

Forum: United Nations Security Council

Issue: The situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan

Student Officer: Ethan Chan

Position: Deputy President

Introduction

Since October 2025, diplomacy between Afghanistan and Pakistan has broken down, with a conflict over the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), quickly escalating into heavy artillery exchanges and airstrikes in both nations, representing the most severe direct military confrontation between the two powers since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Considering Pakistan's position as a nuclear power, with an estimated 170 warheads, and Afghanistan having only recently emerged from decades of conflict, this conflict must be resolved swiftly lest it begin to disrupt the region's fragile stability.

Therefore, the United Nations Security Council has an urgent mandate before it, to not only end the conflict between the two nations, but to understand the underlying causes of the hostilities and learn from this crisis to prevent such escalations from occurring again.

Definition of key terms

Durand Line

The internationally recognised border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan recognises the border, while Afghanistan considers it illegitimate, leading to the border being a major source of tensions.

Counterterrorism

Actions undertaken by world governments against the root causes of terrorism and actions of terrorist groups in line with the four agreed upon pillars of counterterrorism.

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

An alliance of militant groups operating from the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that has conducted a number of terrorist attacks within Pakistan, including assassinations and suicide bombings. The group is ideologically linked but distinct from the Taliban in Afghanistan, with the former having used Afghanistan as a safe haven to launch operations from while the latter turns a blind eye, creating friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Background information

1893

Sir Henry Mortimer Durand and Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman signed the Durand Line agreement, establishing a 1600 mile border between Afghanistan and then British India. Notably, the border divided the Pashtun and Baloch areas in two, laying the groundwork for future tensions.

1947

Pakistan gained independence, inheriting the Durand Line as its western border. Afghanistan refuses to accept the border, declaring it void as a relic of British colonialism. When Pakistan joined the United Nations, Afghanistan was the only nation to oppose its entry.

2007

The militant factions within Pakistan united to form the TTP. Over the following decade, Pakistani counterinsurgency efforts succeed in reducing the TTP's presence in Pakistan and pushing parts of the organisation into eastern Afghanistan.

2017

Pakistan began construction of a fence along the Durand Line in response to attacks from Afghan based militant groups, including the TTP. The fence was expected to be completed in 2021, but Afghan troops repeatedly attempted to dismantle the fence resulting in skirmishes and exchanges of fire along the border.

2021

The Taliban retook Kabul and consolidated its control over Afghanistan. The Taliban pledged it would not allow Afghanistan to be a base for terror operations, but the TTP intensified operations within Pakistan. Pakistan called for the Taliban to punish the TTP, but the Taliban responded with inaction.

2022

In January, Pakistan's national security advisor, Moeed Yusuf, visited Afghanistan to discuss the TTP with the Taliban and demand the TTP attacks launched from Afghanistan be stopped. This led to a series of talks, in which an indefinite ceasefire between the TTP and Pakistan was brokered. The ceasefire was broken in November, resuming the attacks. In April, Pakistan carried out airstrikes into Afghanistan in response to TTP attacks, escalating tensions further.

2023

Pakistan implemented the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP), outlining a 3 phase plan to deport Afghan refugees, starting with illegal, unregistered refugees, followed by Afghan citizen card (ACC) holders, and ending with the forced repatriation of Afghans with proof of registration in Pakistan in accordance with UNHCR conventions. By 2026, 2.5 million Afghans had been deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan, straining Afghanistan's economy and escalating tensions between the two nations.

2025

In October, Pakistan responded to a TTP attack by conducting an airstrike targeting the TTP's leader in Kabul. Afghanistan retaliated by conducting an attack that resulted in 23 Pakistanis and 9 Afghans dead. Ground fighting broke out along the Durand Line and the border between the two nations was closed. On October 18th, the two nations met in Doha to negotiate a ceasefire, which was agreed upon on October 25th.

2026

On February 21st, Pakistan undertook a series of airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan in

retaliation for TTP attacks in Pakistan, including the bombing of a mosque in Islamabad that killed 30 people. On February 27th, The Taliban carried out retaliatory strikes against Pakistan, launching both airstrikes and a ground incursion, prompting Pakistan to launch retaliatory airstrikes into Afghanistan, including strikes on Kabul. The conflict between the two is still ongoing, with repeated airstrikes and exchanges of fire between troops continually escalating the conflict and destabilising the region.

Organisations and major countries involved

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan's entry into the conflict is essentially a culmination of a campaign to pressure the Taliban to neutralise the TTP. Pakistan's airstrikes primarily targeting TTP strongholds, closure of the borders and their earlier counterterrorism actions against the TTP makes it clear that Pakistan primarily seeks to act against the TTP. Pakistan has no strategic interests to engage in a costly, prolonged conflict in Afghanistan, provided the threat the TTP poses to Pakistan can be diminished significantly.

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

As the other primary combatant in the conflict, Afghanistan must balance Pakistan's concerns with its own. Afghanistan must back up its claims that it can control the TTP and balance Pakistan's concerns with support for its ideological ally, such as moving the TTP away from the Durand Line or encouraging the group to pursue a peaceful resolution with Islamabad. Additionally, Afghanistan must also use this opportunity to preserve and improve its international relations. Pakistan has already made promises to China that it can protect Chinese assets, but these should be expanded upon in order to utilise the opportunity to reduce its isolation.

TTP (Tehrik-E Taliban Pakistan)

The TTP is the main source of the tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, having conducted terrorist attacks since 2007, primarily in Pakistan, whose counterterrorism actions have led to the TTP taking refuge in neighbouring Afghanistan. Pakistan denounces Afghanistan's inaction against the TTP, but it's also problematic for Afghanistan to act against their ideological ally, paired with the risk of TTP fighters turning to other terrorist organisations. Regardless, a counterterrorism campaign against the TTP must occur in order for its threat to Pakistan to be diminished.

People's Republic of China

For the PRC, the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan is a matter of critical importance. Pakistan has been a key economic and political ally of China for decades, while China has begun developing closer ties to Afghanistan. Both nations are key considerations in China's foreign policy, and the conflict has threatened China's push to expand its economic influence. While China will likely assume a policy of non-interference, ending the conflict quickly will be in its best interest, as is developing economic ties with both nations. Overall, this conflict presents challenges, but also opportunities to settle concerns with regional terrorism, building economic ties with both nations, and securing mutual long term growth.

India

Since 2021, relations between India and Afghanistan have dramatically improved, expanding far beyond the initial provision of humanitarian aid. With the reactivation of the Kabul Amritsar air route and the volume of trade between the two nations exceeding \$1.5 billion, India should carry this momentum to improve relations further, while also undermining Pakistan's objectives in the negotiations.

Possible solutions

Any long term solution must target one of three areas: Counterterrorism against the TTP, Coming to a compromise over the border, and the issue of Afghan refugees.

Focussing on counterterrorism operations, Pakistan's operations in the 2010s were broadly successful, but ultimately failed to push the TTP out entirely as they found safe havens in Afghanistan. Afghanistan could begin moving TTP elements away from Pakistan, maintaining support for the TTP while limiting the group's ability terrorism operations within Pakistan. With international support, Pakistan can also begin a renewed effort to push the TTP out of Pakistan, including potential intelligence sharing between Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding the TTP.

The border dispute over the Durand line will also be a key area of discussion. Similar to the first point, cooperation between the two nations will be difficult and limited in scale given their

drastically different stances on the matter, with Afghanistan denouncing the Durand line and asserting claims on Pakistani territory, while Pakistan asserts the Durand line as the legitimate border. Some measures could be taken to ease movement across the border either on a state or national level, such as implementing border passes for checkpoints. Demilitarising the border may also be discussed, including actions like reducing the military presence on the border. Given how firmly the two nations assert their territorial claims, it is unlikely that any territorial dispute will be bilaterally resolved at this point.

Lastly, the issue of Afghan refugees must be considered. Leading up to the military confrontation, Afghan refugees were evicted from Pakistan en masse, straining Afghanistan's economy and escalating tensions significantly. Pakistan could potentially negotiate with Afghanistan to return refugees to Afghanistan and implement a framework to ensure a smooth return for the refugees. Simultaneously, Afghanistan could create a framework for their returning refugees to allow them to smoothly return to the nation. Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent Pakistan, could also garner additional humanitarian aid to handle the influx of refugees.

Both nations could also pursue issues relating to their economic development, such as securing the overland transit routes through Pakistan through guarantees that the border remains open to commercial activity.

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