

# BALOCH INSURGENCY AND EXTERNAL INVOLVEMENT AMID THE TALIBAN RISE IN AFGHANISTAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

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## Abstract

*Taliban has taken control of Afghanistan; the US-influenced government of Ashraf Ghani has surrendered, a two-decade-long war ended, and the Taliban proclaimed their acting government on 7 September 2021 and resumed the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan. Pakistan is in support of an inclusive Taliban-led government in Afghanistan and providing Aid to the country for rebuilding and reconstruction of the affected neighbor while hoping for recognition from the international community. Taliban's regime in Afghanistan is a game-changer for South Asian regional politics as now China, Russia, and Iran's interests lie in this area. The Study is an attempt to examine the effects of the Taliban's government on Pakistan's national security, integrity, and economy with special concern for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and Foreign Relations by taking the Baluchistan insurgency as an example. This research will answer intriguing questions such as how the Taliban's government of Afghanistan affects the Baluch insurgency. The purpose of this research is to determine if the Taliban-led Afghan government deepens Pakistan's woes or serves the country's national interests. This paper argues that Baluch insurgents were previously hiding in Afghanistan and unstable Afghan territory was used against Pakistan by the enemies to exacerbate of Baluch insurgency and escalate terrorism to destabilize Pakistan. This study also argues that the New Taliban Government in Afghanistan has an amalgamation of encouraging and detrimental outcomes for Pakistan as*

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*supporting the Afghan Taliban government has visible impacts on regional politics and the dynamics of Pakistan's relations with the United States, Iran, and with regional powers, Russia, and China.*

**Keywords:** Baluchistan insurgency, Taliban-led Afghan government, Regional Politics, Economic Effects, Dynamics of Foreign Relations

## Introduction

On April 15, 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, and the Fall of Kabul occurred. The battlemented President of Afghanistan (Ashraf Ghani) joined the evacuation of some of its citizens and foreigners which signaled that the longest and costly war of the United States, the superpower came to an end after two decades of Battle. Armed Taliban spread across the center and some of them entered the president's house and took control of the whole of Afghanistan. Taliban's Spokesperson told the media that soon they will arrange talks and announce an "open, inclusive Islamic government".<sup>1</sup> From the presidential palace Taliban announced to restoration of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan, and people from the United States embassy were evacuated through helicopters. Local Afghan people were worried and expecting the resumption of brutal and oppressive Afghan Taliban rule like the one in the 1990s in which there was violence, oppression, barbarism, and no rights for women at all. The tendency of fear could be seen on the faces of Afghan People who were rushing out of their homes.

On September 7, 2021, the Taliban's Spokesperson Muhammad Zabiullah Mujahid named the 33 members interim government of Afghanistan which will be led by Mohammad Hasan Akhund and Abdul Ghani Baradar be the deputy leader. The deputy leader will also be an acting interior minister and Zabiullah himself will work as acting deputy culture and information minister. According to him the members of other minority groups will also be included in the government. Zabiullah said, "All factions have been represented in the cabinet".<sup>2</sup>

Afghanistan is a multiethnic country, and most people have a tribal type of culture. The majority of people are Sunni and strictly practice Islam which is a major reason they always oppose any oppression or influence by the foreign powers. Afghanistan experienced several regimes of different leaders. Most of the time Afghan government was influenced by foreign

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<sup>1</sup>"The fall of Kabul marks the final chapter of America's longest war, which began after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks," *Dawn News*, (Karachi: August 16, 2021), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1640975>.

<sup>2</sup> Arif Hayat, "Taliban announce interim government; Mohammad Hasan Akhund to be PM, Baradar deputy PM." *Dawn News*, (Karachi: September 7, 2021), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1645047>.

powers and puppets of those powers. The strong affiliation of the population with religion opposed the foreign-influenced government. To avert the communist ideology, various rebellious groups emerged in-country resulting in the fall of the government, and major powers found a vacuum and intervened in Afghanistan to control the rebels but to date, no great power including the USSR and the United States, the sole superpower of the world couldn't achieve its objectives and Taliban who were overthrown in 2001, after twenty years they are back and the US has gone defeated by the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long porous border of 2430km named the Durand line but both countries don't share a delightful story of relations with each other. The story of Pakistan – Afghanistan relations got evils during the British period in the subcontinent. Pashtuns were divided into two areas during the British rule of the subcontinent one side belonged to Afghanistan and the other belonged to British India. The devils of colonial masters did end with their departure but even then, past grudges made Afghanistan reject the United Nations' membership of Pakistan when the negative vote was withdrawn from Afghanistan two months later Quaid-e-Azam called both countries "sister nations".<sup>3</sup>

Baluchistan is the biggest region of Pakistan consisting of nearly 44% of the state's land area and is the heaviest one in terms of natural reserves. According to the census of the year, 2017 the population of the province is 12.34 million.<sup>4</sup> Baluchistan provides an energy corridor to central Asia, and this makes it more strategically important for the power politics of international actors. But today, Baluchistan is the most underdeveloped and poverty-stricken province of Pakistan. For many years native people of Baluchistan numbered around eight million have been complaining of marginalization they claim that they are not getting their due rights and they complain that govt of Pakistan is not equally treating them and not doing work for their development as they are doing for other provinces of Pakistan like for Punjab or Sindh etc.

The Baluch rebels are now playing in the hands of those who want to destabilize Pakistan. The external influence is continuously aggravating the insurgency of Baluchistan. India has used the Afghan territory and is sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan and Indian involvement in their interests and aims were already explained above in this study. One can configure Afghanistan's involvement in Pakistan's affairs or their support to Baluch

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<sup>3</sup> Hanif Rahman, "Pak-Afghan relations: past and present," *Daily Times*, (Islamabad: July 4, 2019), <https://dailymail.co.uk/423362/pak-afghan-relations-past-and-present/>.

<sup>4</sup> Baluchistan. (April 5, 2018), available at: <https://unpo.org/members/8014>

insurgents mainly because of their past grievances and Pakistan's support to the United States to operate in Afghanistan against the terrorists. In the past, Many Pakistani civil and military leaders acknowledged Afghanistan's support to the separatist movements in Pakistan and terror attacks in the territory of Pakistan which were planned in the Afghan territory. The use of Afghan territory against Pakistan was a big threat to the national security of Pakistan and to Secure Pakistani Authorities had meetings with the Afghan Taliban the Taliban of Afghanistan now ensured Pakistan that Afghan soil will no longer be used against Pakistan, and this is a very important factor for Pakistan and Taliban's government have thoughtful effects on Pakistan as a whole.

One year has passed since the Taliban took control on August 15, 2021. Although there have been doubts about the Taliban's leadership before, the last year has established the mood and given an idea of how the Taliban intended to administer the nation. Even within the current interim system, the true test for the Taliban is not only obtaining power, but also legitimacy, acceptability, efficiency, and, of course, recognition. The organization has been interacting with the world community and regional governments individually as well as via Doha and aims recognition; current interaction does imply de facto recognition.

Pakistan officially supports the Taliban government; it is evident by the speech of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in which he said that Afghans shredded the chains of slavery. Pakistan favors the recognition of the inclusive Afghan government which will protect all human rights and hopes that the international community will recognize this new Afghan government because it going to be a different one from the previous Afghan Taliban government in which there were no human rights and women were most oppressed members of the society. Pakistan also believes that the recognizing new Afghan government will help the country to get rid of the humanitarian crisis. Taliban government in Afghanistan is very critical for Pakistan as any instability, regime change, or foreign influence has profound effects on Pakistan to shape its policies regarding Baluchistan and the ongoing project of China China-Pakistan economic corridor, Trade, and Foreign Relations of Pakistan.

### **Research Methodology**

The research is qualitative as qualitative data collection techniques have been used in it. The purpose of the research is to explore the link between Baluch insurgents, and the Afghan Taliban

The study finds out the effects of the Taliban government of Afghanistan on the overall security of Pakistan and explains the interference of external elements and their description of how they are aggravating the insurgency.

The audience of the research is applied as it answers many questions and will help to formulate further policies regarding national security, nation-building within a country, other separatist movements, and the country's relations with regional states.

### **Research questions**

1. Will the Taliban-led Afghan government increase the woes of Pakistan or favor the national interests of the country?
2. Are Baluch insurgents any links with the Afghan Taliban?
3. How external actors are aggravating the Baluch insurgency?
4. What are the impacts of the Taliban-led government of Afghanistan on the Baluch insurgency?

### **Literature review**

The article “Baluchistan unrest internal and external dimensions”<sup>5</sup> is written by three authors Muhammad Khurshid Khan, Asma Sana, and Afifa Kiran in the NDU journal 2012. The article is about the external and internal elements factors that are involved in the Baluchistan insurgency. The authors started with the political history of Baluchistan and described the Baluchistan political history before and after independence and then talked about the different waves of insurgency in Baluchistan in different regimes of Pakistan. The authors highlighted the different internal factors like the Sardari system, Corruption in Bureaucracy, and lack of law and order due to governmental issues involved in the insurgency along with various external factors. Developmental activities by the government and future recommendations for Baluchistan were also given in the article. In a nutshell, the authors beautifully analyze the insurgency of Baluchistan. This article explained the various external and internal factors which are involved in the Baluchistan insurgency some of which are critically important to be addressed and resolved.

The article “Afghanistan’s Long Ignored Second Front in Baluchistan”<sup>6</sup> is written by Adam Weinstein who is a veteran of the Marie Corps and worked in Afghanistan. He is also a policy associate at the National Iranian American Council and has also given to Foreign Policy, The Diplomate, and CNN, and regularly writes for the London School of Economics Middle East Centre and South Asia Centre Blogs. The article is about the link of the

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<sup>5</sup>Muhammad Khurshid Khan, Asma Sana, and Afifa Kiran, "Balochistan Unrest: Internal and External Dimensions," *NDU Journal* (2012), available at: <https://www.academia.edu/download/86580611/05-Balochistan-Unrest.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>Adam Weinstein, "Afghanistan’s Long Ignored Second Front in Baluchistan," (Atlantic Council, June 5, 2017) available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iran-source/afghanistan-s-long-ignored-second-front-in-balochistan/>.

United States war in Afghanistan with neighboring countries of Afghanistan. According to the author, the Afghan war is not only confined within Afghan borders, but it has likens with the Baluchistan insurgency of Pakistan and Iran. The author claimed that the Baluch insurgency has backing from India and there is huge narcotic smuggling between Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Iran and the Afghan Taliban has support from its bordering countries. In conclusion, the author beautifully sums up the way forward for the United States' war in Afghanistan, and according to him for peace and stability in Afghanistan; there must be a comprehensive solution inclusive of Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Iran, and Taliban.

### **Historical background**

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2430-kilometer-long border known as the Durand line. Both countries have a complicated history with one another. The history of Pakistan-Afghan ties has traces of the British time in the subcontinent when Pashtuns were separated into two territories during the British administration of the subcontinent, one belonging to Afghanistan and the other to British India.

Afghanistan has had an offensive policy toward Pakistan since its independence, and aside from the fact that they are dependent on Pakistan for the trade of their goods through Karachi port because Afghanistan is a landlocked country; they supported the initial uprising in Baluchistan and the Pashtunistan in North Waziristan, which is a mountainous area of Pakistan.

In the 1970s when the Soviet Union attacked Afghanistan Pakistan provided military as well as moral support to Afghanistan against the Soviet Union and sent trained mujahideen to help them fight against the Soviet Union. Pakistan also accepted many Afghan refugees who existed in Pakistan and many of them are now become Pakistani citizens and are government employees. In the Post-Afghan War period particularly the decade of the 1990s and 2000s Pakistan played a very important role in Afghanistan and Afghan affairs whether they were related to the Taliban, their grouping, or the creation of Islamic Taliban but still Pakistan couldn't resolve the issue of Pashtunistan.

In 2001 after the incident, 9/11 United States started the worldwide war against terrorism under the presidency of Bush in which Pakistan was only given the choice of either with or against the US and Pakistan chose the United States and fought against terrorists in Afghanistan. Pakistan provided its bases to the United States to operate in Afghanistan against terrorists from there this further ruined Pakistan-Afghanistan relations.

It's going since its independence Afghanistan has had territorial claims on Pakistan in Pashtun majority areas and both states are busy accusing each

other, of meddling in each other's internal affairs. Afghanistan provided its support to the uprising of Baluchistan which then turned into a separatist movement, and they also supported the Pashtun movement of Pashtunistan to destabilize the country.

Pakistani Many civil and military figures recognized Afghanistan's backing for separatist groups in Pakistan and terror operations planned in Afghan territory against Pakistani land. During a discussion with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in April 2015, then Army Chief General Raheel Sharif resolved to take action against Afghanistan, which is providing a haven for Baluch rebels.<sup>7</sup>

### **Insurgency in Baluchistan, the Afghan Taliban's Influence, and External Powers's Involvement**

#### **The strategic importance of Baluchistan**

Baluchistan has both geostrategic and geopolitical importance that is the reason because it plays a key role in the power politics of regional as well as international players. Baluchistan is the largest province of Pakistan consisting of 43.6 percent of the total area of the country.<sup>8</sup> It provides a substantial share of the natural gas supply for commercial and domestic use, comprising 200 coal mines that play a noteworthy role in the industrial phase. Senator Mir Kabeer Ahmed Muhammad Shahi while talking about the importance of Baluchistan to "Baluchistan Voice" described the status of Baluchistan as a central hub because it provides the junction between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Further Baluchistan is an entryway of the Persian Gulf, 180 nautical miles from the strait of Hormoz through which 20% of the total world oil passes by, and has the status of a major trade route of the world.<sup>9</sup>

As the politics over the seas are getting important because of trade and commerce the same as the regions which have seaports for trade purposes i.e., Baluchistan. It provides the best feasible and quickest route to the Arabian Sea, which fascinated the major international and regional actors, including China, India, the US, Iran, the Central Asian Republics (CARs),

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<sup>7</sup> Abdul Manan, "Insurgency in Baluchistan: Afghanistan to be urged to eliminate BLA sanctuaries," *The Express Tribune*, (April 16, 2015), available at: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/870714/insurgency-in-balochistan-afghanistan-to-be-urged-to-eliminate-bla-sanctuaries>.

<sup>8</sup>"About Consulate General: Baluchistan." Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Karachi, available at: [https://karachi.mid.ru/en/general-consulate/about\\_consulate\\_general/baluchistan/](https://karachi.mid.ru/en/general-consulate/about_consulate_general/baluchistan/).

<sup>9</sup>"Geopolitical and Strategic Importance of Baluchistan," (June 26, 2018), available at: <https://www.balochistanvoices.com/2018/06/geopolitical-and-strategic-importance-of-balochistan/>

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and Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Baluchistan is not only important due to its valued natural resources and other minerals, but it is in the South-west of Pakistan, near Iran and Afghanistan borders, the building of Gwadar port in the Arabian Sea has the prospect of fetching extraordinary progress in the region has increased its importance for Pakistan and in regional affairs.

The importance of the geostrategic location of Baluchistan can be determined by the incidence of Afghan War I when in 1839 the British made use of its passes to send an army into Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> The area also serves as a cross-country energy corridor for Central Asian states, Iran, and Qatar pipeline projects. The involvement of foreign actors in Baluchistan in all eras was also acknowledged by Ex-President General Pervez Musharraf in his era as well in his article on the press, he said

'They are a handful of tribal followers of the revolutionary Sardars and their descendants who live in distant countries and are protected by international agencies. These tribal followers, estimated to number 2,000 to 3,000, are divided into sixty "Ferrari camps" and are armed by foreign organizations.'<sup>12</sup>

### **Big powers interested in the region and the CPEC project**

China and Pakistan are all-weather-tested friends. On May 21, 1951, China and Pakistan began official ambassadorial relations. Pakistan was one of the earliest nations to accept China. China has a deep interest in Pakistan's province Baluchistan which is why it has invested a lot in the southwest deep-water port in Baluchistan.<sup>13</sup> China has long-term planning for investment in Baluchistan including constructing a deep-water port at Gwadar on the Arabian Sea to give it entry to Gulf oil resources<sup>14</sup>. The Chinese interests in Baluchistan and particularly Gwadar port were explained by Maha Atal, a writer on political economy and foreign affairs. She said "The Gwadar-Quetta highway will act as a pipeline for China. An

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<sup>10</sup> Ali Zaman Shah, "Geopolitical Significance of Baluchistan: Interplay of Foreign Actors," (Islamabad: Institute Of Strategic Studies, 2017), available at: <http://issi.org.pk/geopolitical-significance-of-balochistan-interplay-of-foreign-actors/>.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Willasey, *Baluchistan: all sides may lose*, (Gateway House, 2016), available at: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/balochistan-sides-may-lose/>

<sup>12</sup> Pervez, "Understanding Baluchistan," (March 14, 2012), available at: <https://presidentmusharraf.wordpress.com/2012/03/14/musharraf-understanding-balochistan-2012/>

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Wasama Khalid, "Gwadar Port and CPEC: Transforming Baluchistan's Economy for Future Generations," *The Geopolitics*, (May 14, 2023) available at: <https://thegeopolitics.com/gwadar-port-and-cpec-transforming-baluchistans-economy-for-future-generations/>.

<sup>14</sup> MacDonald, "Is Baluchistan more strategically significant than Afghanistan?," (2010).

investor in the Sendek copper mine, Metallurgical Corp of China, is attempting to take over Barrick's Reko Diq site.”<sup>15</sup>

Considering that China and the US are competitors in the global game and peace in Baluchistan is favorable for CPEC which will boost the economy of Pakistan and China which is annoying for the US so that the US along with India backing the militants in Baluchistan and aggravating the unrest of Baluchistan. Gwadar development and China’s participation in the region’s politics is a challenge to US dominance in the South Asian region in the current scenario. In the year 2012, U.S. Congressman Dana Rohrabacher presented a motion that requested the United States to encourage Baloch separatists as freedom fighters<sup>16</sup>. The motion was scheduled, but if the United States ever does choose to engage itself in the dispute of Baluchistan that will be a direct threat to the Chinese interest and China’s strategic interests will be at risk.<sup>17</sup>

This is obvious that in an attempt to counter China in the South Asian region, the US provides funds, and equipment as well as trains the militants of Baluchistan and that makes China an indirect factor in the aggravation of unrest in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan. The attack on the Pakistan stock exchange (PSX) in 2020 was unmistakable evidence of Indian and US desires to halt Chinese investment in Pakistan’s province of Baluchistan as the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) accepted the responsibility of the attack on PSX and Pakistani officials claimed that this attack was planned by Pakistan’s enemy India and was too threatened the investors in Pakistan may make them feel that Pakistan is not a safe place. Their main target was halting the Chinese investment in Baluchistan as many previous attacks by Baluch insurgents were planned to threaten the investors of Pakistan, including the attack on a luxurious hotel<sup>18</sup>.

China to protect and promote its investment in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Baluchistan developing good and cordial relations with the Afghan Taliban. Before the Fall of Kabul when the Afghan Taliban were

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<sup>15</sup> Maha, *China's Pakistan Corridor*, (April 30, 2010), available at: <https://www.forbes.com/global/2010/0510/companies-pakistan-oil-gas-balochistan-china-pak-corridor.html?sh=2c77259430f1>

<sup>16</sup> Conan, “*A strategic seaport is Pakistan key to China’s energy supremacy?*”, (March 13, 2015), available at: <http://chinawatchcanada.blogspot.com/2015/03/a-strategic-seaport-is-pakistan-key-to.html>

<sup>17</sup> Conan, “*A strategic seaport is Pakistan key to China’s energy supremacy?*”, (March 13, 2015), available at: <http://chinawatchcanada.blogspot.com/2015/03/a-strategic-seaport-is-pakistan-key-to.html>

<sup>18</sup> Asad, “Pakistan: 4 killed in attack on Karachi stock exchange,” *Al Jazeera*, (June 29, 2020), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2020/6/29/pakistan-4-killed-in-attack-on-karachi-stock-exchange>

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taking control of many of the provincial capitals, China welcomed 9 members delegation of the Afghan Taliban headed by Mullah Baradar Akhund and they met the Chinese Foreign minister on 27 July 2021<sup>19</sup>. As said by Taliban spokesperson Muhammad Naeem in talks Taliban assures China that Afghan land will not be used against any other state and China commits not to interfere in Afghanistan's affairs but rather will help to solve problems<sup>20</sup>.

Recently after the Taliban takeover of the Afghanistan government, an official Abdul Salam Hanifi from the Taliban met the Chinese ambassador to Kabul to discuss the bilateral issues and a Taliban spokesperson said the Chinese ambassador promised humanitarian aid to the Afghan Taliban<sup>21</sup>. According to Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid Afghan Taliban hopes the cooperate with China in economics, trade, infrastructure construction, and gas pipeline projects<sup>22</sup>. These incidents are evident that China is leading in its policy protecting its investment in CPEC.

This will have an immense impact on Pakistan in terms of development in the China-Pakistan project and the trade will increase through Gwadar port. The international community is concerned that the Power vacuum left by the United States in Afghanistan will be filled by China as a major power China is a friend having huge investments in Pakistan will ultimately put Pakistan at privilege in international as well as in regional politics.

The relations between Pakistan and the United States of America (USA) are like a Yoyo toy which has its up-and-down oscillations and in US-Pakistan relations, these up-and-down oscillations depend upon the interests of the United States. The incident of September 11 changed the nature of Pakistan-United States relations at 180- degrees. In the War against terrorism launched by President Bush of the United States, Pakistan was given the choice of either with us or against us, and as a result, Pakistan again chose the United States in its war against terrorism. Pakistan provided military bases to the US to operate from its territory against the terrorists in Afghanistan.

When it comes to the province of Baluchistan of Pakistan, the United States has always shown a keen interest in it mainly because of the strategic

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<sup>19</sup> "Taliban team meets Chinese officials to allay concerns;" *Dawn News*, (Karachi: July 2021), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1637521>

<sup>20</sup>"Taliban team meets Chinese Officials to allay concerns;" *Dawn News* (Karachi: July, 2021), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1637521>

<sup>21</sup> "Taliban Leader Meets Chinese Envoy in Kabul, Discusses Bilateral Issues: Report, " *NDTV* (September 6, 2021), available at: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/taliban-leader-meets-chinese-envoy-in-kabul-discusses-bilateral-issues-report-2532024>.

<sup>22</sup> "Taliban team meets Chinese officials to allay concerns;" *Dawn News*, (Karachi: July, 2021), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1637521>

importance of Baluchistan. The interest of the US in Baluchistan could be evidenced by the project of “Greater Baluchistan” which was initiated in the Bush Era<sup>23</sup>. The “Greater Baluchistan” means All Baluch majority areas of Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan formed an independent state. In recent history, many such events and statements of US leaders and officials are evidence of US interest in Baluchistan. In June 2006 an article by Ralph Peters named “Blood Borders” published in the Armed Forces Journal supported the idea of an independent Baluchistan dubbed as ‘Free Baluchistan’ and the map of free Baluchistan was also included in that article<sup>24</sup>. There are many reasons why Pakistan’s province Baluchistan is of most strategic importance to the United States for example first during the War on Terror Pakistan supported the United States and provided them their land and bases in Baluchistan from where they could operate against the Taliban reside in Afghanistan because it was easy for the united states as from Baluchistan Pakistan has shared border with Afghanistan and in the same purpose, the US could create hold in that areas and fight the ongoing war of Afghanistan. All these shreds of evidence substantiate the claim that unstable Baluchistan suits the United States.

As above evidence confirms the US interests in Baluchistan because the United States used these areas to operate against the Taliban and to fight its war in Afghanistan in the past. Like in the past, the United States will need Pakistani ground and airspace to operate in Afghanistan. America still needed access to operate in Afghanistan and for this, retired Army Gen. Joseph Votel, who has vast knowledge said, "Gain access to Pakistani airspace is the highly operational advantageous approach for successful over-the-horizon counter-terrorism operations,"<sup>25</sup>. Pakistani airspace is the nearest for the United States to access because it was confirmed by the pilots who were in previous operations that it took 4 hours to reach the country from the nearest base of Qatar and further time consumed for refueling, operating, and return<sup>26</sup>.and for such situations, Votel said ‘Even with an effective over-the-horizon approach’, he said, ‘we would still need good allies on the land assisting us’<sup>27</sup> while emphasizing the importance of Pakistan for the United States.

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<sup>23</sup> Zaheer Ul Hasan, “US Meddling in Baluchistan Exposed,” (February 13, 2012), available at: <https://defence.pk/pdf/thread/us-meddling-in-balochistan-exposed-by-zaheerul-hassan.158735/>.

<sup>24</sup> Peters, “Blood Borders,” *Armed Forces Journal*, (2006)

<sup>25</sup>Paul, “Frosty U.S.-Pakistan Relations Complicate Efforts to Keep Terror at Bay in Taliban’s Afghanistan,” *US NEWS*, (August 20, 2021), available at: <https://www.usnews.com/news/world-report/articles/2021-08-20/frosty-us-pakistan-relations-complicate-efforts-to-keep-terror-at-bay-in-talibans-afghanistan>.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

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Ryan Crocker in the New York Times stated that disengaging Pakistan was the mistake of the United States in 1990 and it would be a reputation if it moved away from Pakistan. According to him, they needed Pakistan to deal with the threat from the Taliban in Afghanistan as he said, 'We need to be involved with Pakistan on ways to evaluate and deal with this increased threat'.<sup>28</sup> The opinions of experts show that Pakistan and Baluchistan province are important for the United States after its withdrawal and the Taliban government in Afghanistan. To have checked in the region, to counter China, and leave no space or power gap for China Pakistan is the most important option for the United States, and from this, it could be conferred that the United States will continue to use Pakistan for its interests in South Asian region.

### **India's Role and Interests**

Pakistan and India share very complex and critical relations as they were always hostile because of past events and practices between them. The two countries are considered traditional enemies of each other. Historically it is a proven fact that India always interferes in the internal affairs of its neighboring countries and tries to aggravate those internal tensions to destabilize them, this is its entire agenda to create its regional hegemony in this region. India never wanted to see its neighboring countries developed and always engaged in creating instability in other countries that lie in its neighbor. Since its independence it has been involved in a confrontation with its neighbors as India fought a war with China in 1962, Three wars with Pakistan in 1948, 1965, and 1971, it was involved in the Sri Lankan conflict and backed the Tamil tigers of Sri Lanka to aggravate the civil war there and make them unstable.<sup>29</sup> These are Indian efforts to destroy regional peace. Like the disintegration of 1971, India is doing in Baluchistan to destabilize Pakistan. The arrest of Serving Indian Naval Officer Named Kulbhushan Yadav in March 2016, by Pakistani forces is undoubtedly evidence of Indian involvement.

There are many shreds of evidence that prove Indian-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan particularly their support to insurgents of Baluchistan by using Afghan soil. It is said that the Indian intelligence agency, Research Analysis Wing (RAW) is backing the insurgents of Baluchistan through the territory of Afghanistan, and the United States is also involved in this game the CIA

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<sup>28</sup> Hashim, "The US-Pakistan relationship in a new Afghanistan," *Atlantic Council*, (September 2 , 2021), available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/southasiasource/the-us-pakistan-relationship-in-a-new-afghanistan/>.

<sup>29</sup> John, "The Rebels In Sri Lanka Find Allies In India," *New York Times*, September 24,1995, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/24/world/the-rebels-in-sri-lanka-find-allies-in-india.html>

intelligence agency of US is providing its tacit support to its sister intelligence agency RAW to counter China in South Asian region.

Pakistan officially provided proof of RAW involvement in espionage and surveillance in Pakistan. In July 2009, Pakistan's foreign office provided India proof of their intelligence's involvement in backing terrorism in Pakistan. The proofs were given by the Prime Minister OF Pakistan at that time Mr. Yousuf Raza Gilani to his Indian counterpart Dr. Manmohan Singh during their meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt<sup>30</sup>. Although that information given to India was kept secret somehow the main points in that information related to the links of the Research Analysis Wing (RAW) with the people who were involved in the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan, the creation of safe houses by RAW in Afghanistan from where they train insurgents and provide them military weapons to operate in Pakistan further the pictures of meetings of Baluch insurgent leaders Bramdagh Bugti, Burhan and Sher Khan with Indian operatives were also included in those proofs given to India.<sup>31</sup>

In March 2016 a 'serving Indian sailing intelligence officer 'who was in work for RAW was caught by security forces of Pakistan near the Pakistan-Afghan border line region in the Chaman area of Baluchistan. That intelligence officer named Kulbhushan Yadav confessed in a video released by the Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) that he was there to support Baluchistan insurgents and create instability in Karachi, according to the reports he was captured red-handed while he was trying to enter Pakistan in the border area of Baluchistan.<sup>32</sup>

The above shreds of evidence prove Indian involvement in Baluchistan, and it is an obvious reason for Indian investment in Afghanistan. India put around 3\$ billion into Afghanistan including the construction of the Afghan parliament house, renovation of 19th century Stor Palace in Kabul, Salma Dam, and various projects of highways and buildings, and became the largest regional investor in Afghanistan<sup>33</sup>. To destabilize Pakistan India was increasing its investment under the Western-backed government of Ashraf

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<sup>30</sup> "Proof of RAW involvement in terror acts given to India," *Dawn News*, (July 22, 2009), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/849730/proof-of-raw-involvement-in-terror-acts-given-to-india>.

<sup>31</sup> "Proof of RAW involvement in terror acts given to India," *Dawn News*, (Karachi: July 22, 2009), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/849730/proof-of-raw-involvement-in-terror-acts-given-to-india>

<sup>32</sup>"Transcript of RAW agent Kulbhushan's confessional statement," *Dawn News*, (March 13, 2016), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1248786>

<sup>33</sup> Anjani, "India's Investments in Afghanistan Led to a Diplomatic Dead End," (August 30, 2021), available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-08-29/will-india-s-infrastructure-investments-in-afghanistan-amount-toanything>.

Ghani to make strong grounds in Afghanistan but the Taliban take if Afghanistan is a major setback to India. Michael Kugelman author of Foreign Policy's weekly South Asia brief opined that India's reluctance to reach the Taliban on time and the hapless Afghan reconciliation process with deep Pakistani ties to the Afghan Taliban are two major factors against India<sup>34</sup>. Talking on Aljazeera Kugelman said The Taliban takeover delivers a body blow to India's strategic interests"<sup>35</sup>. If India is considered under the Taliban's Afghanistan it's a huge diplomatic loss for India because Afghanistan Taliban has good ties with Pakistan and in his talk, the Taliban spokesperson said that they will establish good diplomatic ties and foreign relations with Pakistan, China, and Russia. Afghan Taliban intended to raise voice for the Kashmiri Muslims in Indian-occupied Kashmir. In a talk to BBC Taliban Spokesperson Suhail Shaheen stated, 'As Muslims, we have the right to speak up for Muslims in Kashmir, India, or any other country'.<sup>36</sup>

### **Effects of Taliban's Afghanistan on the internal security of Pakistan**

The national integration and internal security of Pakistan have been a great debate among political analysts from the day when the Taliban took over the Afghanistan and western-backed regime of Ashraf Ghani surrendered to the Taliban after the withdrawal of United States troops from the country. This part of the study examines the convincible effects of the Taliban government of Afghanistan on Pakistan.

#### **The threat of terrorism in Pakistan:**

Pakistan is one of the big countries affected by terrorism and many heart-wrenching incidents of terrorism occurred in Pakistan including the attack on an APS school in Peshawar in 2014 in which 150 people were killed including 134 school children<sup>37</sup>. Earlier there was a debate that the Taliban rise in Afghanistan could aggravate the terrorism in Pakistan and can harbor the groups like Tehreek-I-Taliban (TTP) the group who committed the Peshawar APS school attack. Tehreek-I-Taliban (TTP) is an Islamist militant group and is dominated by Pashtun ethnicity. After the 2014 incident,

<sup>34</sup> Bilal, "Taliban takeover a 'body blow' to Indian interests in Afghanistan," *Al Jazeera*, (August 29, 2021), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/29/what-does-the-talibans-takeover-of-afghanistan-mean-for-india>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Vineet, "Afghanistan: Taliban says it will 'raise voice for Kashmir Muslims'," *BBC*, (September 3, 2021), available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-58419719>.

<sup>37</sup> Robert. "Peshawar school massacre," *Britannica*, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Peshawar-school-massacre>

Pakistan launched a counter-insurgency operation against these factions and won it. In the past few years, TTP has again gained strength and collaborated with similar aiming groups and accepted the responsibility of attack on the luxurious hotel of Quetta where the Chinese ambassador was residing and was their target but fortunately, he was not there at that time. TTP is the militant group that congratulated the Afghan Taliban over their victory because they have a similar almost same ideology to that of the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan was concerned that the Taliban victory in Afghanistan could give confidence to TPP that political violence could work to archive the interests group is banned by the United Nations and in Pakistan, they are fighting with the Pakistan army and are against the government. For this reason, Pakistan is developing ties with the Afghan Taliban government with the aim of a Pakistani team led by a spy agency named Inter-Services Intelligence or ISI met the Afghan Taliban government. According to the news of Voice of America, Taliban spokesperson Muhammad Zabiullah Mujahid said that the Pakistan team expressed their concerns about the release of detainees who are involved in terrorist attacks in Pakistan and the Taliban assured Pakistan that no will be allowed to use Afghan soil against Pakistan<sup>38</sup>.

As the 15 of August 2022 marked the one year of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the detrimental impacts on Pakistan's security are already apparent in the form of an increase in terrorism. TTP's operations in Pakistan have multiplied since August 2021, with financing, recruiting, and attacks in locations other than ex-FATA. Furthermore, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province has been targeting within Pakistan, including an attack on a Shia Mosque in Peshawar in March 2022.<sup>39</sup> Pakistan saw 272 terrorist events, Between August 2021 and March 2022, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal.<sup>40</sup>

### **Extremist Parties and Their Influence**

Initially, there were fears that the Taliban's success in Afghanistan might inspire radical groups in Pakistan. Tehreek-I-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) is an Islamist extremist party and Khadim Hussain Rizvi(late) was the founder of TLP. In the year 2017, the party created a civil disturbance in different parts

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<sup>38</sup> Ayaz, "Afghan Taliban, Pakistan Discuss Anti-Terror Cooperation," *Voice of America*, (September 8, 2021), available at: <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/afghan-taliban-pakistan-discuss-anti-terror-cooperation>.

<sup>39</sup> Jibril, "At least 58 killed in suicide bombing at Shi'ite mosque in Pakistan," *Reuters*, (March 5, 2022), available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/mosque-blast-northwestern-pakistani-kills-five-wounds-dozens-police-2022-03-04/>.

<sup>40</sup> *South Asia Portal*, (2022), available at: <https://www.satp.org/terrorist-groups/pakistan>.

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of the country against the orders of the Supreme Court to release Asia Bibi who was sentenced to death on the charges of blasphemy and opposed the changes in blasphemy law which resulted in the resignation of Minister of law, Zahid Hamid. In April 2021 when Muslims all over the world were protesting French President Emmanuel Macron because he defended the display of blasphemous cartoons, Khadim Hussain Rizvi took the lead in Pakistan and committed violence in his own country, and on April 15, 2021, TLP was banned due to civil disobedience and violence.

It's an emerging party within the country and elections of 2018 TLP became the 3rd largest party the Taliban government in Afghanistan can motivate the ideology of such parties within the country which is a non-traditional security threat to Pakistan. In December 2021, TLP supporters lynched a Sri Lankan factory supervisor in Sialkot on blasphemy charges<sup>41</sup>. Furthermore, the political legitimacy of the TLP will also have long-lasting adverse effects, such as reducing the space available for already marginalized religious minorities, undermining Pakistan's efforts to highlight the spreading religious intolerance in its neighbor India, and further solidifying Pakistan's reputation as a state that is intolerant of all religions. The development of "religious extremist" political groups like the newly unbanned Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and the Jamaat Ulema-i-Islam, according to former information minister Fawad Chaudhry, will eventually be detrimental to the nation.<sup>42</sup>

## **Impacts on Pakistan's Economy Due to the situation in Afghanistan**

### **Pakistan's Precarious Economic Situation**

Even in its early years, Pakistan was not an impoverished country, and its economy has never been as weak as it is now. Pakistan's continuous reliance on foreign economic help has damaged its economic framework, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic problem. The rising inflation and a large fiscal deficit have increased the import bill, threatening the country's balance of payments. The currency has reached an all-time low, and overseas reserves have shrunk to barely two months' worth of imports. In such conditions, the economy, of Pakistan cannot afford any other pressure.

Pakistan's economic conditions necessitate peace and stability in its neighboring nation, Afghanistan, because any turbulence in Afghanistan will

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<sup>41</sup>"Sri Lankan factory manager lynched and set on fire in Pakistan," *AlJazeera*, (December 3, 2021), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/3/sri-lankan-factory-manager-lynched-and-set-on-fire-in-pakistan>.

<sup>42</sup>'Rise of 'extremist' parties like JUI-F, TLP will harm Pakistan: Fawad," *Dawn News*, (December 21, 2021), available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1665041>.

be felt on Pakistani borders. Pakistan already faced economic issues due to the influx of Afghan refugees, according to UNHCR Pakistan hosts more than 1.4 million recorded Afghans<sup>43</sup>. In the wake of the Taliban's takeover of neighboring Afghanistan in August 2021, more than 300,000 Afghans took refuge in Pakistan<sup>44</sup> and it has a significant impact on Pakistan's already shaky economy.

A stable and developing Afghanistan will improve the economies of its neighboring countries like Pakistan. In economic concerns, Pakistan, China, Iran, and Russia may help the reconstruction of Afghanistan which will promote their economies as well. According to economist Shahid Hassan Siddique, 'Afghanistan's long-term stability and economic prosperity will benefit Pakistan and its economic activity'.<sup>45</sup> Pakistan has continued to import fertilizers through Gwadar port to Afghanistan despite the political change in the country. The development of Friendly diplomatic relations between Afghanistan with Pakistan and its friend China can facilitate Afghanistan, despite the landlocked nature of the country through trade under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Afghanistan will have access to Gwadar port for trade of goods this will open a new way of revenue generation for Pakistan through the Gwadar port and will develop Pakistan's economy<sup>46</sup>.

### **Pakistan's Reputation in the International Community**

Pakistan's unilateral decision to recognize and support to Taliban government in Afghanistan is critical for foreign relations of Pakistan. Pakistan is hoping for the acceptance of the Afghan Taliban government by the international community because this time Taliban are more advanced, and they assured that there will be no violations of any member of the social community including women.

However, this stance exposes Pakistan to possible diplomatic and economic vulnerabilities, particularly if the Taliban fails to respect human rights and interact inclusively with the global community. If any form of violence or violations of human rights and women's rights were to arise in Afghanistan under the Taliban government, then Pakistan's standing in the international

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<sup>43</sup>"Pakistan," (UNHCR, 2022), available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/pakistan.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Ayaz, "More Than 300,000 Afghans Flee to Pakistan since Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan," *Voice of America*, (December 16, 2021), available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/more-than-300-000-afghans-flee-to-pakistan-since-taliban-takeover-of-afghanistan-/6357777.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Salman, "Afghan situation and Pakistan's economy," *The Express Tribune*, (August 21, 2021), available at: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2316747/afghan-situation-and-pakistans-economy>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

community could be compromised, potentially resulting in sanctions from major powers and nations such as the G7.

To mitigate risks to its international reputation due to the Taliban's governance in Afghanistan, Pakistan must adopt a comprehensive preemptive strategy. This strategy should focus on diplomatic engagement, utilizing Pakistan's influence to ensure the Taliban adhere to international human rights norms and maintain open communications with global stakeholders.

Crucial components include starting frequent discussions with the Taliban to emphasize the value of inclusive governance and human rights, working with regional and international partners to develop a unified strategy for Afghanistan, setting up accountability and transparency monitoring systems for human rights, and encouraging economic cooperation subject to the Taliban's commitment to progressive governance. Through these efforts, Pakistan aims to maintain a balance in its diplomatic ties with Afghanistan while promoting stability and respect for human rights there.

## **Conclusion**

The Taliban government of Afghanistan has an amalgamation of results for Pakistan. From an optimistic point of view, Pakistan will benefit from the Taliban government of Afghanistan shortly. China is developing good ties with the Afghan Taliban, coming with investments of billions of dollars, providing humanitarian aid to the Taliban, and involving Afghanistan in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This will put Pakistan and its economy at an advantage as the trade from Gwadar port will be increased.

In political concerns the Taliban government of Afghanistan increased the importance of Pakistan in the region as Pakistan shared a long border with Afghanistan, cooperation and friendly ties of the Taliban with China, Pakistan, and Russia changed the regional dynamics and reduced the influence of the United States in the region. Stable Afghanistan is a major blow to Pakistan's traditional enemy, India who was using the unstable territory of Afghanistan against Pakistan to increase terrorism within the country and to aggravate the Baluchistan insurgency, to destabilize Pakistan. the United States ' withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan and the Taliban government once again make Pakistan an important strategic state in South Asia which will be needed as an ally by the United States to have hold and check in this region. The Taliban regime also raises concerns for Pakistan's national cohesion and security by fostering other extremist and terrorist organizations within the country and offering safe havens for them like past. For this reason, Pakistan had high-level official meetings with the Taliban. The Taliban officials ensured that their soil would not be used against any other state

The support and recognition of the Taliban government by Pakistan will not only shape regional politics but will reshape the foreign relations of Pakistan, as Iran was criticizing Pakistan for supporting the Taliban after the Taliban takeover of Panjshir Valley. But in the past few years Iran has realized that working with the Taliban more favors its interests than supporting anti-Taliban factions. Iran very carefully welcomed the new Taliban regime in Afghanistan. This approach of Iran coincides with Pakistan's policy of supporting the Afghan Taliban<sup>47</sup>. The recent development of relations between both countries was visible when former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan met Iranian Head H.E Ebrahim Raisi at Dushanbe on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and both leaders discussed the Afghanistan Issue and Prime Minister Imran Khan emphasized that peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in his country's interest.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Umair, "Iran and Pakistan: Bilateral Bonding Over the Taliban," *The Diplomat*, (September 28, 2021), available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/bilateral-bonding-over-the-taliban/>.

<sup>48</sup> "Pakistan, Iran leaders discuss Afghanistan in Dushanbe meeting," *Khaleej Times* (September 17, 2021), available at: <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/world/rest-of-asia/pakistan-iran-leaders-discuss-afghanistan-in-dushanbe-meeting>

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