government if they claim that terrorists are crossing from Afghanistan. Pakistan has also alleged that before the conquest, the Republic of Afghanistan supported the Afghan Taliban, accusing them of receiving training in Pakistan and then entering Afghanistan. However, after the victory, it became evident to Afghans that Pakistan is anti-Taliban. Despite the fighting, why didn't Pakistan, with control over its borders, stop the Taliban? The assertion is made that terrorists do not enter Pakistan from Afghan territory due to security posts on both sides of the border. However, even if terrorists manage to cross into Pakistan from Afghanistan and the Afghan forces do not apprehend them, the responsibility falls on Pakistani forces. The question is raised: why don't they prevent this incursion? It is argued that terrorists do not enter Pakistan from Afghan territory, and even if they do, Afghans cannot stop them due to the complex history of revolution and the presence of various groups in Afghanistan. The difficulty of preventing smuggling is acknowledged, but it is emphasized that the responsibility lies with Pakistan to address this issue, and the Afghan government cannot be held accountable for activities that have nothing to do with Afghans. (S. Jaffar, personal communication, January 08, 2024)

He critically examines the accusations, contradictions, and responsibilities involved in Pakistan's claims about terrorists entering from Afghanistan. It highlights inconsistencies, questions the effectiveness of security measures, and underscores the need for evidence and accountability in diplomatic interactions.

Jaffar begins by asserting that Pakistan's accusations against Afghans allowing terrorists to enter are baseless. The presence of security posts on both sides of the border is cited as evidence, raising doubts about the effectiveness of Pakistan's security measures. This challenges the credibility of Pakistan's claims. The analysis calls for Pakistan to present evidence to the Afghan government if they assert that terrorists are crossing from Afghanistan. This emphasizes the importance of accountability and transparency in diplomatic relations, urging Pakistan to substantiate its claims with concrete proof. The analysis highlights Pakistan's alleged support for the Afghan Taliban before the conquest, contrasting it with the post-victory revelation that Pakistan is anti-Taliban. This contradiction raises questions about

Pakistan's consistency in its policies and actions, particularly concerning border control and the Taliban. Despite Pakistan's control over its borders, the analysis questions why Pakistan didn't stop the Taliban during the fighting. This challenges the effectiveness of Pakistan's border control measures and suggests inconsistencies in their approach to handling the Taliban. The analysis shifts focus to the responsibility of Pakistani forces if terrorists manage to cross into Pakistan from Afghanistan. The question is raised: why don't Pakistani forces prevent such incursions? This challenges Pakistan's effectiveness in securing its borders and preventing potential security threats. The difficulty of preventing smuggling is acknowledged, recognizing the complex history of revolution and the presence of various groups in Afghanistan. This nuanced perspective considers the challenges faced in controlling activities that may involve smuggling. The analysis concludes by emphasizing that the responsibility lies with Pakistan to address the issue of terrorists entering from Afghanistan. The Afghan government is absolved of accountability for activities unrelated to Afghans.

Amin Wali Safi had the following views:

Firstly, it's important to note that there is no universally agreed-upon definition of a terrorist; perceptions vary based on individual perspectives. The global community widely acknowledges that Pakistan has been associated with the production of terrorists. In light of this, pointing fingers at other nations seems ironic. The accusations against Afghanistan are viewed by many as an attempt to deceive their own population and the international community. However, this strategy appears to be transparent, and the truth is becoming evident to everyone. Across the world, nations, institutions, politicians, and the general public recognize that whenever there are explosions or acts of terror, suspicions often turn towards Pakistan. The prevailing belief is that Pakistan, motivated by financial gains, is willing to engage in activities that jeopardize global security. Contrary to these suspicions, Afghanistan is not in a position to pose a threat to other countries or dispatch terrorists. The allegations against Afghanistan are perceived as unfounded and lacking substantial evidence. It appears that Pakistan is striving to reshape the international community's perception of itself and divert attention away from its own associations with terrorism. By doing so, Pakistan aims to preemptively create a narrative against the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, suggesting the presence of terrorists and using this narrative to gain support or pursue its objectives in the future. (A. W. Safi personal communication, February 04, 2024)

The allegations that terrorists are entering Pakistan from Afghanistan are a serious matter that requires careful consideration and a comprehensive response. It is important to assess the evidence and consider the broader context in order to address these allegations effectively. It appears that Pakistan is striving to reshape the international community's perception of itself and divert attention away from its own associations with terrorism. By doing so, Pakistan aims to preemptively create a narrative against the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, suggesting the presence of terrorists and using this narrative to gain support or pursue its objectives in the future.

Aziz Ullah Miankhel, an activist, holds, “Indeed, hidden hands are involved and TTP is now a regional or international project. The way Pakistan exported terrorism world-wide in the last four decades or so- they are now trapped in the same net” (A. U. Miankhel, personal communication, February 26, 2024). The allegations that terrorists are entering Pakistan from Afghanistan are a serious matter that requires careful consideration and a comprehensive response. It is important to assess the evidence and consider the broader context in order to address these allegations effectively. Firstly, it is important to note that there is no universally agreed-upon definition of a terrorist, and perceptions of terrorism can vary based on individual perspectives. It is also important to recognize that terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can be driven by a variety of factors, including political, social, economic, and religious motivations. It is important to note that Pakistan has a long history of supporting and harboring terrorist groups, including the ISIS and other militant organizations. Pakistan's support for these groups has been a major source of

instability in the region and has contributed to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

Muhammad Jamal Shinwari said, "I believe this is not the right approach. When neighboring countries lack a healthy relationship and political commentators fail to provide accurate perspectives, there tends to be a mutual blaming game. In such situations, if security deteriorates in Afghanistan, Pakistan is held responsible, and vice versa if it deteriorates in Pakistan" (M. J. Shinwari, personal communication, February 12, 2024). The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been historically complex and marred by various conflicts and disputes. One of the most contentious issues between the two countries is the Durand Line that divided the Pashtun tribal areas, which have historically been a part of Afghanistan. The Pashtun tribes living in the region have also never accepted the Durand Line, and it remains a source of friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The lack of recognition of the Durand Line by Afghanistan has led to disputes over the control of the border areas, with Pakistan accusing Afghanistan of harboring terrorists and militants who launch attacks on Pakistani territory. Blaming Afghanistan for supporting terrorism and fencing the Durand Line on that pretext is not the right approach. The issue of terrorism and militancy in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted problem that requires a comprehensive and coordinated response from both countries. Instead of engaging in a mutual blaming game, Afghanistan and Pakistan should work together to address the root causes of terrorism and militancy in the region and find a mutually acceptable solution to the border dispute.

Latif highlighted, "There is no truth in these claims; instead, the real hub of terrorists lies within Pakistan itself. Pakistan is involved in launching various projects and receives substantial financial aid in return. With Afghanistan now being in a state of security, it raises questions about the basis for Pakistan's concerns about insecurity in that country. In Pashto, we have asserted, "Don't do what you want," and in the case of Afghanistan, it has not experienced a better situation than Pakistan for the past 40 years. Therefore, it is time for Pakistan to address its own challenges and concerns" (S. A. L Manauri, personal communication, February 02, 2024). Latif begins by refuting the claims that terrorists are crossing the Durand Line into Pakistan. Instead, he asserts that the true source of terrorist activities is within Pakistan. The statement accuses Pakistan of launching various projects linked to terrorism and receiving substantial financial aid in return. This implies complicity in supporting or harboring terrorist elements, suggesting a deeper issue within Pakistan. The analysis questions the basis for Pakistan's concerns about insecurity in Afghanistan, particularly given the current state of security in the country. This challenges the legitimacy of Pakistan's claims regarding potential threats from Afghanistan. The inclusion of a Pashto assertion, "Don't do what you want," adds a cultural and linguistic dimension. This assertion implies a cautionary approach, suggesting that actions have consequences, and it is time for Pakistan to consider the implications of its actions. The analysis highlights that Afghanistan has not experienced a better situation than Pakistan for the past 40 years. This challenges Pakistan's stance on insecurity and suggests that Pakistan should focus on addressing its own challenges rather than attributing them to Afghanistan. The conclusion emphasizes that it is time for Pakistan to address its own challenges and concerns. This implies a need for self-reflection and internal resolution instead of placing blame on external factors. He strongly disputes the claims of terrorists crossing into Pakistan from Afghanistan, asserting that the root of terrorism lies within Pakistan. He challenges Pakistan's narrative, questions the basis for its insecurity concerns, and calls for self-reflection and addressing internal challenges.

Noor Akbar reflected,

The accusations made by Pakistan may not represent its genuine position due to its living conditions under occupation. The Afghan government categorically rejects these accusations, asserting that if Afghanistan's territory could be used to harm any neighboring country, why haven't direct damages been caused from our side of the border? This war is an internal matter within your own country; therefore, it is imperative to master it and enhance

your own security rather than resorting to invading the territory of a foreign nation. Furthermore, the Afghan government questions why they haven't exposed any groups causing harm to other countries. They emphasize their commitment not to utilize their land to the detriment of anyone, pledging to defend their country at the cost of their lives if anyone attempts to harm it. The Afghan government, in addressing any potential issues, maintains transparency. They point out that the government currently holds individuals associated with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in prisons in Kabul, including Afghans who went to Pakistan. This fact contradicts any claims of supporting activities against neighboring countries, reinforcing the argument that the accusations are baseless (N. A Rohani personal communication, January 04, 2024).

Noor Akbar questions the genuineness of Pakistan's position, suggesting that the accusations may not truly represent its stance due to living conditions under occupation. This implies a skepticism about the credibility of Pakistan's claims. The response from the Afghan government categorically rejects Pakistan's accusations. It highlights the lack of direct damages caused from Afghanistan's side of the border, challenging the validity of claims that Afghan territory is being used to harm neighboring countries. This analysis emphasizes the internal nature of the conflict within Pakistan and suggests that the focus should be on mastering and enhancing security within Pakistan rather than resorting to invading foreign territory. The Afghan government questions why they haven't exposed groups causing harm to other countries. This challenges the legitimacy of accusations and implies that if such groups existed, they would be dealt with transparently. The Afghan government asserts its commitment not to utilize its land to the detriment of anyone. The pledge to defend the country against harm reinforces the idea that Afghanistan is not supporting activities against neighboring nations. The Afghan government claims transparency in addressing potential issues and points out that individuals associated with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are in prisons in Kabul. This fact is presented as evidence contradicting accusations and reinforcing the argument that the claims are baseless. The analysis raises doubts about the authenticity of Pakistan's accusations, strongly rejects them, emphasizes the internal nature of the conflict within Pakistan, questions the lack of exposure of harmful groups, and underscores Afghanistan's commitment to using its land responsibly. The holding of TTP individuals in Kabul is presented as evidence supporting the assertion that the accusations are baseless.

Another question we had for the respondents was: *What type of border management do the Taliban want in the case of border with Pakistan?*

Akbar Khan, a Taliban official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggests a nuanced position by the Taliban, acknowledging the current reality of the established border while seeking assurances and commitments from the Pakistani government to avoid aggressive actions along the Durand Line. The emphasis on security, safety, and the avoidance of conflicts underscores a diplomatic approach to managing the border dispute. He posited, "The Durand Line is not acceptable to the Taliban, but for the time being, both the Durand Line and the border have been established; therefore, the Taliban is currently urging the Pakistani government not to deploy its troops to encroach upon Afghan territory, specifically adhering to the Durand Line. The request is for the Pakistani government to prioritize the security of its own borders, ensuring the safety of traders and travelers during their journeys, and avoiding any harm or damage that could lead to disputes. This approach aligns with the border management strategies of both countries, fostering a commitment to maintaining peace and security, and steering clear of any involvement in conflicts." (A. Khan, personal communication, January 08, 2024)

Akbar begins by asserting that the Durand Line is not acceptable to the Taliban. This reflects a long-standing historical and political disagreement over the legitimacy of this border. Despite the Taliban's objection, the passage notes that both the Durand Line and the broader border have been established for the time being. This suggests a temporary acknowledgment or acceptance of the current border situation. The Taliban is urging the Pakistani government not to deploy troops into Afghan territory, specifically emphasizing respect for the

Durand Line. This can be interpreted as an attempt by the Taliban to maintain a delicate balance or status quo regarding the disputed border. The Taliban's request is framed in terms of prioritizing border security. It emphasizes the safety of traders and travelers, advocating for measures that prevent harm or damage and, by extension, potential disputes. This aligns with the idea of responsible border management. The response suggests that the Taliban's approach is in line with the border management strategies of both countries, emphasizing a commitment to peace and security. The intention appears to be conflict-avoidance and to ensure the safety and well-being of people on both sides of the border. The concluding statement emphasizes steering clear of any involvement in conflicts. This could reflect a desire to maintain stability in the region and avoid exacerbating tensions.

On the other hand, Ahmed Roohani underscored, "The Taliban's plan is to convene an international conference to address the Durand Line issue and seek its resolution. Regarding the barbed wire, the Taliban aims for a management system that ensures the safety of both sides, and any issues that may arise should be resolved through dialogue. The established principled distance concerning the wire should be respected. Furthermore, there should be no unnecessary attempts to relocate the wire. In this context, the right to establish defensive border posts is asserted, with the condition that both sides refrain from closely guarding and monitoring each other's borders. The agreement grants the right to establish posts within their respective territories for both parties." (A. Roohani, personal communication, January 10, 2024)

Roohani's response reflects a diplomatic and measured approach to address the Durand Line issue. It emphasizes dialogue, safety, and respect for established principles, while also allowing for the establishment of defensive border posts within the territories of both parties. The Taliban's plan involves proposing an international conference to address the Durand Line issue. This signifies a diplomatic and multilateral approach to finding a resolution to the long-standing border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban emphasizes resolving issues through dialogue. This suggests a preference for peaceful negotiations and discussions rather than resorting to confrontational or aggressive measures. It reflects a diplomatic stance and a commitment to non-violent conflict resolution.

The Taliban seeks a management system for the barbed wire that prioritizes the safety of both sides. This indicates a concern for the well-being of individuals on either side of the border and implies a desire to avoid any harm or conflict arising from the presence of the barbed wire. The passage mentions the importance of respecting the established principled distance concerning the barbed wire. This underscores the significance of adhering to agreed-upon principles and boundaries, contributing to the overall stability of the region. The statement asserts that there should be no unnecessary attempts to relocate the wire. This indicates a desire to maintain the status quo and prevent any actions that might escalate tensions or create additional challenges in the border region. The passage grants the right to establish defensive border posts, with the condition that both sides refrain from closely guarding and monitoring each other's borders. This reflects a balanced approach, allowing for security measures without escalating into a heavily militarized or confrontational situation. The agreement acknowledges the right of both parties to establish posts within their respective territories. This suggests a mutual understanding of the need for border security while emphasizing the importance of territorial integrity.

Most importantly, to find out whether an explicit and obvious stance has been discussed with Pakistan or not, we asked, "*Has the Taliban government talked to the Pakistani government about the border fencing and government's official reservations about it?*"

Latif underscored, "The Taliban government has not yet discussed the installation of the barbed wire with the government of Pakistan and there is no official interaction regarding this" (S. A. L Manauri, personal communication, February 02, 2024). He signals a lack of official communication between the Taliban government and the government of Pakistan regarding the installation of barbed wire. It underscores the need for diplomatic engagement to

address border-related concerns to prevent potential misunderstandings between the two parties. There has been no discussion between the Taliban government and the government of Pakistan on the matter of installing barbed wire. This suggests a lack of formal communication channels or official interactions between the two parties regarding this specific issue. The statement specifies that there is no official interaction regarding the installation of barbed wire. This implies that any discussion, if happening at all, is not taking place through recognized diplomatic or governmental channels. The absence of official discussions could have several implications. It might indicate a delay or lack of progress in addressing border-related concerns. Alternatively, it could suggest that either party has not prioritized or initiated talks on this specific matter. The lack of discussion implies a potential need for diplomatic engagement between the Taliban government and the government of Pakistan to address issues related to the installation of barbed wire. The statement may prompt the parties involved to establish communication channels and engage in official talks to clarify their respective positions and concerns.

On the other hand, Sadeeq Ullah stated, "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has not yet engaged in discussions with Pakistan regarding the barbed wire. However, it has explicitly prohibited any attempts to cross the barbed wire on the border." (S. Ullah, personal communication, January 08, 2024) He highlights the absence of discussions between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding the barbed wire on the border. It also emphasizes the Islamic Emirate's unilateral prohibition on crossing the barbed wire, indicating a proactive approach to border security. The potential consequences and the need for future diplomatic engagement are points of consideration. The key point is that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has not yet engaged in discussions with Pakistan about the barbed wire. This suggests a lack of formal diplomatic conversations or negotiations between the two entities on this specific matter. The statement does not provide reasons for the absence of discussions. It could be due to various factors, such as political differences, delays in diplomatic processes, or the prioritization of other issues. The lack of information on this aspect leaves room for interpretation.

Despite the absence of discussions, the statement mentions that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has explicitly prohibited any attempts to cross the barbed wire on the border. This indicates a clear stance on maintaining control over the border and preventing unauthorized movements. The prohibition of crossing the barbed wire suggests a unilateral decision by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It implies a firm position on border security without the need for mutual agreement or negotiation with Pakistan on this specific issue. While diplomatic talks have not taken place, the prohibition serves as a form of communication through actions. It conveys a message about the Islamic Emirate's expectations and boundaries regarding border security. The statement raises questions about the potential implications of the lack of discussions between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Pakistan on this matter. It could lead to uncertainties in border management, potential misunderstandings, or the need for future diplomatic engagement to address concerns.

3.7 Conclusion

The Durand Line, a contentious boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been a source of dispute and conflict since its creation in 1893. The line, drawn by British diplomat Sir Mortimer Durand during the British colonial era, divided the Pashtun tribal areas between British India and Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan has never recognized the Durand Line as an official border, and the issue remains unresolved to this day. The Taliban, a militant group that has controlled large parts of Afghanistan since the 1990s, has historically taken a hardline stance on the Durand Line. The Taliban's official position on the Durand Line is that it is an illegitimate border imposed by colonial powers, and that Afghanistan's true border extends beyond the Durand Line to include parts of Pakistan's territory. This official stance is based on the perceptions and opinions of Taliban commanders and officials who have engaged with researchers and journalists. While the Taliban's

official position on the Durand Line is not made public or discussed in official government channels, it is widely known and accepted within the organization.

The Taliban's stance on the Durand Line is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, the entity views the Durand Line as a symbol of colonial oppression and a barrier to the reunification of Pashtun territories. On the other hand, the it also sees the Durand Line as a potential source of conflict and instability, particularly in areas where the border is not clearly demarcated or where there are competing claims to territory. Their stance on the Durand Line is also influenced by its broader territorial ambitions. The Taliban has historically sought to establish an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan, and they view the Durand Line as an obstacle to this goal. Their ultimate goal is to establish a state that encompasses all Pashtun territories, including parts of Pakistan's territory.

The Taliban's stance on the Durand Line has implications for border management and security in the region. The Taliban's refusal to recognize the Durand Line as an official border has led to tensions and conflicts along the border, particularly in areas where the border is not clearly demarcated or where there are competing claims to territory. The Taliban's refusal to recognize the Durand Line has also made it difficult for the Afghan government to establish effective border management and security measures. The Taliban's stance on the Durand Line is complex and multifaceted. It views the Durand Line as a symbol of colonial oppression and a barrier to the reunification of Pashtun territories. The Taliban's refusal to recognize the Durand Line has led to tensions and conflicts along the border, particularly in areas where the border is not clearly demarcated or where there are competing claims to territory. The Taliban's stance on the Durand Line has implications for border management and security in the region, and it is likely to remain a contentious issue for the foreseeable future.

The lack of communication with Pakistan adds a layer of uncertainty to the situation, highlighting the need for diplomatic engagement to address these complex issues and avoid potential conflicts in the region. The Taliban's rejection of the Durand Line is a significant factor in this uncertainty, as it indicates a fundamental disagreement with the historical demarcation of the border. The Durand Line was established in the late 19th century by British diplomat Sir Mortimer Durand, dividing the Pashtun tribal areas between British India and Afghanistan. The line was drawn without the consent of the local Pashtun tribes, and Afghanistan has never formally recognized it as an official border. The issue has been a source of dispute and conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan ever since.

The Taliban's rejection of the Durand Line is based on its view that the line is an illegitimate border imposed by colonial powers. The Taliban sees the Durand Line as a symbol of colonial oppression and a barrier to the reunification of Pashtun territories. The Taliban believes that Afghanistan's true border extends beyond the Durand Line to include parts of Pakistan's territory. The Taliban's refusal to recognize the Durand Line has led to tensions and conflicts along the border, particularly in areas where the border is not clearly demarcated or where there are competing claims to territory. The lack of communication between the Taliban and Pakistan exacerbates these tensions and adds a layer of uncertainty to the situation.

Diplomatic engagement is essential to address these complex issues and avoid potential conflicts in the region. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan need to engage in dialogue and negotiation to find a mutually acceptable solution to the border dispute. This will require compromise and flexibility on both sides, as well as a commitment to resolving the issue peacefully. The study suggests that some within the Taliban are claiming an intention to take back areas held by Pakistan when they have the capability to do so. This indicates a more assertive and territorial stance, hinting at potential future conflicts or disputes over border regions. The Taliban outright rejects the concept of border fencing. This stance may be rooted in a desire for open and unrestricted movement across the border or may reflect a rejection of external attempts to control or restrict their territory. Despite rejecting the Durand Line and border fencing, the Taliban expresses a current preference for soft border management. This implies a willingness to adopt a more flexible and

cooperative approach to border control, at least for the time being. The study notes that the Taliban has not discussed these matters with Pakistan. This lack of communication could be due to various reasons, such as diplomatic complexities, internal decision-making processes, or a deliberate strategy to assert their position independently. The study implies that the Taliban's current approach is to advocate for soft border management while rejecting certain established border features. However, it also suggests the possibility of a more assertive stance in the future, particularly regarding territorial claims. The rejection of the Durand Line, border fencing, and the assertion of potential territorial claims may have significant implications for regional relations, potentially leading to tensions with Pakistan and other neighboring countries.

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