

WEEKLY ANALYSIS

Issue Number – 497
(October 25-30, 2025)

THE RECENT WAR BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.

In this issue:

- The Recent War Between Afghanistan and Pakistan: Causes and Consequences 3
- Causes of the Recent War 4
- Consequences of the War 6
- Peace Negotiations Between Afghanistan and Pakistan 7
- Conclusion 9
- Recommendations 9
- References..... 10



THE RECENT WAR BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Introduction

From a historical perspective, the political relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan can be divided into two main phases. The first phase spans from the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 up to 1979, and the second from 1979 to the present day.

During the first phase, relations between the two countries were often strained, mainly due to disputes over the Durand Line and the rights of the Pashtun population living on both sides of the border. However, the signing of the *Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement* in 1950 played an important role in improving their political and economic ties.

In the second phase, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have fluctuated—at times improving and at times deteriorating. From 1979 to 1992, relations were largely cold, driven by the rivalry between the two global powers of the time: the United States and the Soviet Union. Pakistan aligned itself with the United States, while the Afghan government supported the Soviet Union.

In the early years of the “Islamic State of Afghanistan” and later during the first period of the “Islamic Emirate,” bilateral relations were generally close and cooperative. However, during the twenty years of the Republic (2001–2021), relations became tense once again. Several factors contributed to this tension, including mutual distrust, Pakistan’s perceived double standards, drug trafficking from Afghanistan into Pakistan, and Afghanistan’s close relations with India.

A closer examination of the relationship between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Pakistan reveals that during the Emirate’s first rule (1996–2001), ties were strong and friendly. Pakistan, along with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, was among the few countries to recognize the Taliban government. Despite this background, the first Emirate eventually collapsed, with Pakistan’s cooperation, and was replaced by the Republic. In the early years of the Republic, relations between Pakistan and the Taliban remained distant. However, after 2005, when India and the United States signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement, Pakistan, whose similar request had been rejected by Washington, adopted a dual policy and began to strengthen its ties with the Taliban.

After the Taliban’s return to power in 2021, many assumed that relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan would once again improve. Yet in recent years, tensions have re-emerged due to issues related to Afghan refugees and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). These security concerns have led to heightened hostilities, culminating in direct military clashes between the two countries.



This analysis will examine the main causes, consequences, ceasefire dynamics, and the possible future of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations following their recent conflict.

CAUSES OF THE RECENT WAR

The recent conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan has multiple causes, which can be summarized as follows:

1. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Factor

The primary cause of the recent war between Afghanistan and Pakistan is the dispute over the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP). Pakistan claims that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan supports the TTP and provides safe havens for its fighters inside Afghanistan. In response, the Afghan authorities accuse Pakistan of violating Afghan territory, creating insecurity along the Durand Line, and even harboring leaders of ISIS. From these mutual accusations, it is clear that the main driver of the current conflict is indeed the TTP. Whenever Pakistan has carried out attacks on Afghan soil, it has justified them as strikes against TTP hideouts.

The TTP was formed in Pakistan in 2007 but faced internal divisions and setbacks in 2014–2015. The group reorganized in 2018 and resumed attacks on Pakistani military targets. According to Pakistan's Ministry of Interior, the group's membership reached between 7,000 and 10,000 by 2023. Pakistani analysts believe that the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan greatly boosted the morale of the TTP, inspiring them to pursue a similar Islamic system in Pakistan. As a result, attacks by the group have surged—official data shows that between 2021 and August 2023, TTP attacks increased by 60%, killing around 2,300 Pakistani soldiers and civilians. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province alone, the group claimed responsibility for over 300 attacks.

Reports by the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* indicate that Pakistan witnessed 418 attacks in 2023 compared to 365 in 2022, while *Al Jazeera* reported that the total number of attacks across Pakistan in 2023 reached 650.

Following these waves of attacks, Pakistan demanded that the Islamic Emirate launch operations against the TTP within Afghanistan, threatening that if Kabul failed to act, Pakistan would take military action inside Afghan territory itself.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has repeatedly rejected these accusations. Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi described them as propaganda, insisting that “there is no group in Afghanistan that poses a threat to the security of neighboring countries.” Likewise, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid stated that “instead of addressing its own security challenges, Pakistan is once again blaming Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate not only rejects such activities



but condemns them. However, ensuring security inside Pakistan is not Afghanistan's responsibility; Pakistan must secure its own territory."

Despite Kabul's assurances that Afghan soil will not be used against any country, Pakistan carried out several airstrikes inside Afghanistan. In April 2022, Pakistani jets bombed Khost and Kunar provinces, killing 47 people and injuring 22, most of them women and children. Another airstrike in March 2024 targeted Paktika and Khost, killing five women and three children. Most recently, in January 2025, Pakistan bombed the Sarkano district of Kunar Province, claiming to target TTP centers.

Pakistan went even further on October 9, 2025, launching a direct airstrike on Kabul. In response, the Islamic Emirate carried out counterattacks along the Durand Line under the right of self-defense in accordance with international law. According to Zabihullah Mujahid, these retaliatory strikes killed 58 Pakistani soldiers and wounded 29 others. This series of events makes it evident that the main cause of the recent conflict lies in the dispute over the TTP.

2. The India Factor

Pakistan's recent attack on Kabul occurred shortly after Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's official visit to India. A key component of Pakistan's "strategic depth" policy is to prevent Indian influence in Afghanistan. Muttaqi's trip to New Delhi provoked anger in Islamabad, especially since it was the first official visit by an Afghan minister to India in several years.

The Afghan delegation received an unusually warm welcome from Indian officials. Muttaqi even visited *Darul Uloom Deoband*, a prominent Islamic seminary, marking the first official Afghan visit there since the 1950s. Despite the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) being a nationalist party, India warmly received a minister representing an "Islamic" government. This move was seen as part of New Delhi's broader effort to balance regional power and pressure Pakistan.

Although India and Afghanistan do not share a direct border, Indian policymakers argue that through the Gilgit-Baltistan region, India maintains a geographical link with Afghanistan—a claim that underpins India's strategic interests in the area. For Pakistan, preventing Indian influence in Afghanistan is thus a central foreign policy goal.

Following Muttaqi's visit, widespread concern and resentment grew in Pakistan. While India's ties with the Taliban remain mostly symbolic, New Delhi aims to maintain a presence in post-U.S. Afghanistan and counter the influence of both China and Pakistan. Therefore, the Afghan foreign minister's visit to India and India's positive engagement with the Taliban may have



been additional triggers for Pakistan's military action, intended to pressure Kabul and discourage closer Afghanistan–India ties.

3. The United States Factor

Another possible factor behind the recent war is the role of the United States. In recent weeks, Washington reportedly asked the Islamic Emirate to allow U.S. forces access to the Bagram airbase, an offer that Kabul refused. Former U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks, warning that "very bad things will happen if the Taliban don't give us Bagram," reflect this tension.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Prime Minister and army chief, General Asim Munir, have held several meetings with Trump, and the growing closeness between Islamabad and Washington has fueled speculation that the U.S. might be pressuring the Taliban through Pakistan.

For the first time in history, Pakistan directly attacked Kabul, a move that some analysts interpret as part of a broader U.S. strategy to intimidate the Taliban. The goal, they argue, could be to force the Islamic Emirate to make concessions, particularly regarding the Bagram base, and to remind Kabul that non-cooperation with Washington could once again turn Afghanistan into a center of instability.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

1. Deterioration of Political Relations

As a result of this war, political relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have severely deteriorated. The tensions have led Pakistan to accuse the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in various international forums of supporting terrorism and allowing its territory to be used against Pakistan. Islamabad has further claimed that Afghan soil could also be used against other neighboring countries. On the regional level, Pakistan has consistently raised issues such as the need for an "inclusive government" and "human rights" in Afghanistan—points that negatively affect the international recognition process of the Islamic Emirate.

2. Mutual Use of Pressure Tools

The worsening relations do not only mean that Pakistan possesses leverage over Afghanistan; the Islamic Emirate also has its own instruments of pressure, which it has used during the recent conflict. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the IEA, claimed that Pakistan provides safe havens for ISIS fighters, offering them training in various cities, and that the attacks carried out recently in Russia, Iran, and other regional countries—as well as several attacks inside Afghanistan—were all organized from ISIS centers within Pakistan. He also asserted that after Afghanistan banned opium cultivation, Pakistan turned to drug production itself, exporting narcotics to European and American markets. Another potential



pressure point for Afghanistan is its ability to obstruct Pakistan's access to Central Asia. In short, as bilateral relations have worsened, both sides have increasingly resorted to using maximum pressure tools, further damaging their relationship and generating broader regional instability.

3. Economic Consequences

The war has also negatively impacted the economic relations between the two countries. Pakistan announced new restrictions on Afghan trade through the port of Karachi and temporarily closed several border crossings. These closures reduced trade volumes, disrupted the movement of goods, and led to the seizure of Afghan traders' shipping containers while customs tariffs were increased. These measures have had harmful economic repercussions for both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

4. Pressure on Afghan Refugees

Another significant consequence of the war is the increased pressure on Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan and the beginning of forced deportations. Following the conflict, the federal cabinet of Pakistan, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, held a meeting and announced that only Afghans with valid visas would be permitted to remain in Pakistan. All others were ordered to leave the country. Thus, one of the most serious outcomes of the conflict has been the mass expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Peace talks between the two countries began in Doha under the mediation of Qatar and Turkey. In the first phase, the two sides reached an agreement on a temporary ceasefire. It was then decided that Turkey would host the next round of negotiations, scheduled for **October 25, 2025**.

During the October 25 talks, Pakistan demanded that Afghan soil not be used for activities against Pakistan and that the Islamic Emirate take firm action against the TTP. In return, Afghanistan demanded that Pakistani territory also not be used for attacks against Afghanistan, that Pakistan prevent the growth of ISIS within its borders, and that U.S. drones not be allowed to launch strikes from Pakistani soil. According to *TOLO News*, Pakistan did not commit to stopping U.S. drone operations, arguing that it has an existing agreement with Washington that it cannot unilaterally revoke.

Although the final outcome of these negotiations remains uncertain, Afghanistan appears to hold a relatively stronger position for several reasons:

1. Pakistan's Internal Crises



Pakistan is facing severe crises in its political, economic, and security sectors. Growing tensions between the Pakistan Muslim League (N) and the Pakistan People's Party have weakened the central government, while Imran Khan's party continues to gain popular support, as demonstrated by its large recent rally. Attacks on members of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in Lahore, which resulted in numerous casualties, have intensified political instability, particularly in Punjab Province. At the same time, security operations against the TTP and Baloch separatists have stretched Pakistan's military capacity. Additionally, Pakistan's growing alignment with the United States has caused concern among regional powers such as Iran, Russia, China, and India. Under these conditions, escalating a new war with Afghanistan would be strategically and politically costly for Islamabad. This situation gives Afghanistan an advantage and an opportunity to press for its own demands during the negotiations.

2. Continued Threat of Conflict

If the negotiations fail, Pakistan will remain under constant threat of military confrontation with Afghanistan. This would open yet another front for Islamabad while it is already dealing with internal and regional challenges—an outcome clearly not in Pakistan's interest.

3. The ISIS Issue as Leverage

The Afghan delegation has presented clear evidence of ISIS safe havens inside Pakistan. Given that Pakistan already faces international accusations of *state-sponsored terrorism*, sustained pressure by Afghanistan on this issue could significantly damage Pakistan's reputation globally. Moreover, mediating countries such as Turkey—also affected by ISIS activity—may gradually downplay Pakistan's TTP-related concerns until the ISIS issue is resolved.

4. Loss of Influence if Talks Fail

If the talks collapse and Pakistan refuse to show flexibility, it risks losing what little political influence it still holds in Afghanistan. Such an outcome would be detrimental to Pakistan's long-term security and economic interests.

5. Fear of Pushing Afghanistan Closer to India

Pakistan will likely do its utmost to keep the dialogue alive, since the failure of these talks would risk driving Afghanistan closer to India—an outcome completely contrary to Pakistan's long-standing *Strategic Depth Policy*.



CONCLUSION

The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has historically been marked by fluctuations, alternating between periods of cooperation and confrontation. During the first rule of the Islamic Emirate, Pakistan maintained close relations with the Taliban government and was among the few countries to recognize it officially. Following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, it was widely expected that relations between the two countries would again become friendly and cooperative. However, tensions soon re-emerged due to the issue of the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)*, the question of Afghan refugees, and persistent disputes over the Durand Line.

The principal cause of the recent conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been their disagreement over the TTP. Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of sheltering and supporting the group, allegations that the Islamic Emirate has consistently rejected. Nevertheless, Pakistan has carried out airstrikes in several Afghan provinces—including Khost, Paktika, Nangarhar, Kunar, and even Kabul, citing the presence of TTP militants. The most recent attack on Kabul prompted retaliatory strikes by the Islamic Emirate on Pakistani military outposts along the Durand Line, further deepening hostilities between the two sides.

At the same time, the role of other external actors—particularly the United States and India—cannot be ignored. Pakistan views the growing engagement between India and the Islamic Emirate with suspicion and has responded by employing various forms of pressure. Moreover, there are indications that the United States may be using Pakistan as a channel to exert pressure on the Taliban government, especially regarding control over the Bagram airbase and other strategic interests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Respect for Sovereignty:

Pakistan should recognize and respect Afghanistan's political sovereignty and engage with it as an independent state. Once the Islamic Emirate is assured of such recognition and respect, it will, in turn, demonstrate its willingness to respect Pakistan's sovereignty and respond appropriately to its legitimate concerns.

2. Balance in Foreign Relations:

The Islamic Emirate should strive to maintain a balanced foreign policy—particularly between Pakistan and India—to ensure that Afghanistan does not once again become a battleground for regional rivalry.

3. The Role of China as a Mediator:



China has recently strengthened its ties with the Islamic Emirate while also being a long-standing strategic partner of Pakistan. This shared relationship provides Beijing with the potential to serve as a neutral mediator in fostering and improving bilateral relations between Kabul and Islamabad.

4. National Support and Internal Reforms:

Every government facing external conflict requires strong domestic support. Therefore, the Islamic Emirate should pursue selective reforms within the framework of Islamic principles to strengthen internal unity and enhance national legitimacy.

5. Peaceful Resolution:

War benefits neither country. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan should seek to resolve their disputes through dialogue and mutual understanding, putting an end to cycles of violence and opening a new chapter of peaceful coexistence.

REFERENCES

1. Syed Muhammad Abbas, "Afghanistan–Pakistan in a Security Puzzle (Past, Present, and Future)", Vienna International Institute for Middle East Studies, November 20, 2023, p. 11. [Link](#)
2. *L.A. Times Archives*, "2 Slain in Attack on Pakistani Embassy," *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1995. [Link](#)
3. Shehryar Fazli, "The Impact of Afghanistan's Drug Trade on its Neighbors", *The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, November 2023, p. 7. [Link](#)
4. Vito Morisco, "From Rebel Governance to Institutionalization? Prospects for the Taliban and Afghanistan", *Austrian Institute for International Affairs*, July 2023, p. 21. [Link](#)
5. Amanullah Zarawar, Naveedullah Alokozay, and Hamad Shoukat, "Pakistan and the 2.0 Taliban (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) Regime: A New Scene", *Cognizance Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 4, Issue 8, August 2024, p. 252. [Link](#)
6. Ido Gadi Raz, "Against All Expectations: Afghanistan–Pakistan Relations after the American Withdrawal", *Op. Cit.*, pp. 14–15.
7. Muhammad Bilal Iftikhar Khan, Syed Waqas Haider Bukhari, and Marriyam Siddique, "Pakistan–IEA Relations: A Game Theory Perspective", *Journal of Social & Organizational Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2022, p. 31. [Link](#)
8. Syed Muhammad Abbas, "Afghanistan–Pakistan in a Security Puzzle (Past, Present, and Future)", Vienna International Institute for Middle East Studies, November 20, 2023, p. 19. [Link](#)
9. Abid Hussain, "Taliban's Ties with Pakistan Fraying amid Mounting Security Concerns", *Al Jazeera*, August 17, 2023. [Link](#)
10. Sneha Swaminathan, "Explained | Why Is Pakistan Asking 1.7 Million Afghan Nationals to Leave Its Territory?", *WION News*, November 2, 2023. [Link](#)



11. Abid Hussain, *"Tensions High after Pakistan Launches Cross-Border Attacks into Afghanistan"*, Op. Cit.
12. Arsalan Bilal, *"Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban: Friends Becoming Foes"*, *The Diplomat*, April 28, 2023. [Link](#)
13. Abid Hussain, *"Taliban's Ties with Pakistan Fraying amid Mounting Security Concerns"*, Op. Cit.
14. Vito Morisco, *"From Rebel Governance to Institutionalization? Prospects for the Taliban and Afghanistan"*, Op. Cit., p. 25.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Al Jazeera*, "At Least 47 Dead in Afghanistan after Pakistan Attacks: Officials," April 17, 2022. [Link](#)
17. Abid Hussain, *"Tensions High after Pakistan Launches Cross-Border Attacks into Afghanistan"*, Op. Cit.
18. Abid Hussain, *"Tensions High after Pakistan Launches Cross-Border Attacks into Afghanistan"*, Op. Cit.

The Centre for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) is an independent, non-profit, and non-governmental research organization established in July 2009 in Kabul. CSRS is committed to promoting policy-oriented research through conducting authentic and unbiased research concerning Afghanistan and the region.

Contact Us:

Email: info@csrsaf.org

Website: www.csrsaf.org

Phone & WhatsApp: +93780618000



www.csrsaf.org



info@csrsaf.org