

**Taliban, Durand Line and Refugees:
The Afghan-Pakistan Border Region under Stress
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Contested Border: Pakhtunistan – Tribalistan – Talibanistan

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Contested Border: Pakhtunistan – Tribalistan – Talibanistan

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Abstract: The intention of this opening paper is to frame this session on the political significance of the Afghan-Pakistan border region. This paper aims to provide a brief overview about historical trajectories of this border region, where the state never achieved the full implementation of a monopoly of force.

While this border region gained global significance since the terrorists' attacks of 9/11, however, it is a shortcoming to view the high political significance of this region solely through the lens of the 'war on terror'. Much more the complex web of conflicts has to be taken into consideration to understand this border area. First, the ideological contestation between militant Islamists and the West ('Talibanistan') is here to mention, which only dates back to the last decade – even if this confrontation has its roots in the beginning of the Afghan Wars in 1979. Second, this region is coined by the longstanding conflict between 'tribe' and 'state' ('Tribalistan'), which is dealt with in different ways in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the past. Third, the situation along the border is tinged by the unsolved ethno-nationalist conflict between Islamabad and Kabul on the Pakhtunistan issue – the question, whether the North West Frontier Province belongs to Pakistan or to Afghanistan. To understand the logic of behaviour not only of the local elites and movements, but also of the national and international actors and organisations these three overlaying dimensions of conflict have to be taken into consideration.

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Changing and Contested American Perceptions of the Role of the Taliban in the War in Afghanistan: Reevaluation or Continuity from Bush to Obama?

Theodore P. Wright, Jr.

Abstract: There was an almost total lack of knowledge, even awareness, of Afghanistan in the United States in 1980 when the Afghan civil war began between the Pakistan-supported Mujahidin and the Soviet-supported Communist government in Kabul. There were said to be only six academic experts on that country and two of them died shortly thereafter. The US government, still stinging from its defeat in Vietnam, regarded the war in purely Cold War terms as an opportunity for revenge on the USSR. Historically, it was inadvertently, as in the Middle East, stepping into the shoes of the British who had fought three unsuccessful wars against Afghanistan between 1838 and 1919. This was shown when the civil war ended, incredibly, in the victory of the Mujahidin and the withdrawal of the Red Army which played a part in the collapse of the Soviet Union soon after and the senior President Bush abandoned Afghanistan to its fate. Pakistan, which had a continuing vital interest in its unruly neighbor because of the doctrine of "strategic depth" vis-a-vis India, created through the agency of its intelligence services, the Taliban out of madrassa students in Afghan refugee camps. In 1996, this fundamentalist movement achieved a surprising victory over the warring Mujahidin factions and took Kabul and most of the rest of the country. During its five years of rule the Taliban regime was never

recognized diplomatically by any government but Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and some Gulf emirates. American non-recognition was more the product of domestic political pressures, including the feminist organization, than of rational analysis. Early in its rule, the Taliban gave refuge to the obscure al Qaeda organization from Saudi Arabia which was becoming a declared foe of the United States and instigated terrorist attacks on US embassies in East Africa and a US warship in Yemen. No serious effort to get the Taliban to deport Osama Bin Laden and his followers such as had been successful in his previous refuge in Sudan was undertaken either by the USA or Pakistan. Therefore in the aftermath of the "9-11-01" attack on New York and Washington, the Bush Jr administration launched an overwhelming air attack on the largely Pushtun Taliban forces, in alliance with the "Northern Alliance" of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras who had hung on to the northernmost parts of the country. The Bush administration failed to track down al Qaeda and Mulla Omar of the Taliban and was easily diverted by the "neocon" zionists to a contrived and illegal aggression against Iraq in violation of international law established by the Nurnburg trials after World War II. With all its attention focussed on Iraq, Washington failed to notice the reemergence of Pushtun groups calling themselves Taliban in southern Afghanistan. The American election of 2008 produced victory for a Democratic candidate committed to withdrawal from Iraq "so as to concentrate on the real war in Afghanistan". This has caused a split with his followers on the Left and Peace groups as well as a few "realists"(eg. George Will and Selig Harrison), both civilian and military who regard an enlarged American participation in the continuing ethnic civil war as counterproductive and not worth the cost. It is here that the paper will analyze the debate, as far as it can be discerned from public sources, over what policy to pursue in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with its nuclear weapons. Is the old typology of "realist" vs. "idealist" adequate? Is "moderate Taliban" an oxymoron? Is diplomacy possible with religious fundamentalists?

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Walking the Line – Peacebuilding in the AfPak border region

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The complexities of the Afghan conflict are obvious. Politically it has unfortunately been framed in a simplistic rendition of two sides: The Coalition and Government vs. the Taliban insurgency. This version of reality actively denies the multiple levels, drives and aims of a diverse insurgency that has gained momentum and increasing spread.

Nowhere is the complexity of the conflict more pressing than in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Durand line as an international border influences strategy to a very large extent while it is being contested in Afghanistan and ignored by the people divided by it. Multiple interest formations based on religious ideology, local politics, land-based conflicts, smuggling routes, and more has established a conflict nexus with multiple internal dynamics. While influenced by and connected to politics on both sides of the line, it has also generated an internal conflict logic that needs to be addressed separate from the umbrella conflict of government vs. Taliban. While the larger conflict feeds into and uses the local, the local conflicts equally use the larger conflict to pursue its own strategies of gain or plain survival. The current government vs. Taliban conflict exists in an environment where the situational logic encourages opportunistic rather than long-term strategies and where traditional patterns of solidarity and control are weak and replaced by force and coercion.

This paper asks and addresses a number of questions of outmost importance in relation to this type of conflict environment. The position is that these questions have not been addressed sufficiently by the international community or that the answers are stubbornly answered in a pre-defined ideological terminology of state centric liberal democratic reform and market economy.

The argument is informed by field research undertaken in Afghanistan and Somaliland during 2009 for the researcher's PhD thesis and insights gained there. The five questions briefly address issues concerning cross-border sub-state solidarity groups, legitimacy, accountability, situational logics, and strategy coherence. These discussions sample the PhD thesis and are intended to provide an alternative perspective rather than a comprehensive solution, thus laying the ground for further discussion from a widened perspective.

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Transnational Security Governance: Afghan-Pakistan Border Region and beyond

Boris Wilke

Abstract: The politics of violence in the Afghan-Pakistan border region and the global security threats that (supposedly) emanate from it have come under scrutiny in recent years. Most studies draw upon concepts like state failure or state building, and their main purpose is to understand why international efforts to end the civil war in Afghanistan have failed. Pakistani state and non-state actors are mainly seen as external players or spoilers.

Although from a practitioners' perspective, it may be accurate to focus on the so-called Afghan-Pakistan connection from a "state building in Afghanistan" perspective, it is not sufficient from a theoretical point of view. By ignoring the larger (South Asian) picture, taxonomies of Islamist nonstate agents and their governmental patrons fail to acknowledge the character of social processes: *Both* sides of the border have seen tremendous social change over the last years – partly spontaneously, and partly as a by-product of the Afghan conflict. Political change is most palpable in the spheres of political authority, control of violence, and dispensation of justice: Traditional authorities have been undermined, new charismatic leaders have risen (and some have already fallen), and the overall balance of religious and non-religious institutions is in a flux. What is more: These processes do not occur in a political vacuum. State-actors are not passive bystanders, nor are they "pulling the strings" from behind. The relationship between formal political authority and factual political control has always been complex in this region, and it is by no means clear to what extent current developments differ from the past.

In this paper, the politics of violence in the Afghan-Pakistan region will be put into the historical perspective of the British *viceregal state* and its attempts to establish political control by means of *divide and rule* (e. g. FCR) and *indirect rule* (e. g. political agents). Against this backdrop, recent political developments will be analyzed: the transformation of statehood, the transnationalization of governance, and the securitization of (erstwhile) local control of violence. Special emphasis will be put on the Pakistani state's attempts to adapt to new security challenges. Some of these are restricted to FATA (collaboration with U.S. forces, FATA development plan) others have a wider

focus (NADRA and PICIS regimes). As a result, it emerges a clearer and more realistic picture of a particular state apparatus and its policies in an (only to some extent) “ungoverned territory”.

The paper draws upon empirical research undertaken under the auspices of the Research Center (SFB) “Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood”, funded by German Research Foundation (DFG), at the Free University of Berlin, from 2006 to 2009.

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'Fencing of the Durand Line ---- Will it stop the Cross-Border Infiltration?'

Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah

One unique feature of the Durand Line is that unlike other International borders it is not clearly demarcated. Approximately 2600 kilometres in length, it separates the territories of Afghanistan and Pakistan but remained undefined at places because of the terrain and local conditions. That's being the main reason that the Talibans and al Qaeda found it vulnerable to cross it at their own will and at their own convenience. The tribes living at both sides of the Durand Line are Pashtoon, making it very easy target for these 'operators' to negotiate with them and convince to provide support to the militants, exploiting their traditional cultural values and love of Islam. This goes on both sides of the Durand Line, of course, much to the chagrin of both the Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Despite their numerical strength and latest advanced technology the US and its Allies, including the NATO forces, failed in stopping the cross-border movement of the militants. The Afghan authorities blamed Pakistan for secretly helping the al Qaeda and its sympathizers of crossing the frontier and attacking the Coalition Forces thus creating instability in Afghanistan. The Pakistan government blamed the Afghan authorities of helping the Pakistani Talibans against the Pakistani establishment, particularly in Swat, with the full connivance of India the traditional foe of Pakistan. While the blame game continues on both sides of the Durand Line, couple of years back, in the early months of 2007, the Pakistan government floated the idea of fencing the frontier. They see it as an effective tool to stop al Qaeda and their sympathizers to infiltrate the border and that this step would undoubtedly provide a boost to stop the illegal entries into the respective countries. They considered it as something which should be done immediately and were looking forward to the support of the Afghan authorities. Contrary to their expectations, the Afghan authorities criticised this act of the Pakistan government. Hamid Karzai, the Afghan President termed it as a conspiracy against the Pashtoons living on both sides of the frontier.

Pervez Musharraf, then Pakistan President, tried his best to convince the Americans that this being the best solution for stopping the cross-border infiltration of the insurgents. In February 2007 the Pakistan authorities started erecting barriers and were busy in fencing the border at selected places. Meanwhile, Mohammad Akram Khpalwak, the Governor of the Paktika Province accused Pakistan of seizure of the Afghan territory. It was soon followed by skirmishes between Pakistan and Afghan troops at Birmal in Paktika Province of Afghanistan. It was reported that the Afghan troops started tearing down of the fences erected by the Pakistani authorities which s provoked the Pakistani troops and they started firing upon the Afghan soldiers.

In the present study, after examining the background and circumstances which led to the decision of fencing the Durand Line, its practicality would be studied. By fencing the frontier at certain

selected points whether the government of Pakistan succeeded in getting the desired results or not would be discussed further. Moreover, the repercussions of the move would be analysed in detail. Both Afghan and Pakistan authorities are doing their utmost bets to stop the cross-border infiltration but still are keeping divergent opinion on fencing of the border. Why? This and other similar questions would also be discussed in detail.

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