

A Critical Assessment of Pakistan's External Security Threats

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Abstract

Pakistan's instability stems mostly from its eastern and western borders with India and Afghanistan. The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in December 2014 caused a leadership vacuum and political instability in the country, which could exacerbate regional security concerns, notably in Pakistan. Pakistan likewise opposes foreign involvement in Afghanistan, notably from India, because it would exacerbate the country's sub-nationalism problem. Kashmir's strategic significance has been a cause of contention between the two countries. Because Kashmir is the source of water for most of Pakistan's major rivers, it is important to both countries. Because the two countries have fought three wars, with significant human and financial casualties as well as infrastructure destruction, security challenges with India are essential.

Keywords: External Security, Threats, Kashmir dispute, Water dispute

Introduction:

Pakistan's anxiety stems primarily from its eastern and western borders with India and Afghanistan. Since their nefarious plans were realized, the porous and windy nature of the Pak-Afghan border has created safe havens for insurgents and terrorists, contributing to Pakistan's worsening security situation (Malik, Zhilong, & Rafay, 2019). It's also worth noting that on the other side of the border, it serves as a key economic hub for Pashtuns. It also caters to illegal enterprises like drug trafficking and smuggling. Similarly, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 brought with it chaos, insecurity, civil war, and a power vacuum. Correspondingly, withdrawing US forces from Afghanistan within the fourteen-month time frame outlined in the US-Taliban Agreement of February 29, 2020, could result in civil war, security concerns, and the resolution of deadlocks over leadership, particularly the presidency, and power sharing among the country's various stakeholders. The most essential issue in determining global politics is the Security Dilemma. Despite having no intention of fighting, it launched the First World War because both European countries were impelled by a sense of concern regarding their neighbors' alliances.

Despite Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism:

Following 9/11, Pakistan's role as a frontline state in the fight against terrorism gained international attention, putting Pakistan in the spotlight. Despite the fact that Pakistan is fighting terrorism alongside the rest of the world, it has suffered immensely as a result of the conflict (Qayyum, 2016). There were 61,549 deaths and 67011 injuries in the aftermath of 9/11, totaling 61,549 deaths and 67011 injuries. When broken down into categories, the number of terrorists killed is 31,000, followed by civilians (22,000), and security forces (8214). There have been 40,792 civilian deaths,

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14,583 security personnel injuries, and 11,415 militant injuries (Z. U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Ashraf, 2019). It's worth noting, though, that over 150,000 people, predominantly Pashtuns, cross the Pakistan-Afghan border on a monthly basis for a number of reasons. On both sides of the border, Pashtuns gather for a number of reasons, including commercial and noncommercial activities (Tariq & Marwat, 2015).

NATO troops have withdrawn from Afghanistan:

The legal status of the Pakistan-Afghan border lies at the heart of the conflict between the two countries. The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in December 2014 caused a leadership vacuum and political instability in the country, which could jeopardize regional security, especially in Pakistan (Khalil, Perveen, & Ali, 2015). Because of the fragile character of the Pak-Afghan border, it is vital to manage it in order to ensure the long-term stability of the two nations and the area. However, certain issues persist in the historical and legal aspects of the border, which, according to the Pashtun Community of Afghanistan, will divide them from their Pashtun relatives (Z. U. A. Malik & Zhilong, 2018). Two opposing viewpoints shape the relationship on both sides of the border: Kabul wants to use the border for its own vested interests by challenging its legitimacy, while Pakistan wants a friendly regime in Kabul to keep the Pak-Afghan border from becoming a hotbed of jingoistic and chauvinistic Pashtun nationalism (Ahmad & Majeed, 2017). Pakistan's primary goal in building a favorable regime in Kabul is to secure its western border, which is already under threat from threats and hazards on the eastern side. The concept of strategic scope, a term used in international relations to convey the idea of finding refuge in Afghanistan in the case of an Indian army attack, is another cause of anxiety for Pakistan. In the past, the concept of strategic depth has not benefited Pakistan, but has almost always resulted in the opposite outcome (Rabbi, 2012). It has never been used by Pakistan, but it has always been used by Afghanistan to seek refuge in the mountains and then return to Afghanistan after performing terrorist acts in Pakistan. This has been demonstrated in several incidents, including as the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, where the attacker was alleged to have sought refuge in Afghanistan (Mahmood Ahmad Muzafar, 2015). The concept of strategic scope has always been employed by Pakistan to advance its national objectives, yet it has always worked against Pakistan's national interests.

Pakistan opposes foreign intervention in Afghanistan:

Pakistan also does not want foreign engagement in Afghanistan, particularly from India, because this would increase Pakistan's sub-nationalism problem. India has been aiding Afghanistan since the Taliban were deposed in 2001 by US-led NATO forces (Malik, Fatima, & Zhilong, 2018). New Delhi has helped Kabul in a variety of ways, including the establishment of the Afghanistan Parliament, which contains a library. It also includes rebuilding of Habibia High School in the city of Kabul, reconstruction of the Salma Dam, now called as the Afghan-India Friendship Dam, construction of an electricity transmission line, ranging from Pul-e-Khumari to Kabul, building of a hospital named as Indira Gandhi Institute for Child Health/Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital for the ailing persons equipped with a modern technology, giving financial aid to the Afghan National Agriculture Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU) in Kandahar, building a cricket stadium in Kandahar, upgrading telephone exchanges in some provinces, expanding the national television network, besides being providing the Afghan National Army with military and security training on modern lines. Whatever India has done in Afghanistan is not motivated by humanitarianism or the belief that Afghanistan is a charity case; rather, India has a strategic interest in the country. India's main concern in doing so is to limit Pakistani presence in the region and maintain friendly ties with Kabul (Khan & Butt, 2017). The building of the Zaranj-Delaram road is important not only for Afghanistan but also for India. This improves connectivity between the Iranian borders and Afghanistan's most significant thoroughfare, the Ring Road, which also serves as a connector for most of the country's major cities (Afridi, Yousufi, & Musa Khan, 2014). This road would relieve Afghanistan's burden on Pakistan,

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which is reliant on Pakistan for goods and infrastructure transportation due to its landlocked status. By using the Zaranj-e-Delaram road, Afghanistan can now have trade routes with Iran. This would be able to move goods from Daranj to the Iranian port of Chabahar. Indian institutions funded, completed, and partially secured the road's construction.

Both Pakistan's eastern and western borders pose serious threats to the country's stability:

Both Pakistan's eastern and western borders pose serious threats to the country's stability. As Pakistan gave logistical help to the US and allied nations after September 11, the security threat from the western frontier grew. However, since the country's foundation, there have been security concerns over the country's eastern border. The Kashmir issue, the water conflict, and cross-border terrorism are only a few of the issues that have contributed to the country's worst security scenario in decades. India and Pakistan have been at conflict over Kashmir for a long time (Gill, 2019). Both countries have fought three wars over the issue, but no concrete solutions appear to be bringing the two arch-enemies together anytime soon. The strategic importance of Kashmir for both India and Pakistan is recognized by regional and international parties (Ali, Mujahid, & Rehman, 2015). It's also worth mentioning that both countries regard Kashmir as critical to their national unity.

The strategic situation of Kashmir is as follows:

The strategic location of Kashmir has been a source of dispute between the two countries. Kashmir is important to both countries because it is the source of water for most of Pakistan's major rivers. On the Kashmir problem, the primary stakeholders each have their own positions, whereas Kashmir's role as a third party has long been overlooked. Because the majority of Kashmiris are Muslims, India has never been able to offer them the right to self-determination because doing so would strengthen Pakistan's prestige (Z. U. A. Malik & Nawaz, 2014). Pakistan, on the other hand, stands unwavering in its support for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, while rejecting India's claim that Kashmir is an inherent part of Pakistan (Fayaz, 2016). For the benefit of their own vested interests, India has constantly employed propaganda against Pakistan, saying that she is interfering in the affairs of Kashmir. They have been deprived of their freedom to free movement since October 29, 2019, and have been restricted to their residences for the previous eight months. In this situation, the international community and regional players keep silent regarding the residents of India's unreasonable security constraints. As a result, increasing border security forces deployment, armed fight against Muslims, backing for terrorist networks in Pakistan, and the horrific death of innocent Kashmiri civilians have all contributed to heightened tension and security problems between the two nations (Z. U. A. Malik, Zhilong, & Mubeen, 2020). The long-running battle over river water, particularly the construction of dams and numerous power projects on the Jhelum River, is another important cause of worry.

Water is essential for human survival:

The availability of water is critical to human survival. Water meets many of humanity's requirements, including electricity, irrigation, power plants, and dams. Unfortunately, a water conflict emerged between Pakistan and India during Pakistan's early phases of existence, but the World Bank settled the issue in 1960 with the Indus Basin Treaty (Shafiq, Sultana, Munir, & Shoaib, 2019). Both countries' security has been jeopardized by the Water Dispute. According to the majority of statesmen, international water problems are more damaging than domestic water conflicts. Still, Pakistani water issues are intricately linked to India's upstream hegemonic plans, heightening tensions between the two countries. Furthermore, South Asia as a whole, and Pakistan in particular, is experiencing water scarcity, which will have a significant detrimental impact on Pakistan's economic and social structure. According to an IMF analysis, Pakistan is the world's third-fastest-growing country in terms of serious water scarcity. According to the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Pakistan will run out of water by 2025, with little or no water accessible in the region. Even so, only 20% of the population has access to safe drinking water, with the other 80% reliant on contaminated water (Daud, Philosophical Readings XIII.4 (2021), pp. 1584-1588. 1586

et al., 2017). Because India is upstream from Pakistan, it is relatively easy for India to restrict river water, resulting in enormous losses for Pakistan. Though, India has been building the Baglihar Dam on the Chenab River and the Kishanganga Dam on the Jhelum River, both of which are in direct conflict with Pakistan's interests and international law (M. S. Malik & Khan, 2018). This is also a flagrant violation of the 1960 Indus Basin Treaty, which established a clear boundary between Pakistan's and India's river systems. Not only that, but India is also storing a considerable amount of water in addition to dams, which would have a significant detrimental impact on Pakistan's economy. This has exacerbated relations between the two countries, increasing Pakistan's security issues with India.

In order to destabilize Pakistan in the region, the following steps should be taken:

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, India has been breaching international human rights norms on the border by killing innocent people by shelling civilians and Pakistani security installations. Pakistan and India accuse and counter-accuse each other of interfering in the affairs of the other. Regardless of who is to blame, India has always intervened in Pakistan's domestic affairs and attempted to destabilize Pakistan in the area (Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018). Despite the fact that Kashmir had voted in a referendum for Pakistan, violence against Indian people has continued in occupied Kashmir, where they have been held captive in their homes for more than eight months and tormented both psychologically and physically. By sowing discord in Pakistan, India is also fueling the insurgency in Balochistan (Sultana, 2015). An example of this is the capture of Kalboshan Yadav, an Indian spy in Balochistan. He is claimed to have spent many years in Balochistan working for the Indian army. It's worth noting that one of Kalboshan's main concerns was creating security issues in Gawadar and obstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)(Nizamani, 2018; Rafay, Malik, Zhilong, & Fatima, 2020; Sial, 2014). Stopping Indian intervention in Pakistani territory will reduce the likelihood of a security conflict between the two countries. Pakistan must act harshly with such spies in order to strengthen its position and lessen the security threat.

Conclusion:

On the exterior front, Pakistan's security is reliant on Afghanistan and India. There has already been enough discussion on Afghanistan's security danger. Pakistan's security challenges arise from the Pakistan-Afghan border's precarious condition. Apart from security checkpoints, Pakistan's security concerns have been substantially aided by the deployment of security forces on the border. The twisty and hazardous aspect of the border adds to Pakistan's security concerns, as terrorists and rebels can easily traverse the mountains if their evil plans are accomplished.

Border management between the two countries would substantially contribute in the control of terrorism and resistance between the two countries. It is more vital than ever to form a joint security force made up of security officers from both countries to preserve law and order on the border. Security difficulties with India are crucial because the two nations have fought three wars, resulting in significant human and financial casualties as well as infrastructure destruction. However, if the major issues of Kashmir, water, and cross-border terrorism are not addressed, another conflict is a probable possibility. The war in Kashmir, which must be addressed as quickly as possible, is the most critical concern. The international community and regional actors may make a significant contribution by tackling this important topic.

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