



RESEARCH PAPER

The Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the opportunities and challenges for Pakistan after the establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. A historical perspective helps in appreciate the complexities of the evolving geopolitical scene. Qualitative approach was used and data was collected from secondary sources to investigate the current issue of Taliban power. Securitization theory explains the security issues in the evolving geopolitical scene. It assessed Pakistan's difficulties and prospects, demonstrating the delicate balance that the country must maintain. Building confidence appears to be a key to improving regional stability. At the same time, obstacles such as security concerns, economic limits, and foreign pressures necessitate a proactive and deliberate response that acknowledges the historical context and complexities involved. It recommends to build trust and cooperation to stable and cooperative relationships between Pakistan and the Taliban administration.

KEYWORDS Afghanistan, Ideology, Pakistan, Regional Security, Taliban

Introduction

The rise of Taliban in Afghanistan and eventual creation of a government have echoed throughout South Asia, bringing opportunities and challenges for nearby Pakistan. The historical, ethnic, and geopolitical linkages between Afghanistan and Pakistan complicate the ramifications of the Taliban's comeback (Muzaffar, Yaseen & Afzal, 2021). This framework frames current geopolitical issues and emphasizes the importance of the emerging situation. As the region deals with the fallout from these developments, recognizing the opportunities and difficulties that Pakistan faces becomes critical. Pakistan's foreign policy problems have deteriorated since the Taliban administration took control, with terrorist strikes up by a record 56%. Key terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, (TTP) and the Islamic State of Khorasan, are expanding their presence in Afghanistan. The heightened security situation caused by the Taliban means that terrorism in Pakistan is not completely gone, and Pakistan must now be cautious in its dealings with Afghanistan. The Taliban want more autonomy from Pakistan while also expressing willingness to improve relations with India. He has been asking India to strengthen its engagement with Afghanistan through bilateral trade and humanitarian aid, and has expressed a desire for India's help in training the Afghan army. The Taliban also support Iran's Chabahar port project, which was designed to compete with Pakistan's Gwadar port. Pakistan's partnership with Afghanistan is critical to its foreign policy goals, and the deteriorating relationship must be reversed (Waheed, 2022).

This study aims to present a detailed understanding of the post-Taliban administration era, focusing on how Pakistan navigates this new geopolitical reality. By

addressing the geopolitical, economic, and security components, this research hopes to provide policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders with a complete knowledge of Pakistan's involvement in the developing dynamics in its western neighbor.

Literature Review

Afghanistan, a landlocked nation with land connections with six Central Asian nations, is crucial for regional economic endeavours and providing a practical gateway for international trade. Pakistan and Afghanistan can improve their quality of life through enhanced trade and economic relations, but need to curb transit trade's negative impact, coordinate intelligence sharing, and address differences, particularly regarding Indian influence (Sultana, 2011).

Pakistan and Afghanistan share direct interests, aiming for reconstruction as a normal state. Greater integration of economies and transit trade networks could benefit Pakistan. Afghanistan's reconstruction requires multilateral involvement from all state actors, with Pakistan playing a crucial role with American forces and NATO, fighting terrorism on behalf of the U.S. administration. Afghanistan's recovery is reshaping its relationship with Pakistan, with the two nations recognizing their interconnectedness. Pakistan can learn from Afghanistan's experiences, emphasizing friendship over mastery (Akhtar, 2008).

The resurgence of the fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan has resulted in job losses, a greater need for food, economic collapse, and the possibility of terrorist attacks because of their close ties to al-Qaeda. Though they support women's rights and protect minority communities, the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law has made it more difficult for them to go from being insurgents to functioning governments. (Maizland, 2023)

In this study focused on the tense relations between the two nations as a result of conflicts, promote for the Taliban, and cross-border militant groups. It also looks at the historical, conflictual, and resurgence of the Taliban and Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Tensions between the two countries are primarily caused by the leadership of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Bilateral relations have improved since the Taliban took power, and closer ties are essential for both regional peace, security and economic growth. (Choudhary, 2022)

Author discusses the possibilities, difficulties, and effects of a complete US withdrawal from Afghanistan. It suggests collaboration among Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as a sensible review of foreign policy. it serves its geopolitical and geostrategic goals, the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan is a nightmare because it will hinder enemies like China, Russia, and Iran and present opportunities for Pakistan. (Karim, 2021)

Pakistan-Afghan relations post-Taliban era are marked by mistrust and the Prisoner's Dilemma. Despite shared interests, Pakistan is blamed for Afghanistan's instability and suspicion of India-centric policies. Reciprocal strategies can help break this dilemma, fostering cooperation based on mutual trust. The Prisoner's Dilemma is a conflict situation where states or individuals decide whether to cooperate or defect, with cooperation providing the smallest payoff and defecting the largest (Usman, 2017).

Pakistan aligns itself with the United States during the Cold War, seeking assurances of security from the United States due to insecurity. Both friendship and mistrust have defined their relationship. in order to support US interests and link aid to

nuclear nonproliferation, the strengthening of democracies, and counterterrorism, US economic assistance and arms sales packages were designed to meet Pakistan's needs for security during the Cold War and the Afghanistan Jihad. In spite its isolation prior to 9/11, Afghanistan reformed a security collaboration with the United States and emerged as a major ally in the American-led War on Terror. Despite hurdles in the War on Terror and Afghanistan's future, Pakistan joined the United States in the fight against terrorism, establishing a long-lasting partnership. (Lubna, 2016).

The US declared War on Terror to bring 9/11 perpetrators to justice, overthrowing the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, demonstrating US power and realism in retributive justice. According to the research, which looks at the causes, effects, and different theories of crime and punishment in terrorism-related cases, the WOT has had a significant impact on Pakistan's criminal justice system. The study investigates the protection and anti-terrorism ordinances of Pakistan, their development, amendments made after 9/11, and the efficacy of courts martial in cases involving terrorism. To promote peace and stability in Afghanistan, the United States should work with Russia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan, and the UN to create a common framework for engagement with the Taliban. There has also been a noticeable rise in political violence and discuss of a US civil war (Muzaffar, Nawab & Yaseen, 2021; Rubin & Siddique , 2006).

The literature on Afghanistan and Pakistan has identified several research gaps, including the need for a comprehensive study on the impact of the Taliban's return on women's rights, understanding the economic consequences of terrorism and extremism in Pakistan, scrutinizing regional cooperation dynamics with powers such as Russia, China, Iran, and India for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan, and assessing the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures in Pakistan.

Material and Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach, analysing data from various sources, including books, articles, and electronic media. The research is descriptive and explanatory, focusing on the contemporary issue of the Taliban's dominance in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan. The securitization theory is applied to both countries explains the security issues in the evolving geopolitical scene.

Results and Discussion

Historical Context

The Taliban took power of Afghanistan quickly, taking Kabul in 1996. Mullah Omar called himself "Amir-ul-Mumineen" (Commander of the Faithful) and formed Afghanistan's Islamic Emirate. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban rule in Afghanistan was marked by severe Sharia law, restricted women's rights, & cultural repression. The US has criticized the Taliban's backing for terrorists like as Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. After the 9/11 attacks, the United States was forced to act in Afghanistan. In 2001, the US-led coalition, aided by Afghan forces, quickly deposed the Taliban rule. The Taliban reorganized and started an insurgency against the Afghan government and foreign forces, resulting in severe bloodshed and insecurity. The United States and the Taliban signed the Doha Agreement in 2020, enabling the withdrawal of US forces in exchange for security guarantees. The Taliban reclaimed control of Afghanistan in August 2021, resulting in the fall of the Afghan government and the Taliban. (Lombardi, 2022)

Pakistan, Afghanistan's eastern neighbour, is an important role in the emerging regional political landscape. Both countries share the longest border in Afghanistan and

share an extensive tradition of religious, ethnic, and cultural links. However, political ties in Afghanistan have been tense since the Taliban took power in the late 1990s. Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban stretches back to the mid-1990s and has been fraught with ups and downs, with both parties clashing on several occasions (Muzaffar, Khan, & Yaseen, 2019; Karim, 2021).

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is a terrorist network that was founded in 2007 to unite resistance to Pakistan's military. Its goals include the removal of Islamabad's control, rigid sharia comprehension, and the withdrawal of Coalition soldiers from Afghanistan. TTP commanders claim to be seeking the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Pakistan and the destruction of the Pakistani government. Since 2008, the organization has regularly threatened to strike the US homeland and has links to senior al-Qa'ida officials. Mullah Fazlullah, the TTP's leader, is anti-Western and anti-Islamabad. Pakistan's strategic objectives are served by the Taliban's ascendancy in Kabul, which has enabled India to strategically entrench its roots in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. As a result, sympathy for Baloch militants and the TTP, both of which have been implicated in terrorist acts within Pakistan, has grown. With the fall of the hostile Afghan government, India's institutional presence would certainly shrink, as will Pakistan's security establishment's interaction with India and Afghanistan. Pakistan can also serve as a link between the Taliban rule and the rest of the world, perhaps restoring strategic significance. Because to the Taliban's domination in Afghanistan, Pakistan now holds a strategic advantage over Indian in the Central Asian area. A stable Afghanistan might aid Pakistan's geo-economics objectives, but a political agreement with other Afghan players is required (Karim, 2021).

Theory of securitization

Ole Waever initially introduced the notion of securitization in the mid-1990s (Wæver 1995). Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde expanded on it in their 1998 book *Security: A New Framework of Analysis*. The Copenhagen School has always defined international security in a military framework.

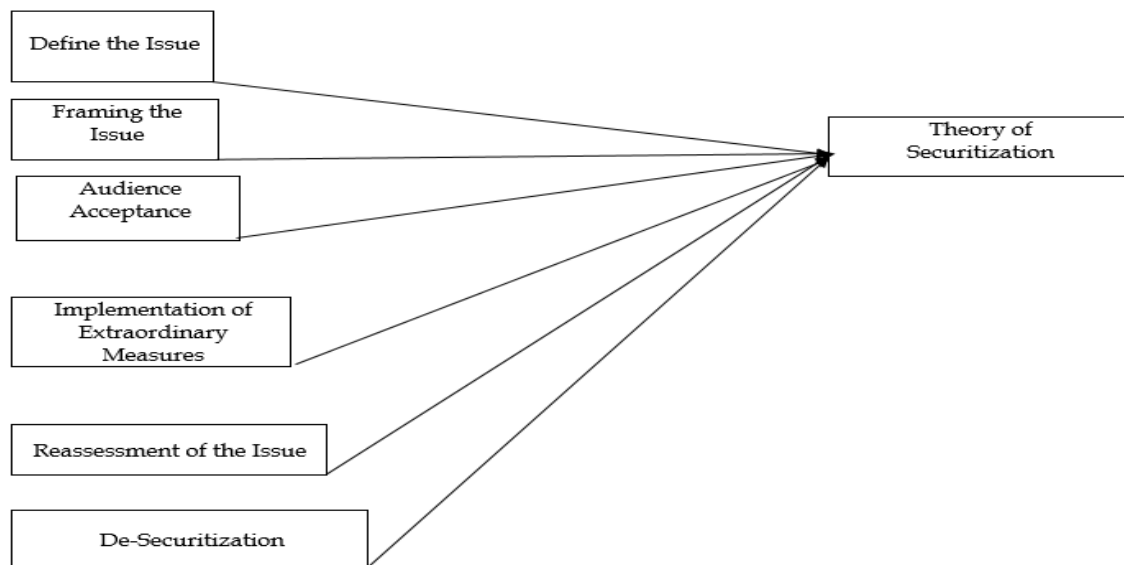


Figure 1 Securitization Theory Model

Securitization theory demonstrates that national security policy is not natural, but rather meticulously manufactured by politicians and decision makers. According to

securitization theory, political concerns are portrayed as high-security issues that must be addressed immediately when classified as 'hazardous', 'dangerous', 'threatening', 'dangerous', and so on. Identified by the 'securitizing actor'. To bring the problem 'beyond politics', social and institutional authority is required. As a result, security issues are not simply 'out there'; they must be characterized as such by securitizing actors. Describing immigration as a 'threat to national security', for example, elevates immigration from a minor political concern to a high-priority problem that necessitates action, such as border security (Rita, 2006).

The securitization theory model to the formation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and its impact on Pakistan

Define the Issue

Issue Identification: The emergence of the Taliban administration in Afghanistan has been cited as a major security fear for Pakistan, with potential spillover consequences including terrorism, refugee problems, and diplomatic challenges.

Framing the Issue

Securitization Move: Pakistan views the Taliban's authority as a direct danger to its national security. The storyline highlights the threat of cross-border terrorism, which might cause instability and imperil residents' lives.

Audience Acceptance

Domestic Audience: The Pakistani government uses strategic communication to persuade its home audience that the Taliban's control in Afghanistan is an existential danger. This might include underlining the historical backdrop of regional conflicts and their possible influence on internal peace.

International Audience: Pakistan communicates with the international world, portraying the Taliban being a common global security threat. The goal is to gather support for steps that would be deemed excessive under regular conditions.

Implementation of Extraordinary Measures

Increased Military Presence: Pakistan argues delivering more troops at the Afghan border as a necessary move to prevent the perceived threat of extremists exploiting the situation.

Enhanced Intelligence Operations: Intelligence services step up efforts to monitor and neutralize suspected terrorist operations emanating from Afghanistan, justifying heightened surveillance and intelligence-gathering activities.

Diplomatic Engagement: Pakistan pursues diplomatic attempts to resolve the international community's concerns about the Taliban's policies. Simultaneously, it seeks backing for steps designed to secure its borders and avert possible security threats.

Reassessment of the Issue

Adaptation of Strategies: Pakistan constantly analyzes the degree of threat presented by the Taliban rule in response to changing circumstances. This might include

modifying military tactics, strengthening diplomatic approaches, or rewriting the narrative to reflect new conditions.

De-securitization (or Perpetuation):

Normalization or Escalation: If the Taliban policy in Afghanistan makes steps toward moderation and collaboration, Pakistan may de-escalate the situation, progressively lowering exceptional measures. Conversely, if the danger perception worsens, Pakistan may increase its securitization efforts.

Pakistan uses securitization theory to purposefully portray the formation of a Taliban administration as a crucial security concern, so rationalizing actions that would typically be deemed drastic. The ability to effectively communicate both locally and globally in order to gain support for perceived security demands is essential to the success of this approach. Pakistan can adjust its strategy in response to evolving circumstances in Afghanistan and the surrounding area through ongoing review.

Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan

Opportunities

Stability

Collaborating with the Taliban might give short-term stability as Pakistan strives to reduce the spread of violence and extremism within its borders. From the Taliban's standpoint, stability would help legitimize their administration and consolidate control. However, the risk resides in the Taliban's vision of stability, which may include oppressive methods and discriminatory policies that might exacerbate internal dissent and regional instability (Plesch, 2017).

Regional Security

Pakistan's enhanced collaboration with the Taliban coincides with its strategic objective in safeguarding its western border and combatting cross-border extremist threats. The Taliban, on the other hand, may see regional security through the prism of minimizing foreign meddling and protecting its sovereignty. However, issues occur if the Taliban's vision differs with Pakistan's strategy, resulting in diverging methods and potential friction in tackling common security concerns (International Crisis Group, 2022).

Economic Cooperation

Economic collaboration between Pakistan and the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan offers substantial prospects and potential advantages to both countries. Improved commercial relations with Afghanistan can open up new economic channels for Pakistan, making commodities and services more easily transported. Improved connection can increase Pakistan's regional influence and offer access to Central Asian markets, hence promoting economic growth. Joint economic enterprises may also contribute to infrastructure development, job creation, and poverty alleviation in both nations.

On the Taliban's side, economic cooperation provides a means to legitimize their authority on a global scale. Economic collaborations may assist Afghanistan meet major developmental needs such as infrastructure reconstruction, healthcare, and education.

Economic stability under the Taliban's leadership may add to internal legitimacy by proving effective governance and addressing socio-economic challenges (Mir, 2023).

Independent Pursuit of Interests

If Pakistan pursues its interests independently of the Taliban, it may design its policies without being limited by the Taliban-led government's ideas and constraints. This independence enables a more flexible and specialized approach to national interests, taking into account a wide range of concerns.

Alliance with others

Seeking alliances or backing from foreign actors presents an opportunity for Pakistan. By associating with countries that may not support the Taliban, Pakistan can boost its geopolitical position, perhaps gaining economic help, security cooperation, and diplomatic backing from a larger coalition of states (Karim, 2021).

Trust-building, and increased regional stability

Trust-building activities between Pakistan and the Taliban are critical for promoting a favourable diplomatic trajectory and leading to greater regional stability. Both parties can establish trust over time by working together to solve similar problems, particularly in areas such as counterterrorism activities and economic development initiatives. Joint security efforts, intelligence sharing agreements, and cooperation economic endeavours are real ways to improve mutual understanding and establish the groundwork for trust. As confidence builds, the possibility of broader collaboration emerges, suggesting greater regional stability. Joint partnerships in infrastructure development, trade, and cultural exchanges create opportunities for long-term engagement, resulting in a favourable trajectory in Pakistan's diplomatic relations with the Taliban. This collaborative approach not only solves urgent difficulties but also sets the scene for long-term stability and positive participation in the region (Azizi, 2019).

Avoiding short-term risks

If Pakistan Not aligning with the Taliban could help Pakistan avoid short-term risks with the backing of Afghanistan's Taliban-led government. By avoiding formal cooperation, Pakistan can insulate itself from foreign criticism, particularly the Taliban's human rights record and potential accusations of supporting an authoritarian state. This approach enables Pakistan to maintain a more prominent diplomatic position, and to limit reputational costs by avoiding direct involvement in Taliban governance decisions. However, complications may arise as Pakistan tries to strike a compromise between its strategic interests in Afghanistan and the need to avoid international condemnation. Moreover, it requires careful diplomacy to negotiate complex geopolitical dynamics without clearly aligning with the Taliban to ensure its stability while remaining active in regional issues (Maizland, 2023).

Challenges

Security Issues

The Taliban's rise in Afghanistan poses serious security worries in Pakistan, given the two nations share an unsecured and traditionally dangerous boundary. Taliban dominance of Afghanistan might increase Pakistan's security issues, such as terrorist penetration, cross-border terrorist attacks, as well as arms and drug trafficking.

Complicating matters is the ideological connection between some groups within Pakistan as well as the Taliban, which might increase support for the organization in Pakistani areas. Furthermore, the inflow of migrants escaping the Afghan conflict may strain Pakistan's assets and pose social and economic issues. The Taliban's presence in Pakistan might further exacerbate sectarian tensions since the group's view of Islamic law may differ from the standards prevalent in the country. The worldwide community is nevertheless on guard because it knows that instability in Afghanistan may directly affect Pakistan's security and the stability of the region. As a result, concerted actions to handle the developing situation and lessen possible dangers are needed. (Namara, 2006)

Economic Issues

The Taliban's ascent in Afghanistan has had serious economic consequences, specifically for neighboring nations such as Pakistan. The ongoing violence in Afghanistan has interrupted regional trade routes, hurt the movement of products and increasing economic uncertainty. The closing of border crossings as well as the increasing risk of terrorism have resulted in a drop in cross-border commerce, affecting companies and people on both sides. Additionally, the violence has pushed commodity prices higher and raised the threat of inflation in the region. The Afghan economy, which is already fragile, is dealing with the issues of interrupted supply chains and low investor confidence. Furthermore, the flood of Afghan migrants entering Pakistan puts a strain on resources, extending social services and increasing the economic burden. The widespread economic uncertainty created by the Taliban's control of Afghanistan underscores the need for regional stability for long-term economic progress, requiring concrete steps to address the root causes of the war and restore regional economic confidence. (Sultana, 2011)

International pressure

Pakistan is facing increased international pressure as a result of the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan. The international community is concerned about the possibility of spillover consequences, which include cross-border terrorism, instability, and a humanitarian disaster. States and international organizations have urged Pakistan to play a positive role in supporting regional peace and stability. There is a desire for stronger border controls to prevent extremist infiltration and arms smuggling. The international community requires guarantees that Pakistan is actively attempting to neutralize any Taliban support networks within its borders. Diplomatic attempts are ongoing to persuade Pakistan to utilize its influence with the Taliban to engage in real discussions for a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan. International actors are deeply following Pakistan's activities, highlighting the importance of collaboration in addressing the region's developing security concerns. The burden on Pakistan highlights the linked nature of regional security and the significance of working together to secure peace in Afghanistan and beyond. (Karim, 2021)

Humanitarian Problems

The ongoing threat of terrorism, worsened by instability in Afghanistan, has caused severe and widespread human misery in Pakistan. The persistent surge of terrorist acts, ranging from suicide bombers to targeted murder, has claimed an appalling number of innocent lives. Aside from the obvious loss of life, the ongoing environment of terror has left communities dealing with trauma and psychological pain. This insecure climate has hampered regular everyday living, stifling social solidarity and economic growth. The instability originating from Afghanistan has served as a catalyst,

exacerbating the problems in Pakistan and leading to a cycle of violence that has serious socioeconomic effects. As Pakistan navigates the complexity of regional geopolitics, tackling the human suffering caused by terrorism necessitates not just strong security measures but also a comprehensive, collaborative strategy with foreign and regional partners to promote stability in the larger South Asian area (Rubin 2022).

Ideological Alignment

The ideological congruence among various groups in Pakistan as well as the Taliban in Afghanistan is cause for concern, as it produces an atmosphere that may encourage the Taliban's violent ideology within Pakistani territory. Shared ideological views, founded in fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, might find resonance among specific segments inside Pakistan, resulting in higher sympathy and support for the Taliban's mission. This connection might exacerbate Pakistan's internal dynamics, eventually leading to radicalization and terrorism. The closeness of these ideological inclinations may impact public opinion, posing issues for the government in combating extreme narratives. Efforts to combat radicalization in Pakistan are critical, necessitating a careful balance between recognizing multiple religious viewpoints and reducing the likelihood of extremist beliefs taking root. The ideological link emphasizes the importance of comprehensive policies that address both the internal and regional components of the problem, fostering a more secure and tolerant society in the face of intellectual influence originating from Taliban-controlled territories in Afghanistan. (Akhtar, 2008)

Conclusion

The historical backdrop of the region's high tapestry contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the current situation. The use of securitization theory explains the security problems in the developing geopolitical landscape. Despite these problems, Pakistan has both possibilities and barriers. Opportunities include attaining stability, strengthening regional security through collaboration with states like Russia, China, Iran, and India, encouraging economic cooperation, forming alliances, and fostering trust to improve regional stability. However, there are several hurdles, such as security issues, economic concerns, and international demands. To achieve this delicate balance, Pakistan must emphasize internal and regional stability as a key opportunity. Regional security cooperation, economic cooperation, and partnerships with important players all provide opportunities for progress. Confidence development becomes the most crucial aspect, increasing regional stability. At the same time, difficulties such as security concerns, economic limits, and foreign demands must be handled proactively. Strategic actions should be implemented to minimize such short-term hazards that might jeopardize the nation's long-term wellbeing. Lastly, ideological unity and a pragmatic strategy are required for Pakistan to traverse the intricate web of problems and possibilities that have emerged in the aftermath of the Taliban's rebirth in Afghanistan.

Recommendations

The results of this study suggests that several strategies for fostering cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. These include open diplomatic channels for transparent communication, establishing conflict resolution processes, exploring economic cooperation, providing humanitarian aid, collaborating on security issues, promoting cultural and educational interactions, improving border control, participating in regional forums, promoting mutual respect for sovereignty, and seeking

global assistance and mediation. These strategies aim to foster understanding, promote regional stability, and foster confidence among neighboring countries.

- Open diplomatic avenues for frank and transparent communication. Regular communication may promote mutual understanding and help establish common ground. This might include the exchange of diplomats or the formation of liaison organizations to improve communication.
- Establish conflict resolution processes to deal with any future issues. A neutral third-party mediator or an international organization might organize conversations and assist with dispute resolution, ensuring that issues are handled amicably.
- Investigate possibilities for economic cooperation and development initiatives that would benefit both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Collaborative activities, such as collaborative infrastructural projects or trade agreements, can build economic links and promote regional stability.
- In order to meet the needs of the Afghan people, provide humanitarian aid. This might include collaborative initiatives in healthcare, education, and poverty reduction. A humanitarian partnership may display compassion and benefit the population.
- Cooperate on security issues, particularly in combating shared dangers like terrorism and extremism. Sharing intelligence, undertaking coordinated actions, and coordinating efforts may all improve regional security and stability.
- Promote cultural and educational interactions between the two nations. Promoting interpersonal interaction through student exchanges, cultural activities, and collaborative academic efforts can help to create understanding and healthy relationships.
- Improving border control to handle security issues and prevent the unlawful flow of people and products. Well-managed borders promote stability and foster confidence among neighboring countries.
- Participate in regional forums and collaborate with other nearby countries. Regional stability is interrelated, and addressing issues collectively can contribute to greater peace and security throughout South Asia.
- Emphasize mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Recognize and handle problems without meddling with internal matters, while cultivating a culture of mutual respect.
- Seek global assistance and mediation as needed. Regional and global players may contribute new ideas and resources, creating a climate conducive to conversation and collaboration.

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