

**A Case of Mistaken Identities:
The Real Friends and Foes in the War in Afghanistan**

Siddharth Singh Chaudhari

University of Michigan

Abstract

This article explains why Pakistan supports the Afghan Taliban. It contends that Pakistan has extensive systematic incentives to do so. Furthermore, internal Pakistani dynamics enable and encourage support for the Taliban. The article considers the implications for the United States and the Afghan government. This work extends the existing literature and presents novel arguments.

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Introduction

“Give your enemy a thousand chances to become your friend, but do not give your friend a single chance to become your enemy.” – Imam Ali

On the 30th of November 2016, roughly three weeks after his scarcely believable triumph in the United States’ presidential election, President-elect Donald J. Trump spoke with the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, over the phone. As various news organizations have since reported, the conversation between the two leaders did not go according to plan. Having elected to eschew the State Department’s guidance altogether, the President-elect instead chose to compliment the Pakistani Prime Minister’s terrific character and remarkable performance and praise Pakistan’s exceptional people and boundless opportunities. While the President’s ringing endorsement of Pakistan and its leader may be described as exaggerated, his statements are somewhat in keeping with the United States’ foreign policy towards the South Asian giant. The U.S. government, after all, intended to contribute over \$742 million in foreign assistance to Pakistan over the course of 2017 (Foreign Assistance – Pakistan).

That figure is, by no means, an anomaly. Former President Obama acknowledged the complicated nature of his country’s relationship with Pakistan and even refused to visit the latter during his time in office. The U.S. government, however, granted more than \$2.6 billion in foreign assistance to Pakistan between 2011-2016 (Foreign Assistance – Pakistan). In recent years, the nature of the relationship between the two countries has come under intense strain. Mounting evidence of systematic collaboration between elements of the Pakistani government and security establishment on the one hand and members of the Afghan Taliban on the other has repeatedly undermined the United States’ counterterrorism strategy in Afghanistan. But as Pakistan remains hostile to the United States vis-a-vis the Afghan War, the U.S. government continues to acknowledge the nation as a Major non-NATO ally (MNNA), placing it in an elite group alongside other stalwart supporters like Australia, Japan, and South Korea. As I hope to illustrate over the course of this essay, this constitutes a major strategic error on the part of the United States.

This essay analyzes the Pakistani government’s position pertaining to the United States’ efforts to defeat the Afghan Taliban. Highlighting territorial sovereignty and financial considerations, I argue that Pakistan is likely to continue to support the Afghan Taliban covertly, as an ongoing rivalry with India, an unresolved border dispute with Afghanistan, and an avaricious security establishment leave an unstable Afghanistan in the nation’s strategic interest. My overarching aim, then, is to offer a response to the following question:

- Why is Pakistan undermining the United States’ anti-Taliban strategy in Afghanistan?

Key Contentions

This essay has been divided into seven sections. I begin with an overview of the scholarly literature on the role played by Pakistan in the War in Afghanistan. I, then, provide a brief history of the Afghan War. The third section dwells on the rationale behind the Pakistani government’s actions in Afghanistan from a realist perspective. The subsequent section contains

a discussion on Pakistan's centrality within and contributions (both positive and negative) to the War in Afghanistan. The fifth section highlights Pakistan's territorial sovereignty considerations. Here, I argue that Pakistan's constant fear of a growing Indian influence within the Afghan government and the re-litigation of the Durand Line dispute by that government compels it to lend its support to the Afghan Taliban. Finally, I emphasize the role that greed has played in the Pakistani security establishment's decision to enforce its government's policy of siding with the Afghan Taliban. I conclude with a brief discussion of the policy implications of my arguments.

Literature Review

The scholarly community's views on Pakistan's involvement in the War in Afghanistan have evolved considerably since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. Early assessments were cautiously optimistic. Akhtar, for instance, argued that while Pakistan's attitude towards Afghanistan had been wolfish in the past, the events of 9/11 changed the nation's calculus significantly (2008, 50). Electing to partner with the United States, Pakistan seemingly consigned age-old rivalries to the dustbin of history and invested itself in the quest for a stable Afghanistan, free from the shackles of Taliban rule (Akhtar 2008, 61-62). Others also emphasized this post-9/11 shift in Pakistan's foreign policy behaviour and expressed renewed hope for cooperation with the United States (Kux 2001; Khan 2007; Khattak et al 2014).

Recent contributions, however, have been far more critical. Several scholars have pointed out Pakistan's involvement in a dangerous game in Afghanistan. A common criticism pertains to the incongruous nature of Pakistan's strategy in the war-torn nation. Scholars observe that while the Pakistani government continues to identify itself as an ally of the United States in the fight against the Afghan Taliban, the country provides a safe haven for some of the terrorist group's most influential leaders and military commanders within its own territory (Kruys 2009; Rashid 2012; McGovern 2013; Nadiri 2014). Others have drawn attention to the material and logistical support – recruits, military training, funding, and weaponry – that Pakistan's security forces have contributed towards the Afghan Taliban's cause in the past decade (Constable 2007; Jones 2007; Mitton 2007). However, while Pakistan's underhanded actions in Afghanistan have been criticized repeatedly in the scholarly literature, few scholars have studied the Afghan conflict from Pakistan's perspective and reflected on the country's motivations. The handful of accounts that do exist tend to over-emphasize Pakistan's enmity with India while ignoring other important factors (Akbarzadeh 2003; Khan 2010; Mezard 2010). This essay, then, assesses the U.S.-led war against the Afghan Taliban from a Pakistani standpoint and attempts to build a holistic picture by highlighting the role an ongoing border dispute and avaricious security apparatus play in determining the South Asian nation's strategy in Afghanistan.

A Brief History of the War in Afghanistan

While the current Afghan War began in 2001 with the invasion of Afghanistan by a coalition of forty nations led by the United States, the country has suffered from political turmoil and conflict for decades. As Rubin and Armstrong point out, "For much of the modern era,

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Afghanistan might credibly be defined as a large body of rocky land surrounded by neighbors who export their own conflicts onto its territory” (2003, 31).

Trouble began in September 1979, when disagreements and internal rivalries between the leaders of the communist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) led to the ouster of President Nur Muhammad Taraki, one of the founding members of the party and a Soviet Union loyalist, by Hafizullah Amin. Educated in the United States and eager to strengthen his country’s relationship with Pakistan (a member of the Western Alliance at the time), Amin was immediately identified as a threat by the Soviet Union. Wary of its loosening grip over the PDPA and the increasing influence of the mujahideen (and, by extension, of the Pakistanis and Americans that financed and trained them) in various parts of the country, the USSR found itself under considerable pressure. Unwilling to surrender an important ally and neighboring country to Pakistani and American control, the USSR intervened militarily in December 1979, capturing and assassinating Amin within a matter of days. This, in turn, triggered a nearly ten-year long war that led to the loss of somewhere between 500,000 to 2 million civilian lives and destroyed each and every pillar of the Afghan state (Khan 2012, 212-213).

In the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, factional infighting between the mujahideen (who had only recently united to thwart the Soviets) became the norm. A political vacuum emerged that permitted opportunistic states like Pakistan to construct their spheres of influence in the country (Rubin and Armstrong 2003, 31). By extending its support to the burgeoning Taliban movement, Pakistan invested its efforts in attempting to install a friendly authority in its neighboring country. The Taliban movement comprised of a loosely affiliated group of Afghan teachers and students from conservative religious academies (madrasas) in Afghanistan and Pakistan that intended to restore order in the country through the enforcement of Sharia law and tribal traditions (Rubin and Armstrong 2003, 31). Pakistan had been “intimately associated” with the group since its establishment in the early 1990s (Riedel 2013). Indeed, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had trained Mullah Omar, the eventual supreme commander of the Afghan Taliban, at one of its training camps in the 1980s to fight against the Soviet Union (Riedel 2013). When the time came, then, the Pakistanis turned to their old ally and helped Omar establish the Taliban as a powerful organization in Kandahar. With considerable Pakistani support to rely on, Omar and the Taliban captured the Afghan capital of Kabul in 1996 and cemented their rule in the country, establishing the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. As the Taliban graduated from insurgency to governance and secured their monopoly over the use of force, Pakistan became one of only three countries (the others being the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) to recognize the terrorist outfit as the rightful and legitimate government of the nation (Riedel 2013).

By 2001, the Pakistani government had made itself indispensable to the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan supplied the Taliban regime with “hundreds of advisers and experts to run its tanks, aircraft and artillery, thousands of Pakistani Pashtuns to man its infantry and small units of its Special Services Group commandos to help in combat” with rival authorities (Riedel 2013). Simply put, “Pakistan provided the oil needed to run the Taliban’s war machine” (Riedel 2013).

A landmark event in the United States, however, altered this arrangement considerably.

While the Western world was still reeling from the events of September 11, 2001, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) quickly identified each of the nineteen hijackers responsible for the horrific attacks. For his part, Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, vehemently denied that his organization had recruited, trained, and financed the terrorists. Having returned to Afghanistan a few years earlier to avoid arrest, bin Laden had established a strong relationship with Mullah Omar and leveraged his connections with the Afghan Taliban to expand al-Qaeda's operations across the world (Anderson 2015). As it became clear to the rest of the world that al-Qaeda had been using Afghanistan as its head office, bin Laden continued to plot, secure in the knowledge that he would never be extradited to the United States by the Taliban government.

Within days of the September 11 attacks, the United States government demanded that the Taliban surrender bin Laden over to them and dismantle the al-Qaeda training camps that had sprung up across their territory. The Afghan Taliban refused to accept these demands and taunted the U.S., compelling the latter to initiate Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. The United States led operation dismantled the Taliban government in less than a week. By December 2001, large parts of the Afghan territory were under American control. Facing complete annihilation, the defeated Taliban fighters were ordered by Omar to retreat and flee from armed confrontation with their far superior enemy (Reidel 2013). While several militants returned home, others fled to Pakistan and found shelter in the city of Quetta, where Omar himself settled (Reidel 2013). After a few years of hiding and ignominy, Omar identified an opportune moment. As the U.S. became embroiled in the War in Iraq, Omar gathered his recovering troops and launched the now infamous Taliban insurgency. By 2004, Afghanistan had once again become a theatre of war.

A North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) report containing data procured from 27,000 interrogations with over 4,000 Taliban and al-Qaeda militants was leaked in 2012. The report claimed that the Pakistani security establishment had proved crucial to the survival and resurgence of the Afghan Taliban in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 invasion. The Pakistani intelligence agency, the ISI, offered shelter, training, tactical know-how, and funding to the organization while keeping information pertaining to the location of the group's leaders hidden (Maqbool 2012). The Pakistani government and security establishment have repeatedly cast aspersions about the findings of this report. However, the fact that the Taliban re-emerged to snatch back what they regard as their territory cannot be disputed. Indeed, the Taliban also released a report entitled, "Percent of Country under the control of the Mujahideen," in March 2017. The report assesses the ongoing power-struggle between the Taliban, local warlords, and the U.S. backed Afghan government of President Ashraf Ghani in 349 of the 400 known districts in Afghanistan. According to the report, the Afghan Taliban "fully controls 34 districts, including the district centers, and contests another 167 districts (these are districts where the Taliban claims it controls between 40 to 99 percent of the territory)" (Roggio 2017). Furthermore, the terrorist outfit claims that it maintains a considerable presence (10 to 39

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percent) in another 52 districts and a minor presence in six districts (1 to 9 percent) (Roggio 2017). These numbers have been largely verified by several news organizations and do not differ significantly from those provided by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in a recent report.

There are many reasons that account for the Afghan Taliban's dramatic return to power in several regions of the war-torn nation. Numerous mistakes by U.S. authorities, including a considerable reduction in the number of American troops left behind in Afghanistan since 2014 and a shift towards addressing the threat posed by the Islamic State have no doubt contributed to the Taliban's recent string of successes. As I argue in subsequent sections, however, the United States government's over-reliance on the Pakistanis lays at the core of the Afghanistan imbroglio.

A Realist Perspective on the Rationale behind the Pakistani Position

In order to appreciate the Pakistani position vis-à-vis the Afghan Taliban, it is important to understand the countries' relationship with the Afghan government (the terrorist group's greatest enemy). Here, I turn to the principles of realism.

The realist doctrine is built on the assumption that the international arena is characterized by the lack of an established authority figure or anarchy. In the absence of an established authority figure to monitor, outline objectives for, and resolve conflicts between states, individual states' foreign policies are governed by a combination of internal and external factors. The size, location, capacity, and historical trajectory of a state, along with its system of governance and leadership, play a significant role in determining each state's foreign policy behaviour in the international arena. But while states receive different scores on the aforementioned parameters, realists argue that all states pursue a common objective: survival. In an anarchic international system, "the survival of the state can never be guaranteed, because the threat or use of force culminating in war is a legitimate instrument of statecraft and foreign policy behaviour" (Ahmed 2010, 314). As a result, a state must do whatever it may take to ensure its survival.

Survival is an abstract concept. From the Pakistani government's perspective, survival (in the context of the War in Afghanistan) involves preserving its territorial sovereignty in the face of existential threats from India and Afghanistan. Territorial sovereignty refers to the Pakistani government's right and power to preside over its territorial affairs without the threat of foreign interference or intervention. As I go onto discuss in a forthcoming section, the Pakistani government remains of the view that its right and power to conduct the country's business is constantly compromised by its Indian and Afghan counterparts. This, in turn, prompts the government to attempt to weaken its adversaries by extending support to the Afghan Taliban and embroiling the Indian and Afghan governments in a frustrating and endless conflict.



While the Pakistani government remains convinced that its right to rule is constantly jeopardized by its neighbors, it cannot maintain its sovereignty on its own. To secure this objective, the civilian government has had no choice but to engage in a symbiotic relationship with the Pakistani security establishment, comprised primarily of the Pakistani armed forces and the ISI. Members of the security establishment, however, have an agenda of their own that is independent of their interest in protecting the government's territorial sovereignty. As I go onto argue in a subsequent section, Pakistan's security apparatus has benefited tremendously from the United States' foreign assistance to Pakistan and retained a financial incentive to keep the threat of a resurgent Afghan Taliban alive. It has secured this generous flow of capital by taking advantage of the civilian government's credibility in the eyes of the American authorities. The Pakistani government and its quasi-independent security establishment, then, have both used the threat of a strong Afghan Taliban for their own ends.

Pakistan's Contributions to the Afghan War

Before delving into the reasons behind Pakistan's decision to continue to support the Afghan Taliban, it is worth reflecting on some of the contributions the country has made to the U.S.-led War in Afghanistan.

The events of September 11 left the Pakistani government in a quandary. Their previous support for the Afghan Taliban had been well documented. Indeed, Pakistan was the last nation to rescind the diplomatic recognition it granted to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The 9/11 attacks gave the United States the moral high ground and widespread sympathy across the world. The United Nations Security Council's decision to unanimously adopt Resolution 1368 granted an additional veneer of legality to the United States' counterterrorism agenda in Afghanistan. Cognizant of the significant outcry that would result from them dragging their feet on what many at the time viewed as a black-and-white issue, the Pakistani government attempted to thread the proverbial needle. With contradictory interests at stake, Pakistan chose to "cooperate where its national security interests converged with those of the USA and avoid where they diverged" (Khattak et al 2014, 86). As the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Abdul Sattar once explained, his country's policy vis-à-vis the War in Afghanistan now involved a "[y]es-but approach," wherein the Pakistani government would unequivocally accept each of the United States' demands in public, before expressing its reservations and disagreeing with key details in private (Nadiri 2014, 140).

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Disagreements aside, Pakistan has aided the United States' counterterrorism agenda in several ways since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001. The country has granted members of the coalition access to its military bases for reconnaissance and rescue operations, provided logistical support, and contributed intelligence resources and airspace for targeted strikes against Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives (Akhtar 2008, 62). The Pakistanis also helped the U.S. establish a joint patrol along the Afghan-Pakistan border and deployed soldiers in certain areas of the tribal belt near the contested border for the first time in their history (Akhtar 2008, 62). These efforts have directly contributed to the capture of dozens of al-Qaeda militants. Additionally, the Pakistani security establishment has also assisted in the search for and apprehension of a limited number of terrorists hiding within its own borders. A majority of these, however, have been low-level, rank-and-file targets, and few have served as members of the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan's attempts to aid the United States in its anti-Taliban efforts have been undermined by an unwillingness to quash the Afghan Taliban within its own territory. The terrorist group remains highly active in Pakistan's more accessible urban and peri-urban areas, generating funds and attracting recruits in some of the country's major cities (Nadiri 2014, 142). Senior Taliban officials have repeatedly claimed in interrogations that they travel freely between the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Quetta, and Haripur, under the guaranteed protection of the Pakistani government and security establishment (Nadiri 2014, 142). Indeed, several of these officials continue to maintain stable residences in these regions and lead comfortable lives, in full view of the Pakistani authorities. It is a poorly kept secret that the Pakistani government and security establishment are "thoroughly aware of Taliban activities and the whereabouts of all senior Taliban personnel" (Riedel 2013). The authorities in question, however, have done little with this information and largely turned a blind eye to the terrorist group's operations both within and across the border.

The Ongoing Indo-Pak Rivalry

The Pakistani government's ongoing rivalry with its Indian counterpart lies at the forefront of its decision to support the Afghan Taliban. A rivalry is loosely defined as a competitive relationship between two (or more) actors striving to achieve a common goal or preponderance over the other. The relationship between the Pakistani and Indian governments, however, is more than merely competitive. The arrangement between the South Asian giants "is included on virtually every comprehensive list of international rivalries. It is, in other words, an exemplary (and therefore troubling) case" (Mitton 2014, 361). The countries have engaged in four wars (in 1947-48, 1965, 1971, and 1999) since the partition of India took place in 1947. Frequent outbursts of violence have ensured that relations between the two nations remains defined by a lack of trust. Key figures on both sides of the unending conflict are convinced that the opponent will seize any opportunity to destroy them. Most recently, widespread outrage and protests in Indian-administered Kashmir in the aftermath of the killing of a prominent Mujahideen leader by Indian soldiers on July 8, 2016, have rekindled tensions between the

eternally distrustful neighbors.

While the decades-old dispute over the future of Indian-administered Kashmir has often dominated the headlines, Pakistan and India have also found themselves on opposing sides in Afghanistan. Wedged in between Afghanistan in the west and India in the east, Pakistan is a narrow country that has long been wary of India's relationship with its conflict-ridden neighbor. From the Pakistani government's viewpoint, India has aligned itself with the U.S.-backed Afghan government, a spiritual successor to the Northern Alliance that fought the Pakistan-backed Afghan Taliban in the 1990s (Mitton 2014, 362). After years of hostile relations with a Taliban regime partial to Pakistan, then, the Indian government has made friends of its own in Afghanistan. The Indians have gone to great lengths to consolidate these gains, offering foreign aid and investments as incentives. The Indian government has spent over \$1 billion in development funds to "provide an array of benefits including health, education, energy, communication, and general infrastructure support" for their Afghan counterparts, with the promise of even more aid in the future (Mitton 2014, 362-363). India also contributed to the construction of the country's new parliament building, incurring a cost of around \$25 million and "linking the site of Afghanistan's nascent democracy to India and the Indian people" (Mitton 2014, 363). Even more worryingly, the Indian



MAP EXHIBITING PAKISTAN'S POSITION BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND INDIA

government has gradually ramped up its military involvement in Afghanistan. India has been providing comprehensive training services to Afghan military personnel and supplying defensive military equipment, including armored checkpoints and watchtowers to the growing Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) (Mitton 2014, 363). The Indian government has also set up four new consulates in Afghanistan to complement the work already being done by its embassy in Kabul (Khan 2010, 179). The Pakistani security establishment has repeatedly claimed that

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these consulates “are, at best, intelligence gathering sites and more likely bases for carrying out operations inside Pakistan” (Khan 2010, 179). The Pakistani government has also formally accused the Indian intelligence services of relying on these locations to recruit Afghans to carry out terrorist operations in Pakistan (Khan 2010, 179).

The Pakistani government is fully aware of the benefits India is hoping to accrue from ingratiating itself with the Afghan government. A closer relationship between the two nations, for instance, will grant its biggest rival consistent “access to energy-rich Central Asia, with Afghanistan serving as a conduit and corridor” (Mitton 2014, 364). India is also likely to leverage any relationship with the Afghans to strengthen its security apparatus in their country and reduce its vulnerability to attacks from terrorist organizations operating out of Afghanistan. Most importantly, however, India may eventually see Afghanistan as a springboard to ratchet up the pressure on Pakistan’s western border. This, in turn, would leave the latter exposed to attacks from the east and the west and cement India’s hegemony in the Indian subcontinent.

Throughout the course of its existence, Pakistan has been involved in a relentless race to achieve military deterrence with respect to its significantly larger neighbor to the east. The country currently maintains one of the world’s largest active militaries and boasts a defense budget that amounted to approximately 3.4% of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016 (Gady 2017). That budget was increased by roughly 7% for 2017-2018 fiscal year (Gady 2017). In addition, Pakistan has maintained a fully-functioning nuclear arsenal, with most experts in agreement that the country is in possession of somewhere between 100-130 nuclear warheads. From the government’s point of view, however, the country’s military might will offer scarce comfort if India continues to make significant gains in its relationship with the Afghan government. Pakistan’s distrust for India has captured its government’s psyche for decades. The Pakistanis are convinced that “India’s intentions are to squeeze Pakistan by giving it two hostile borders” (Khan 2010, 181). India’s provision of aid and investment to Afghanistan belie its strategic interest in weakening Pakistan’s security on the western front and constitute a “direct affront to Pakistan’s sense of propriety in a country it has historically treated... as a client state” (Chaudhari 2011, 85). Given its simply extraordinary defensive commitments and frail economy, “Pakistan cannot afford the military establishment it has, much less a far larger one to prepare for a possible ‘second front’ against Afghanistan” (Khan 2010, 181). A growing Indian presence in Afghanistan, then, represents an existential threat in Pakistan’s backyard. It leaves the Pakistani government with the unenviable task of having to protect its territorial sovereignty from attacks hailing from the west and the east in the event of an Indian invasion. Consequently, the Pakistani government is likely to continue to offer support to the Afghan Taliban in the foreseeable future. The terrorist organization also views India as an enemy, given the latter’s support for the erstwhile Northern Alliance and current partnership with President Ashraf Ghani’s “illegitimate” government in Kabul. Short of invading Afghanistan and systematically dismantling its enemy’s infrastructure in the country, the Pakistani government’s only option is to continue to cooperate with the Afghan Taliban, an organization that is unlikely to turn against its old patron and provides a resilient barrier against Indian expansionism in the region.

The Durand Line Dispute

Pakistan shares an approximately 2400-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan referred to as the Durand Line. Established via an agreement between imperial Britain and the erstwhile Emirate of Afghanistan in 1893, the border is the subject of a long-standing dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The nineteenth century witnessed the British and Russian empires, two of the world's most powerful actors at the time, engage in what historians have since referred to as "the Great Game." As Russia methodically conquered its neighbors and expanded its influence in Central and Southern Asia, Britain was alerted. Worried that the Russians would eventually set their sights on the wealthy colony of India, the British elected to invade Afghanistan with the hopes of using the Emirate as a barrier. Each of the Britain's attempts to forcefully bring Afghanistan into its sphere of influence, however, failed miserably. With time running out, the British turned to Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary to India. An accomplished diplomat, Sir Durand reached an agreement with the Emir on November 12, 1893. The final, one-page long treaty, "resulted in a frontier that ran from the Karakoram Range in the northeast running south through the Spin Ghar mountains... before turning west along the Chagai Hills to the border with Iran" (Micallef 2017).

The agreement was plagued by controversies from the outset. The new border established by the treaty divided the Pashtun tribal lands, a region colloquially referred to as Pashtunistan in two, with half of the area now part of British India (modern-day Pakistan) and the balance remaining a part of Afghanistan (Micallef 2017). The division also led to the loss of the province of Baluchistan to British India (modern-day Pakistan), stripping the Emirate of its historic access to the Arabian Sea (Micallef 2017). Furthermore, while the original agreement was drafted in English, Dari, and Pashto, Sir Durand insisted that the English version must be treated as "the definitive copy" (Micallef 2017). This left the Emir at a disadvantage, given that he neither read nor understood the English language. The demarcation surveys that began in 1894, then, may have commenced without the informed consent of Afghanistan's leader. The division was, nonetheless, completed by May of 1896.

The legitimacy of the Durand Line has been questioned by the Afghans ever since. Successive generations of Afghan governments, for instance, have claimed that the

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MAP EXHIBITING THE DURAND LINE

terms laid out in the Dari and Pashto versions of the November 1893 agreement state, “the legality of the Afghan-Pakistan border should have lapsed in 1993, 100 years after the signing of the agreement” (Qassem 2007, 66). No documents, however, have ever been unearthed to justify these claims. Previous Afghan governments have also claimed that the British confiscated the original copies of the Dari and Pashto versions. These allegations have been strongly and repeatedly refuted by the British government. As things stand, then, there “is absolutely nothing in the Durand Line agreement or in subsequent documents between the British and Afghan Boundary Commissions which completed border demarcations until 1896, to indicate that the border was determined only for 100 years” (Qassem 2007, 66). Indeed, the original agreement has been ratified both formally and informally on numerous occasions, including in 1922 and 1930.

Questions regarding the legitimacy of their claims have not prevented Afghan governments from reviving the Durand Line debate from time-to-time. In the 1940s, for instance, as Pakistan became an independent nation, “the Afghan rulers refused to recognize the treaty and played the nationalist card of ‘Greater Pashtunistan’, laying claim to Dir, Swat, Chitral and Amb, Baluchistan and the princely states of Kalat, Kharan, Makran, and Las Bela” (Wagner and Khan 2013, 73). In the 1960s, governments in Kabul continued to observe a Pashtunistan Day and even brought the Durand Line issue to the attention of the International Islamic Economic Conference and the United Nations (Wagner and Khan 2013, 75). More recently, former President Hamid Karzai stated unequivocally that Pakistan has “no legal authority to dictate terms on the Durand Line,” and that the Afghan government and people would never acknowledge the legitimacy of the arbitrary Afghan-Pakistan border (Siddiqui 2017).

From the Pakistani government’s perspective, the Durand Line debate represents a zero-

sum situation. Any meaningful attempts by the Afghan government to relitigate the issue pose an existential threat to the Pakistani government's territorial sovereignty. The humiliation of 1971, when East Pakistan (modern-day People's Republic of Bangladesh) declared its independence and separated from the homeland with the assistance of the Indian government and armed forces, still looms large in the memories of Pakistan's elites. The areas that the Afghan government seeks to repatriate amount to approximately two-thirds of Pakistan's territory as a nation (Micallef 2017). The loss of these areas, then, would lead the total collapse of the Pakistani state and cannot be tolerated by the government under any circumstances.

In this instance, however, the Pakistani government's reliance on the Afghan Taliban for support is complicated by the fact that the latter has also refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Afghan-Pakistan border. While he depended on Pakistani assistance throughout his time as the supreme commander of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Omar refused to recognize the Durand Line and argued that Muslims ought not to be divided by worldly barriers. The Pakistani government, then, has had to weigh its options carefully in recent years. Trapped between the proverbial rock (an Afghan government that is forever unwilling to recognize the Durand Line) and a hard place (an Afghan Taliban that shares the government's disregard), the Pakistani government has had to bank on a cynical balancing game. Aware of the fact that President Ghani's elected government has the recognition and support of the United States and the international community, Pakistan has hedged its bets and continued to provide aid to the Afghan Taliban. The Pakistani government's calculus here is simple: a perpetual stalemate is preferable to a decisive outcome. If the Afghan Taliban is provided with sufficient resources to persist as a constant thorn in the side of the Afghan government, but not enough to overthrow the government altogether, the two parties will remain locked in an endless stalemate. This, in turn, will prevent both sides from finding the time and energy to revisit the Durand Line debate in any meaningful way. While such a strategy has risks associated with it, it has served the Pakistani government well so far. Unable to dismiss the other from the playing field, neither the Afghan Taliban nor President Ghani's government have found themselves able to challenge the Afghan-Pakistan border concertedly. Consequently, it is unlikely that the Pakistani government will abandon its support for the Afghan Taliban while the Durand Line debate remains unresolved. A stable Afghanistan, as things stand, runs contrary to the Pakistani government's interest in preserving its territorial sovereignty.

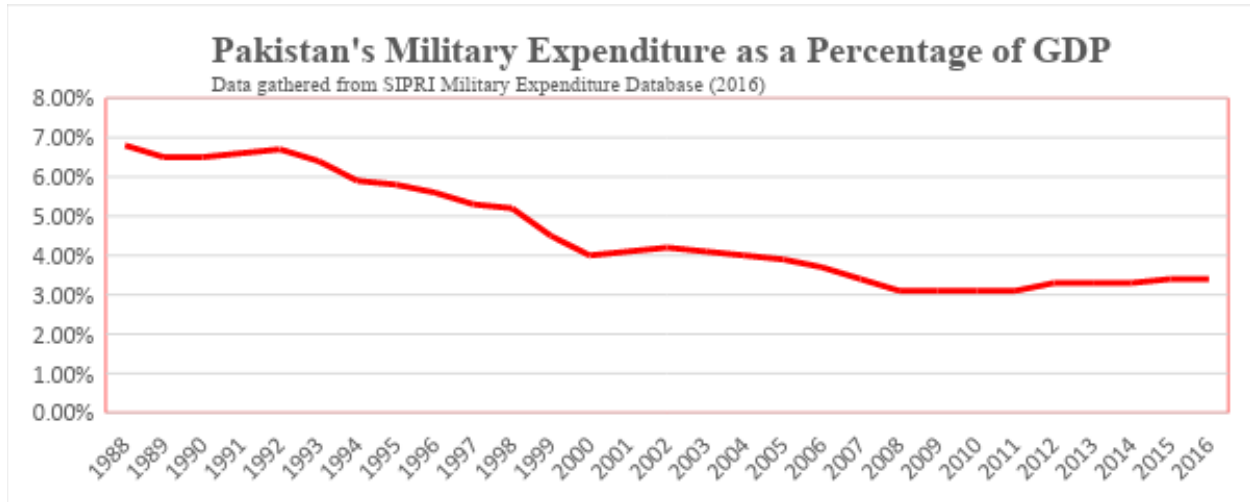
The Greed of the Pakistani Security Establishment

While the Pakistani government's aim to preserve its territorial sovereignty offers a concrete purpose for the country's security establishment to pursue, greed has also played an important role in its decision-making. To explain the effect of avarice on the Pakistani security establishment's decision to implement its government's policy and cooperate with the Afghan Taliban, I begin by analyzing the country's military expenditure.

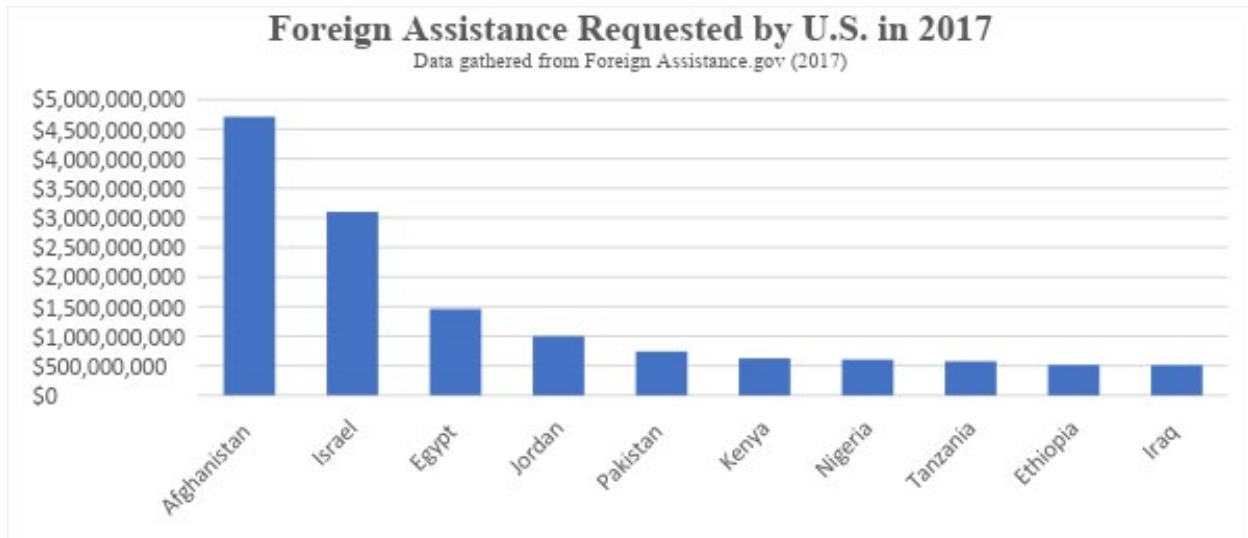
Pakistan's military expenditure, i.e. the total amount that the Pakistani government spends on maintaining the country's security establishment (which is made up of the country's

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armed forces and intelligence agencies), has been consistently high in recent decades. The nation spent roughly 6.8% of its GDP on military expenses in 1988 (SIPRI 2016). While this figure had been halved by 2016, the economy had grown considerably (SIPRI 2016). As a result, the military’s budget doubled from roughly \$4.5 billion in 1988 to over \$9 billion in 2016.



The security establishment’s demand for resources, however, has also increased. Consequently, in recent years, it has received a generous amount of foreign assistance from the United States in return for its cooperation in the War on Terror. In 2013, for instance, the U.S planned to provide \$348 million in foreign aid to the Pakistani security establishment (Foreign Assistance - Pakistan). That figure equates to roughly 4% of Pakistan’s military budget for the same year. Similarly, the U.S. planned to contribute \$328 million in aid in 2016, which amounts to approximately 3.6% of the Pakistani military budget for that year (Foreign Assistance – Pakistan). The United States’ generous financial aid, then, has added to the Pakistani security establishment’s already lavish budget. Indeed, it has helped senior officials of the Pakistani armed forces to engage in widespread corruption in recent years. Senior officers have invested heavily in dozens of highly profitable local businesses, ranging from marriage halls and dairy farms to factories, banks, and insurance firms (Shams 2016). As Siddiqi observes, “Today the Pakistani military’s internal economy is extensive, and has turned the armed forces into one of the [country’s] dominant economic players” (2007, 18).



To secure this steady supply of foreign aid from the United States (and other countries), the Pakistani security establishment has had to focus on two interrelated objectives. First, as I stated earlier, the armed forces and ISI have extended their consistent support to the Afghan Taliban, thereby ensuring that the terrorist group remains an ever-present threat to the Afghan government and the U.S. remains fully-committed to an expensive and long-term counterterrorism strategy in the region. Indeed, the Pakistani armed forces have had a long history of supporting religious extremists in Afghanistan for their own ends (Siddiqi 2007, 86). Secondly, the Pakistani armed forces have had to retain the faith of the United States and convince the latter that they can be relied upon in the fight against the Afghan Taliban. To achieve this aim, the armed forces have taken advantage of their considerable influence in the Pakistani government.

The Pakistani armed forces occupy a unique and prestigious position at the heart of the country's security establishment. The Constitution of Pakistan grants the country's armed forces the ability to "subject to law, act in aid of civil power when called upon to do so" (Pakistani.org). In practice, this has allowed the Army to reserve "the right to abandon its declared political aloofness and intervene in governmental affairs whenever the high command determines that the civilian government is not acting properly, and that its actions or performance are undermining political stability, military institutional autonomy, and national security" (Shah 2014, 221). As a result, the Army has used its constitutional leverage to overturn elected governments and implement martial law on several occasions and even stage coups to establish its own rule at other times. In times of civilian rule, the Pakistani armed forces' influence in government has ensured that the country's Ministry of Defense remains organized in a manner that allows serving and retired military officials to "occupy central positions in the ministry... [thereby making] it possible for them to control and monitor the work according to the desires of the military establishment" (Anwar and Rafique 2012, 381). The armed forces' pervasive presence in the halls of Pakistan's government, then, has allowed its members to take advantage of any credibility that the civilian government has accrued with the United States and use it to guarantee

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a steady stream of foreign aid. Indeed, the Army has routinely tightened the screws on government officials, pressuring them to reassure the U.S. government of its “commitment” to implementing the latter’s counterterrorism agenda in Afghanistan.

The Pakistani security apparatus, then, has established and maintained a symbiotic relationship with the country’s government. In exchange for preserving the government’s territorial sovereignty (which is also in the security establishment’s best interests), the armed forces have utilized the civilian government’s connections and credibility to placate the Americans and guarantee a regular flow of foreign aid for their various initiatives and personal enrichment. While the lion’s share of the security establishment’s funding stems directly from the Pakistani government, the United States’ generous foreign assistance continues to offer an additional incentive for the Pakistani security establishment to support its government’s decision to keep the Afghan Taliban afloat.

Policy Implications for the U.S. and Directions for Future Research

As I have outlined in previous sections, the Pakistani government’s (and security establishment’s) interests in Afghanistan are fundamentally contrary to those of the United States at this moment in time. Here, I discuss the policy implications for the U.S. government.

- Pakistan’s rivalry with India began shortly after the creation of the two nations in 1947. The relationship between the two countries has had its ebbs and flows ever since. Mutual suspicion and fear, however, prevent any major rapprochement from taking place between the two countries in the foreseeable future. Consequently, the Pakistanis will continue to support the Afghan Taliban, given that the terror outfit offers a resilient barrier against its enemy’s growing influence in Afghanistan. The U.S. government, then, ought to consider forging a stronger alliance with India instead. The two countries share a common interest in overcoming the Afghan Taliban. Moreover, India’s increasing investments in and trade with Afghanistan are likely to strengthen the hold of the latter’s U.S.-backed government and bring prosperity to the war-torn nation. This, in turn, will reduce support for the Taliban among everyday Afghans.
- The Durand Line debate represents an existential threat to the Pakistani state. The U.S. must acknowledge this fact and realize that until the dispute is resolved conclusively, the Pakistanis will support the Afghan Taliban and foment instability in Afghanistan. Supporting the Pakistani or Afghan position will only serve to alienate the scorned party and create further problems in the conflict-ridden region. Consequently, the United States government should remain neutral on the subject and allow the governments in question (as well as tribal leaders) to arrive at an agreement at their own pace and on their own volition.
- The U.S. government’s foreign aid to the Pakistani security establishment continues to stoke the fires of greed. The former ought to consider either reducing the amount of aid it provides to the latter significantly or attaching stricter conditions to its contributions.

This may prompt the Pakistani armed forces to make at least a nominal effort to curb the Afghan Taliban, if only to regain the Americans' trust and continue to fill their coffers.

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