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U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Changing Dynamics of Cross-Border Militancy

Nimra Akhtar¹ Dr. Adeel Irfan²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

² Master Trainer, CVE, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

Correspondence Author: Dr. Adeel Irfan, Correspondence through: adeel.rao@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the political, strategic, sociological and border-governance aspects that affect the changing security environment and explores the new dynamics of cross-border militancy post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan along the Pakistan-Afghanistan (P/A) border. It also reviews the weaknesses and strengths of Pakistan's border security systems including surveillance, fencing, intelligence-based operations, counterterrorism programs etc. This study will be conducted with a qualitative case-study methodology and a qualitative research design with interpretivist approach at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border-security that started in August 2021. Thematic interpretation and qualitative content analysis are used to examine secondary data. In general, the study applies two theories: The Borderland Security Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) to explain the interconnection of security environments of Afghanistan and Pakistan along with special challenges faced by socially intertwined border regions. The findings indicate that this resurgence of cross-border violence is not solely and directly responsible for the departure of the U.S. Rather, it was a catalyst that reshaped the securitization structures within the region and created a space for extremist groups to exploit. The Taliban resurgence and the resilience of the TTPs, coupled with the formation and consolidation of militant networks, security lapses, and the lack of cooperation and coordination on security matters between Pakistan and Afghanistan have all contributed to the threat.



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1. Introduction

The evacuation of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 marked an important change in the political and security dynamics of South Asia. The swift fall of the Afghan government and the Taliban's return to power drastically changed the geopolitical landscape around Afghanistan following nearly two decades of direct international military intervention. The change brought in uncertainty surrounding the future of the governance in Afghanistan, stability in the region, militant groups, and neighboring states' security interests. The impacts have been particularly profound for Pakistan due to its geographical proximity to Afghanistan, historical and social linkages across the border, the presence of refugees, tribal relationships, and the spread of militant groups in both countries (Bashir, 2023; Farhan et al., 2024).

The Pakistan-Afghanistan border is one of the most complex security situations in the region, and has been cited with reference to the Durand Line. Though an international border between two sovereign governments, it is bound by long-standing ethnic, tribal, familial, economic and social connections that often span the border. These relationships have facilitated easier communication across borders and have also facilitated easier immigration of people across borders, infiltration in militant groups and sharing of resources and information. Therefore, border management is a complicated matter which cannot be solved by military force or physical barriers alone (Raja et al., 2022; Sultan et al., 2025).

This was even exacerbated in the current post-2021 security environment. Pakistan had hoped that Afghanistan would become more peaceful and that anti-Pakistan militants would not be allowed to use Afghan soil once the Taliban retook the country. These hopes haven't been entirely fulfilled, though. The resurgence of the TTP is one of the major security threats that confronts Pakistan in the post withdrawal period. The group has continued to operate within Pakistan, has an ideology which appeals to them, has recruitment

networks, and has a cross-border dimension that has hampered counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan (Akhtar & Ullah, 2024; Bakhsh et al., 2024).

Hence, the link between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban has become a major feature of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Due to their ideological commonalities, historical linkages and close proximity, Pakistan is concerned about the existence of militant safe havens and the capacity of the Afghan government to prevent its territory from being used against Pakistan, even though the two groups have different political objectives and organizational structures (Ali et al., 2025; Akhtar & Ullah, 2024). This has created some tension between Islamabad and Kabul especially over management of the border, sanctuaries of militants and status of Durand Line.

In addition, the U.S. withdrawal also has geopolitical implications. The U.S. military's departure changed the security environment in the region and compelled its neighbors to reassess their security priorities. The present security situation in Afghanistan has been a result of the complex interplay of various factors, including the internal political transition in the country, the national security concerns of Pakistan, militant adaptation, border governance and the broader regional security goals of the nations in question. Therefore, the departure should be considered a part of a broader transitional process in the regional security complex, not just a one-off event (Bashir, 2023; Ghafoor et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, this study examines the impact of cross-border militancy on the Pakistan Afghanistan border after the withdrawal of the U.S. troops. It is based on three interrelated questions: (1) what has contributed to the rising resurgence of cross-border militancy, and (2) what impact the Taliban' rise to power and the withdrawal of U.S. forces have had on the operating environment for militant organizations, and (3) how effective have Pakistan's counterterrorism and border security efforts been in mitigating the threat in the post-2021 era.

The central argument of this study is that the

resurgence of cross-border militancy was triggered by rather than caused by the withdrawal of the U.S. troops. Militancy existed prior to 2021 on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, but the change of political and security environment by the Afghan Taliban' takeover and withdrawal altered the political and security conditions in which militancy groups operated. The political situation, militant adaptation, governance problems, borderland dynamics and the lack of bilateral security cooperation all played their part in the arising security situation. Thus, an in-depth analysis of the regional and border security issues is required to understand the security challenges the Pakistan faces after the withdrawal.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political and Strategic Transformation after the U.S. Withdrawal

The U.S. withdrawal had a significant impact on the strategic environment of Afghanistan and its neighbors, according to prior research. Withdrawal changed the regional balance of power and created new security uncertainties, which had major strategic ramifications for Pakistan as argued by Farhan et al. (2024). Likewise, Bashir (2023) examines the development of the strategic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the post-withdrawal context and underscores the intricacies of handling relations with a Taliban-led Afghanistan while countering the militant threats.

Khalid (2022) discusses the change of government in Afghanistan and the implications for Pakistan and Afghanistan. The report highlights that the "regional actor had to rethink its foreign policy and security policies due to the unpredictable environment created by the fall of the previous Afghan political order." The Taliban's return brought Pakistan a mix of opportunities and dangers. Islamabad believed that a Taliban-led government could, on the one hand, improve bilateral relations and help reduce instability. But the rise of militant groups hostile to Pakistan created new security concerns.

More recent studies with similar findings suggest that security concerns and diplomatic

engagement have affected Pakistan and Afghanistan relations under Taliban leadership. Ghafoor and Kasi (2025) discuss the bilateral relationship in the light of the Taliban administration post 2021, while Ghafoor et al. (2025) highlight the significance of the changing political environment in Afghanistan for Pakistan's strategic considerations. This study implies that Pakistan has not achieved strategic stability with the return of the Taliban. Rather it has developed a complex relationship in which disputes over terrorism, border control and sovereignty are played out alongside political engagement.

The literature suggests that the U.S. exit created a new strategic situation, not that it immediately produced militancy. The security consequences of the withdrawal were also mitigated by the pre-existing institutional and political fragility and the capacity of militant groups to adapt to the new realities.

2.2 Taliban Resurgence and the TTP Threat

The resurgence of the TTP is one of the main themes in the literature on post-withdrawal. In their analysis of the TTP's threat spectrum, Bakhsh et al. (2024) argue that the TTP's comeback presents a serious threat to Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy. The organization has shown remarkable resilience, due to organizational restructuring, ideological mobilization, recruitment networks and its ability to capitalize on instability in the wider Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands.

Akhtar and Ullah (2024) discuss the connection between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban and its effect on bilateral relations. The authors highlight the importance of organizational and ideological links to a proper understanding of the security relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ali et al. (2025) also claims that the relationship between the Afghan Taliban and TTP has changed the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The resurgence of the TTP and ISK was identified by Mahmood and Shah (2023) as a challenge to Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. The country is facing a multi-dimensional challenge from militant groups exploiting their findings. From their

findings, the country faces a multi-dimensional challenge posed by militant groups capitalizing on political instability, poor management, and security weaknesses. The literature suggests that apart from the pullout of the US military, other factors have enabled the resurfacing of the TTP group. Specifically, the pullout has created an environment conducive to the adaptation of militants. Also equally significant has been the cross-border networks of the TTP, its resilient nature, and ability to capitalize on security and governance weaknesses.

2.3 The Durand Line and Borderland Security

In regional security researches, the Pakistani-Afghan border has received much attention. In terms of politics, economics, diplomacy, and security, Raja et al. (2022) examine border security. As per their research, Pakistan's efforts at improving border security through fencing and controls have led to enhanced territorial surveillance, but they also experienced social and political challenges. Sultan et al. (2025) addresses the existing challenges in connection with the Durand Line while studying violence on the Pakistani-Afghan border from 2021 to 2025. The Pakistani-Afghan border remains a politically controversial area where full territorial control is complicated by the difficult terrain and presence of trans-border social networks.

Literature has established that border fencing helps increase state capacity through restricting any form of illegal immigration, and ensuring controlled crossings. However, cross-border militancy cannot be stopped solely on the basis of barriers. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of a physical-only security measure of borders is hindered by several factors (Raja et al., 2022).

2.4 Counterterrorism and Border Security Measures

The methods used by Pakistan to address cross-border militancy include border fencing, military intervention, intelligence-led intervention, surveillance, and institutional counterterrorism measures. Pakistan has been successful in dismantling the militant network and curbing any form of illegal immigration due to these measures.

Nevertheless, as per the literature review, the broader structural issues that fuel militancy have not been solved in spite of the success in tactical counterterrorism. As Mahmood and Shah (2023) state, Pakistan's counterterrorism approach is still faced with challenges due to the existence of militant groups. Jan and Qazi (2025) also highlight the challenges facing counterterrorism cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan following the departure of the United States from Afghanistan.

Therefore, the poor level of bilateral cooperation reduces the effectiveness of the security strategy employed by Pakistan. Previously, Afghanistan has raised concerns regarding the border policy and military presence of Pakistan, while Pakistan hopes that the Taliban government will help in preventing the use of the Afghan soil against Pakistan.

2.5 Research Gap

All these strategic implications of the U.S. withdrawal, the return of the Taliban, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the issue of border security have already been analyzed previously, but each of these elements has been analyzed separately. The analysis of how the combination of these factors leads to the emergence of the current security situation after the U.S. withdrawal in 2021 remains an important gap in the existing research. This study bridges this gap by putting together all these factors in one analytical framework. In such a way, the U.S. withdrawal is perceived not as a direct cause of the increase in militancy, but as a trigger operating in a networked regional security complex.

3. Theoretical Framework

RSCT and Borderland Security Theory are two complementary theoretical approaches that have been employed in this research. Together, these approaches provide a multi-dimensional approach to understanding the interplay between local border security issues and regional political changes.

3.1 Regional Security Complex Theory

As per the Regional Security Complex Theory,

which is mainly attributed to Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, the security of states in a particular region can never be understood in isolation since there is geographical linkage in security issues. Security interdependence patterns link states as well as non-states, and thus the happenings in one state may affect the security perception of neighboring states directly or indirectly. One example of such security interdependence is the relationship that exists between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The political instability in Afghanistan affects Pakistan through ideological linkages, refugees, insecurity at the border and militancy. On the other hand, the politics and security situation in Afghanistan is also affected by Pakistan's foreign policy and security policies.

Under RSCT, the withdrawal of the United States has altered the security architecture of the region due to the loss of an important external military actor. This change has implications not only for Afghanistan and Pakistan but also for the strategic calculations of the Central Asian states, China, India, and Iran. Strategic ambiguity and restructuring of security responsibilities were the consequences of disengagement.

The concept is particularly relevant to our analysis since it helps to explain why the growth of militancy in Afghanistan should not be considered an exclusively Afghan problem. The security environment of Pakistan both nationally and domestically is affected by the cross-border security implications. Likewise, the border security policies of Pakistan cannot be evaluated without considering the developments in Afghanistan.

3.2 Borderland Security Theory

Borderland Security Theory provides a more concentrated theoretical framework for analyzing the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, while RSCT takes into account the broader regional dimension. As per this perspective, borderlands are not only territorial boundaries, but rather complex social and political spaces wherein local communities, non-state actors, informal businesses, and tribal networks interface with the state institutions. All these characteristics are

present in the case of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Historically, frontier communities have been maintaining economic, family, tribal, and ethnic ties that cut across international borders. It becomes difficult for the state to exercise full control over its territory due to such ties.

As per this perspective, the social and political characteristics of the borderland, along with the defects in border administration by the state, provide an opportunity for cross-border militancy. In order to sustain their capacity and mobility, militant organizations may exploit local grievances, difficult terrain, and informal networks. Thus, the shortcomings of border fencing can be understood through the Borderland Security Theory. Border fencing can restrict access to certain areas, but it cannot destroy the informal social networks that militants may utilize. Hence, physical constraints, intelligence, local governance, community participation, and bilateral cooperation are all required for border security.

3.3 Theoretical Application

Both the theories are complementing each other. Where Borderland Security Theory gives an account of micro-level dynamics at the border, RSCT provides an understanding of the regional security interdependence of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hence, the withdrawal of the U.S. is regarded as a regional change in the security complex, while the emergence of cross-border militancy is regarded as a process influenced by both the borderland environment and regional instability. Theoretical paradigm suggests that security strategy of Pakistan should not be dependent on physical boundaries and militarization alone, but should be based on socio-political environment which facilitate militants.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Approach

The study applies a qualitative approach to research, as the problem under study is one of complex political, strategic, social and security issues which cannot be adequately dealt with by numbers alone. The qualitative approach enables

the researcher to study the meanings, relationships, processes, and contexts that are related to cross-border militancy. The perspective of this study is interpretative. It acknowledges that security realities are shaped by the perceptions and interpretations of political actors, security agencies, militants and border communities, in addition to material factors.

4.2 Case Study Method

This paper adopts a qualitative case study methodology to focus on the state of border security along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border post the U.S. withdrawal in August 2021. This case was chosen because it provides a good example of the interplay between border security, resurgence of militants and political instability in the region. Regarding the timing, the discussion will cover the period from August 2021 onwards, with a special focus on events up to 2025.

4.3 Data Collection

Only secondary sources have been employed for this study. Sources of information about the U.S. pullout, the Taliban rule, the revival of TTP, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, border security, terrorism, counter-terrorism and regional security were collected through scholarly journals, books, policy papers, research papers and academic studies. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the theoretical framework and research questions. Particular focus was given to studies related to events post-2021.

4.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis and qualitative content analysis. The analysis was based on the following ideas:

- Afghanistan political transition;
- Strategic consequences of the US withdrawal;
- Society and borderland dynamics;
- Nexus between the TTP and the Taliban;
- Cross-border terrorism occurs;
- Border management and barrier in Pakistan;
- Counter-terrorism operations;
- Intelligence cooperation;

- Security link between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Thematic analysis enabled the research to identify the themes and connections in the literature and interpret them in the light of the theory.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

Multiple data from different academic and policy-related sources were used to apply data triangulation and to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings. Getting information from a variety of sources helps you to rely less on one perspective and gives you a more complete picture of the security situation.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The research does not involve human subjects or primary interviews. The research is based only on secondary sources that are publicly accessible. All academic sources are cited properly according to APA standards.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Political Transformation and the Post-Withdrawal Security Environment

The evidence shows that the political change in Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal was an important variable influencing the security situation after 2021. The political change involved the fall of the previous Afghan regime and the swift rise to power of the Taliban, which created uncertainty in institutions and changed the political climate for militant groups.

Pakistan, in turn, saw the emergence of a strategic expectation of cooperation with Afghanistan in terms of security. Nevertheless, the continuation of the TTP threat undermined the expectation. Pakistan's security problems grew due to the activities of militant groups in or contacts with Afghanistan, which caused disagreements between Islamabad and Kabul (Bashir, 2023; Farhan et al., 2024).

Therefore, it can be seen that Pakistan was influenced by political change in Afghanistan via the security-interdependence mechanism. In accordance with the RSCT, political unrest and instability in one state had a direct impact on the

security of its neighboring state.

5.2 Strategic Consequences of the U.S. Withdrawal

The strategic equilibrium in the region has been radically disrupted by the U.S. pullout. The presence of foreign forces has been a major element of the Afghan security policy framework for nearly two decades. With their withdrawal, the element of external security presence was lost and new prospects for regional players and non-state actors to realize their objectives have been created.

Furthermore, the pullout has demonstrated that an effective insurgency can eventually take control of the government. This factor may have strengthened the idea that persistent militancy will lead to political consequences, which might have influenced the strategic considerations of other militant groups beyond Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, the outcomes negate any simple causation between militancy and pullout. The threat posed by the TTP and cross-border militancy existed prior to 2021. Rather, the pullout has transformed the strategic and political context of the operation of existing insurgent groups. It has shifted the balance of power in the region, decreased external constraints, and provided new opportunities for organizational flexibility. Hence, the pullout cannot be viewed as the sole cause of post-2021 militancy.

5.3 Social and Borderland Dynamics

The findings indicate that the knowledge of the sociological elements of the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan is needed in order to understand cross-border militancy. There are strong social connections such as tribal, ethnic, familial, and economic ties in the border region. While these connections create opportunities for legitimate communication across borders, they can also be exploited by the extreme organizations.

The findings support the assumptions of the Borderland Security Theory, which views border regions as socially constructed areas. In this way, geography and social networks operating beyond

the border restrict the capacity of the state to control it.

Social networks can be utilized by the militant groups for their communication, recruitment, movement, and logistic assistance. Physical control of the border is hence required and insufficient at the same time. The interaction between the official institutions of the state and the unofficial networks operating in the borderland is represented by cross-border militancy.

5.4 Resurgence of the TTP

The most important finding of the study is the reappearance of TTP. The organization's organizational resilience, ideological motivations, recruiting prospects, and cross-border operational links mean it is an important factor in the post-withdrawal security environment in Pakistan.

The results show that the TTP's resurgence was not a standalone incident but rather the outcome of a confluence of factors. The return of the Taliban created a new political environment and the wider environmental changes created opportunities for militant reorganization and adaptation. The TTP's operational resilience was also enhanced by its capacity to leverage existing networks (Akhtar & Ullah, 2024; Bakhsh et al., 2024).

Thus, TTP emerges as an important link between the internal security environment of Pakistan and the regional security dynamics. In the RSCT context, the entity is the manifestation of Pakistan-Afghanistan security interdependence. The group's conduct demonstrates the ways in which violent organizations can take advantage of the complicated socioeconomic and geographic features of frontier areas.

5.5 The Role of the U.S. Withdrawal in the Resurgence of Militancy

It can be seen from the data that cross-border militancy was affected indirectly and catalytically by the pullout of the U.S. Before the pullout, there were militant actions, and the TTP was a real threat to the security of Pakistan. However, the

pullout changed the security architecture and allowed extremist organizations to adapt. Therefore, it becomes possible to state the following causal chain: the pullout changed the regional security architecture; the Taliban took power, thus changing the political architecture of Afghanistan; the new environment affected the militant networks; and these changes had an impact on the border security environment of Pakistan. It becomes possible to say that the theoretical framework supports this view. While Borderland Security Theory illustrates the impacts of the transition specifically in the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands, RSCT explains the change on the regional level.

5.6 Effectiveness of Border Fencing

The construction of a fence by Pakistan to guard its border has positively impacted its capacity to monitor official crossing points as well as the border itself. The fence has been able to improve the state's capability to control its territory and also restrict some kinds of illegal movements. Nevertheless, from the outcomes, it is clear that the fence is not sufficient in dealing with cross-border militancy. This is because of various factors including the difficult hilly terrain, alternative routes, local resistance, and adaptation by the militants. In case conventional crossing points are made secure, militants might change their tactics and try to use alternative routes (Raja et al., 2022). In such a situation, border fencing needs to be considered as part of a broader strategy for border management.

5.7 Counterterrorism Operations and Intelligence Capacity

With regard to intelligence-driven operations, surveillance, and counter-terrorism efforts, Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence agencies have been able to demonstrate substantial capability in dismantling militant networks. Such efforts have led to increased capacity for the state to deal with any security threats as well as an end to insurgent activities. Nevertheless, the continued existence of militant violence implies that tactical counter-terrorism efforts are insufficient by themselves. An organization may be destroyed by

military force, but the structures that aid recruitment, radicalization, and mobilization across borders cannot be eliminated. A sustained counter-terrorism approach, therefore, must include intelligence, law enforcement, border management, diplomacy, governance, and economic development. This finding supports the notion that the vulnerabilities of border towns need to be addressed along with security efforts.

5.8 Pakistan-Afghanistan Security Cooperation

One of the weakest components of the post-withdrawal security environment, as stated in the report, is the bilateral security cooperation. Pakistan expects the Taliban government to prevent attacks on Pakistan from the Afghan soil. The bilateral cooperation between the two countries has been constrained by issues relating to border fencing, Durand Line, militants, and sovereignty.

The ability of both countries to coordinate in response to the threat of extremism across their borders is constrained by the lack of effective and consistent intelligence sharing. The issues involved in counterterrorism cooperation in the wake of the US withdrawal are also mentioned by Jan and Qazi (2025).

The findings reveal that a transnational security challenge cannot be solved through unilateral security actions. Counterterrorism requires some form of bilateral cooperation because the extremist networks are international. In the absence of such cooperation, events in one country may pose a threat to the security policy of the other.

5.9 Overall Discussion

It is evident from the findings that cross-border militancy after the withdrawal is a complicated process that arises due to the interaction of borderland, political, strategic and social factors. It is not possible to explain its persistence using one factor alone. Although the Taliban takeover has changed the internal political situation in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of the US has affected the security architecture in the region. As Pakistan

intensified its border control and counterterrorism efforts, the militant groups like the TTP adapted to the new environment. Meanwhile, the social networks and difficult geography continued to undermine the effectiveness of territorial controls.

The results prove that the Borderland Security Theory and RSCT can be used to explain the security situation in the region. In other words, while the Borderland Security Theory explains why the security problems persist in the frontier zones where the state institutions interact with social networks, RSCT illustrates the link between the security in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The main finding is that border militarization alone cannot generate sustainable security. Military operations, monitoring and physical obstacles must be part of a wider strategy that includes community engagement, governance, intelligence sharing, diplomacy and regional cooperation.

6. Conclusion

The 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan plays a very important role in Pakistan's border and national security issues and the security situation in South Asia. The Taliban's resurgence, the changed strategic equation, the return of the TTP and the tensions on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border have created a complex post-withdrawal security scenario.

The analysis shows that the cross-border militancy cannot be seen as a direct outcome of the U.S. withdrawal from the region. It was not a cause so much as an accelerator which aggravated existing problems of security, politics and strategy. The new political environment created by the Taliban takeover allowed militant organizations to operate within it, but the withdrawal directly affected the region's security architecture. The Taliban takeover has created a new political environment in which militant organizations are operating. But the withdrawal has directly impacted the security architecture of the region. The problem is sustained by TTP's organizational resilience, cross-border ties and situational adaptability.

The paper also reveals that the security policies of

Pakistan regarding the border have had a number of tactical effects. Through border fencing, surveillance, intelligence-led operations, and counterterrorism efforts, the state has been able to monitor and counteract militant activity. Nevertheless, these measures have not managed to eliminate cross-border militancy. However, their effectiveness is limited by the nature of the terrain, unofficial networks, local socioeconomic conditions, militancy adaptability, and inadequate bilateral cooperation.

The theoretical analysis proves the hypothesis about the insufficiency of national security perspective in understanding of Pakistan-Afghanistan security. On the one hand, Borderland Security Theory demonstrates the importance of social and political processes taking place in the border area, and on the other hand, Regional Security Complex Theory proves the interconnection of security relations between the two states. Altogether, these perspectives prove the necessity of local knowledge and regional cooperation in order to ensure effective security.

Finally, a comprehensive approach is required to solve the problem of security dilemma after 2021. Besides maintaining efficient border control mechanisms, Pakistan's future security will depend on such aspects as improvement of intelligence cooperation, strengthening diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, dealing with TTP threat by various means, supporting border communities, and promoting regional cooperation. Thus, the capacity of Pakistan and Afghanistan to resolve their security problems through state capabilities, bilateral relations, and regional cooperation will be essential for stable security.

7. Recommendations

An integrated approach to the border security issue should be adopted by Pakistan which involves not only intelligence, but also diplomatic, governance, socioeconomic and physical border administration elements. Modern technologies of surveillance, biometric identification, modern border crossing facilities and additional monitoring of vulnerable areas should be

employed to reinforce the existing border fencing system; yet these measures should be considered supplementary rather than a solution to cross-border militancy problem. Examples of more standardized intelligence sharing and cooperation on counterterrorism include regular bilateral security consultations and institutionalized communication channels that will address militant threats before they become graver. For the counteraction against the threat of TTP, Pakistan should adopt an integrated approach that includes intelligence-led operations, financial disruptions, law enforcement activities, diplomatic initiatives and prevention of recruitment and radicalization of militants. The establishment of an integrated information-sharing system should improve cooperation on intelligence matters between military, civilian, police and border security agencies. At the same time, communities living along the border should be involved into the security planning process, as the local population is capable of providing valuable information on

movement trends, smuggling routes and emerging threats; this can help with improving early warning mechanisms and reducing tension caused by border control measures. For reducing the vulnerability factors that can be utilized by these militant organizations, the security strategy needs to be coupled with economic development of the border areas through improved infrastructure, job creation, health care facilities, educational institutions, and local governance. Even if there are disagreements about terrorism, border management, and Durand line between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban, the country should continue to maintain diplomatic ties with the Afghan Taliban because the existing diplomatic means will remain critical for resolving their security problems. Lastly, Pakistan must enhance regional cooperation among Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Iran and the Central Asian countries to develop joint strategies on counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, border management and regional connectivity.

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