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## Trust and Mistrust in the Pak-Afghan Relations: An Analysis of Bilateral Relations in the light of Prisoner Dilemma

### Abstract

The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been overshadowed by mutual mistrust and strategic rivalry, despite deep cultural ties and Pakistan hosting the world's largest Afghan refugee population. This study applies the Trust Theory and the Prisoner's Dilemma framework to analyze the persistent lack of cooperation between the two states. The research highlights how territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, geopolitical competition, and external interventions have fueled tensions. While both countries occasionally engage in strategic cooperation under international mediation, their interactions are largely shaped by self-interest, security concerns, and historical grievances. The study argues that economic incentives, diplomatic engagement, and institutional mechanisms could help break this cycle of mistrust. However, deep-rooted historical suspicions and external influences continue to hinder long-term cooperation. Economic interdependence and mutual security assurances are crucial for stabilizing Pak-Afghan relations and fostering regional peace.

**Keywords:** Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations, Prisoner's Dilemma, Geopolitical Rivalry, Border Security, Economic Cooperation, Diplomatic Engagement

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### Trust and Mistrust in the Pak-Afghan Relations: An Analysis of Bilateral Relations in the Light of Prisoner Dilemma

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## Abstract

The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been overshadowed by mutual mistrust and strategic rivalry, despite deep cultural ties and Pakistan hosting the world's largest Afghan refugee population. This study applies the Trust Theory and the Prisoner's Dilemma framework to analyze the persistent lack of cooperation between the two states. The research highlights how territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, geopolitical competition, and external interventions have fueled tensions. While both countries occasionally engage in strategic cooperation under international mediation, their interactions are largely shaped by self-interest, security concerns, and historical grievances. The study argues that economic incentives, diplomatic engagement, and institutional mechanisms could help break this cycle of mistrust. However, deep-rooted historical suspicions and external influences continue to hinder long-term cooperation. Economic interdependence and mutual security assurances are crucial for stabilizing Pak-Afghan relations and fostering regional peace.

## Keywords:

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations, Prisoner's Dilemma, Geopolitical Rivalry, Border Security, Economic Cooperation, Diplomatic Engagement

## Introduction

Following its independence from Britain in 1947, Pakistan inherited territorial disputes with Afghanistan and India. The conflicts over the Durand Line demarcation and Pashtunistan became guiding factors in Afghanistan's resentment toward Pakistan's membership of the

United Nations. Since then, relations have been more conflictual than cooperative. The Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan acts as the major route for many critical situations produced in this region. The tensions created based on boundary lines are also the aspects of this study because the foreign legacy laid the roots of disputes



by dividing the Pashtuns. Afghanistan's import and export strategies are discussed because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, and it is the only country that opposed Pakistan's inclusion into the UNO. The closing of borders at times played a role in increasing the tough situations between these countries. As a result, the interruptions in their national affairs were exhibited to create their influence.

Some officials of the Pakistan military were also martyred just because of suicide attacks and target killings by the terrorist groups having shelter in the tribal areas including KPK province as well. Pakistan took part in Afghan resistance movements against the Soviets as a frontline country. Then the nexus was created between the Pakistan military and the Sunni Islamist groups including the Pashtuns of Afghanistan. Pakistan got involved in the affairs of Afghanistan in the 1980s when the US and Saudi supported Afghan Mujahedeen straddling Pakistan fought against the Soviets. Then India's strategic depths were discussed in detail and the reaction of Pakistan towards Afghanistan has been mentioned as it made a healthy cut from a military point of view and halted support to Mujahedeen. In February 1989, the Soviet occupation was removed from Afghanistan and they got discouraged and made sure of their isolation. Then the Najibullah regime, destroyed in 1993, back by the Soviets giving proxy services is elaborated in this research.

After the 9/11 incident, many Afghans were made responsible but due to the permeable nature of the border, they escaped to the tribal areas and started their activities there which increased the insecurity in Pakistan as the terrorist activities, were created. Terrorist activities spread to KPK as it settled areas and bomb blasting also increased. Swat, Charsadha, Buner, and Mardan are the areas where terrorist activities were performed. Among these activities, the incident of Peshawar in the Army Public School was the major issue that shattered Pakistan.

The porous nature of the border damaged Pakistan a lot because of not accepting the Durand Line as an international boundary. The relationships between the tribal areas across the border and the mountain ranges are the reasons for insurgencies produced in this region and this situation is totally against the international

boundary assurance. This border has created many complications because every terrorist could cross the border easily and make a target of the country's peace anywhere.

## Literature Review

The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been historically characterized by deep-rooted mistrust, geopolitical competition, and security concerns. Despite sharing cultural, religious, and linguistic ties, the two nations have struggled to establish long-term cooperative relations due to territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, and external interventions (Ganguly & Howenstein, 2009). Scholars have long attempted to understand the dynamics of mistrust and conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan through various theoretical frameworks, including realism, security dilemma theory, and game theory (Waltz, 2010; Jervis, 2006). This literature review explores existing scholarship on the Pak-Afghan bilateral relationship, analyzing the factors that contribute to their adversarial ties while also identifying potential avenues for cooperation.

## Historical Context and Territorial Disputes

One of the primary causes of friction between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the Durand Line dispute, a border drawn by the British Empire in 1893. Afghanistan has historically refused to recognize this boundary as an international border, arguing that it was imposed upon them without their consent (Omran & Ledwidge, 2009). Meanwhile, Pakistan maintains that the Durand Line is a settled issue, referencing historical agreements signed by Afghan leaders (Qassem & Durand, 1994). The lack of formal recognition of this border has led to repeated diplomatic tensions and security challenges, as insurgent groups frequently move across the porous border, exacerbating instability in both countries (Mousavi, 2018). Several scholars argue that the unresolved Durand Line dispute has fueled mutual suspicion, with Afghanistan accusing Pakistan of harboring ulterior motives in its foreign policy. Afghanistan has often claimed that Pakistan supports Islamist insurgencies to exert influence over its domestic politics (Pant, 2010). Conversely, Pakistan has accused Afghanistan of providing sanctuary to anti-Pakistani militants, particularly those involved in

separatist movements in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Omran, 2009). These unresolved territorial issues have significantly shaped the security policies of both states, making cooperation difficult (Brewster, 2015).

### **Geopolitical Rivalry and External Influence**

The geopolitical significance of Pakistan and Afghanistan has made their bilateral relations subject to the influence of major global powers, particularly the United States, China, Russia, and India. During the Cold War, Pakistan and Afghanistan became pawns in the larger geopolitical struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union (Rais, 2019). Pakistan played a key role in supporting Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviet forces in the 1980s, receiving substantial military and economic assistance from the United States and Saudi Arabia (Weinbaum, 1991). However, after the Soviet withdrawal, the U.S. disengagement from the region created a power vacuum, leading to further instability and the eventual rise of the Taliban regime in the 1990s (Fair & Jones, 2009). In contemporary geopolitics, India's growing influence in Afghanistan has been a major concern for Pakistan. India has invested heavily in Afghanistan's infrastructure, education, and defense sectors, strengthening its diplomatic ties with Kabul (Ganguly & Howenstein, 2009). Pakistan perceives this as an attempt by India to encircle it strategically, which has led to increased Pakistani support for Afghan factions opposed to Indian influence (Bashir, 2010). This triangular rivalry among Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India has undermined trust-building measures, making bilateral cooperation difficult (Pant, 2010).

### **Security Dilemma and Cross-Border Terrorism**

A key factor contributing to mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the security dilemma, wherein both countries take measures to enhance their security but, in doing so, threaten each other's stability (Jervis, 2002). Afghanistan has long accused Pakistan of harboring the Taliban, providing safe havens for their leadership, and supporting cross-border insurgencies (Fearon, 2018). Pakistan, on the other hand, blames Afghanistan for failing to control anti-Pakistan militants, such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

(TTP), who frequently launch attacks from Afghan territory (Perveen et al., 2017). The post-9/11 era has further complicated this security dilemma, as the U.S.-led war on terror resulted in a military presence in Afghanistan, making Pakistan a frontline state in the conflict (Rubin & Rashid, 2008). The porous nature of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has allowed terrorist groups to exploit gaps in security, leading to cross-border attacks, suicide bombings, and militant infiltration (Brewster, 2015). The Peshawar Army Public School attack in 2014, which was carried out by TTP militants operating from Afghanistan, significantly damaged trust between the two countries and led Pakistan to launch Operation Zarb-e-Azb to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries (Fair & Jones, 2009).

### **Economic Interdependence and Cooperation Opportunities**

Despite ongoing tensions, economic cooperation remains a potential area for trust-building between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghanistan, being a landlocked country, relies heavily on Pakistan's seaports for trade, particularly through the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) (Kalim, 2016). Additionally, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) provides an opportunity for Afghanistan to integrate into regional trade networks, reducing its dependence on foreign aid (Iftikhar, 2016). Some scholars argue that economic interdependence could serve as a confidence-building measure, much like in post-war Europe, where economic cooperation helped overcome historical hostilities (Sperling & Webber, 2017). However, political instability and security concerns have hindered trade relations, with Pakistan frequently closing its border crossings due to security threats (Mousavi, 2018). While regional projects like TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline and CPEC-linked trade routes offer potential benefits, the lack of political will and security guarantees has prevented their full implementation (KHAN et al., 2009).

### **Prisoner's Dilemma and Theoretical Perspectives on Mistrust**

The Prisoner's Dilemma provides a theoretical framework for understanding the persistent mistrust in Pak-Afghan relations (Jervis, 2006). The theory suggests that states often fail to cooperate

because they fear being exploited by the other party. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan operate under a zero-sum mindset, where one state's gain is perceived as the other's loss (Paternotte, [2016](#)). Realist scholars like John Mearsheimer argue that mistrust is deeply embedded in state behavior, making long-term cooperation difficult (Toft, [2005](#)). However, defensive realists believe that trust can gradually develop through repeated interactions, confidence-building measures, and institutional agreements (Valeriano, [2009](#)). Research suggests that long-term economic and security cooperation, facilitated by third-party mediation (e.g., China, Russia, and the U.S.), could help reduce tensions and promote stability (Wu & Axelrod, [1995](#)).

### **Prisoner's Dilemma and Mistrust**

Doubts and mistrust are the main basics of this situation produced among the countries, especially Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mistrust is basically the thinking of the mind for another factor that it would get more from cooperation, for example, the condition of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union exhibited the same scenario and as a result, the focus was on offensive measures. If there is peace between the countries, then there will be consent between them. If one sees that the other has a hidden agenda and there is no willingness from this party to cooperate and resultantly conflict appears between them.

Hobbes, Thucydides, and Herz are the scholars among the people who have supported that the rebellious nature of world politics is due to mistrust, little cooperation among them, and lastly the situation of Prisoner's Dilemma has been produced (Harloe, [2012](#)). The Herz gave his opinions about the Dilemma of security which gives the thought of Thucydides and it is obvious that in this present world, there is no cooperation possible in reality. Then states become uncomfortable as they don't like to trust each other and think about the goals of others in a negative way. According to scholars, there are different situations for different scenarios which have produced mistrust. Thomas Hobs has mentioned in his analysis that human nature is aggressive, insecure, and selfish which is related to international relations and the same is true for states' nature as well line insecurity, selfishness,

and aggressiveness because Thomas has described them as an organismic entity. There is another reason for producing mistrust and uncertainty which is the military power, the geographical location, or the goals of the rival country these factors force the state to take hard policies to cover all the staff described above and its results sometimes are very catastrophic (Usman & Majeed Khan, [2017](#)).

Kenneth Waltz was a structural realist and he blamed the international system after the Cold War for producing disorder among countries. According to him, uncertainty is a shared phenomenon in the world the international system is anarchist and the chances of results are minimal (Waltz, 2010). On the other hand, a state is responsible for its own survival and no other factor or state is responsible for that, so it has to deal with it in a very efficient way. Waltz gave a new line of politics as it gave two concepts which are defensive and offensive on the basis of realism giving the concepts of trust or mistrust. Offensive realists are also called Hardcore realists and they have minds that mistrust has been deeply rooted in the states and which generated less cooperation and more chances of conflict between them. John Mearsheimer is on the side of hardcore realists as he says that if the trust is deceived then it becomes difficult to make trust again (Toft, [2005](#)). So, each state is responsible for its own existence and security. The outer factors are a great threat to the state and there is no institute which can retaliate against the powerful aggressors or to punish them. There is another belief of offensive realists that when the power becomes divided then this insecurity is generated with the certainty of mistrust (Valeriano, [2009](#)). These realists are in the right that the mistrust element is the foundation of international relations and then they maintain their power to maximum to remain strong against external factors. There is Jervis on the other side of the coin has said that mistrust is not static in its nature rather it is changeable and can be changed with time (Jervis, [2002](#)).

While on the other hand, some have maintained mistrust and produced conflicts among them generating a situation which is Security Dilemma (A. Collins, 2016). Softcore realists or you can call defensive realists believe that anarchic is responsible for not having the trust as well as cooperation and some type of uncertainties have

also been produced. However, it has been seen that cooperation can be made possible through trade systems.

### **Mistrust in Bilateral Relations and Prisoner's Dilemma**

There are doubts as well as mistrust in their relations which are causing a Prisoner's Dilemma and producing anarchy between them. Mistrust is basically the idea in the mind which describes that others will not cooperate and will get more advantage of it. As an example, take the mistrust between the US and the Soviets leading to the Cold War and as a result created offensive measures. When both actors don't give consent and think about the other's intentions as they would ignore it then only conflicts are produced. Take the example of Germany which appeared as a war proliferator and on whom it could not be trusted and tangled itself with the neighboring countries and situation got worse and led to World War II. European countries then managed to cooperate after World War II and reduced their mistrust. The level of interaction was increased to a level that was outstanding and gave birth to NATO and other organizations like the European Union, which increased cooperation by minimizing mistrust (Sperling & Webber, [2017](#)). Mistrust has the ability to hide cooperation as it causes between two characters. Scholars like Thucydides, John Herz, and Thomas Hobbes have stressed the nature of world politics which creates a Prisoner's Dilemma and mistrust as well. The points given by John Herz are somewhat like Thucydides on security concerns (Ghulam Qumber, Waseem Ishaque, [2018](#)).

John Herz is the man who used first time the word security dilemma and he also said that this world is growing more and more in power and attacked, or annihilated situations can be brought about. So, to avoid such attacks one is making oneself stronger and stronger so that it could be out of the other's impact. This situation will lead others to prepare for the worst actions. The world has become so dangerous that no one is feeling safe on earth as there is a completion of powers among the states and the brutal circling in the world of powers has been started which will produce mistrust only and other intentions are viewed as negative. John Mearsheimer says that the international system has all states suspicious about

each other and can attack each other therefore it is natural that states have doubts about other states and mistrust as well. He believes that states can't be 100% certain in their intentions. In addition to that, he said that in anarchy states can gain power at the expense of other states to survive. (Charles L. Glaser, Andrew H. Kydd, Mark L. Haas, [2016](#)).

### **Trust and Prisoner's Dilemma**

This situation has encouraged researchers to study trust. If the states are in doubt with one another then the interaction has been studied through game theory. Two factors would not cooperate if they wanted to and this was presented by Merrill Flood and the other one was Melvin Dresher in 1950 (Paternotte, [2016](#)). Later on, in the same year, the hypothetical prizes were combined in a story by Albert W. Tucker. The story is about two thieves who were put in different cells having no communication. Police interrogated both thieves one by one. Both are unaware of their intentions. Police gave them two opportunities either to tell the other thief's name for the crime and you will be free or accept the crime. Here a dilemma has been created. If they accept their offer, then they will be punished severely and then accept the crime because there is no evidence relating to that. So, they would do as to have less punishment. They cooperated with the police instead of defecting. If they had known each other's intentions, then they would come up with the best answer to this situation. If one actor gives evidence as proof of its dominant nature, then the other will receive more punishment. While there is another case, if both parties remain silent then both will be happier (Dennis, [2015](#)).

The relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been locked in a Prisoner's Dilemma situation and want to come out of it. They want to enhance their aims despite the concerns of others and to remain in the condition of zero summation. According to the rules of the Prisoner's Dilemma, both countries have only two options either to cooperate or defect, there is no choice else. Take the example of Afghanistan if it comprises individuals then Pakistan would have two choices first one is cooperation and second one would be obviously defection which nobody likes to handle (Perveen et al., [2017](#)).

Prisoner's Dilemma is concerned with the situations of economic, political, or social present for the entities which possess different kinds of aims. It includes research on the behavior of countries to the conflicts or cooperation between them and it calls countries players. Its research gives us information about the prediction of the future on which the policymakers decide policies that help decrease the chances of conflicts and increase the percentage of completing their missions. This can be played by both sides having either the betray policy which leads to defect or the cooperation method having long-term benefits which leads to repeated interactions. Having these cases there would be non-zero results. On an international level, the PD game is played repeatedly, and it is also called an Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma (Hilbe et al., [2013](#)). On the other hand, states betray not because others are betraying but because they need an outcome on their side through short-term management. This caused the nations to cooperate and cooperate repeatedly to decrease the gaps of trust produced as a result of the short-term period. If the interaction remains continuous then cooperation is developed over some time and mistrust is reduced and security issues are also resolved. (Harloe, [2012](#)).

### **Pak-Afghan Relations and Prisoner's Dilemma**

Both countries are linked with each other through their culture, religion, and historical point of view. These two countries are very important because any change in peace and instability would affect the regions of South Asia, Central Asia, and globally as well. If one actor is considered to have insurgency and reduced hold over law & order, then the other would not expect peace in its own country or region. Consequently, we can say that stability in South Asia and Central Asia comes through the stability of Pak-Afghan relations. Both countries had mistrust in their relations in the past and the solution could not be resolved on the other hand instead of having cooperation they are involved in attaining goals by all means (Ganguly & Howenstein, [2009](#)). They made decisions without the intentions of the other actors which led to a dominant strategy called uncertainty. The countries that have the situation of a Prisoner's Dilemma are facing problems on the basis of past

involvements that interrupted bilateral relations due to mistrust. The period having 2001 to 2008 has remained the period with inadequate cooperation because the on-and-off situation halted the progress in their relations. To a small value, there is present trust that can make possible the agreement economically rather than politically because of deadlocks present on some issues. These deadlocks happen in bilateral relations due to less cooperation or it would be of stalemate or competition between them for a larger amount of payment (Tierney, [2013](#)).

It is included in the interests of Pakistan that it wants to make a friendly government with the maximum portion of the Pashtuns representing in Afghanistan and in this way, the issue of Pashtunistan would be resolved as Afghanistan would not question it and will accept the Durand Line as the internationally recognized boundary. This quest was considered an interruption in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and Afghanistan showed its attitude towards it leading to mistrust. Such behavior put a stop to cooperation and confusions were generated through this which remained after the Taliban era. War on terror, security reasons, and the management of the border are linked with both countries and both have cooperated well (Omran, [2009](#)). The best site to observe the Prisoner's Dilemma situation is the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's interesting and advanced to discuss that matter according to the Prisoner's Dilemma situation. Many times, it has been reported that mistrust and doubts or suspicions are the main reasons for this situation. Robert Jervis has put light on the lines that when the arch-rivals come into contact with each other in this situation then one always thinks about the other's measures in cooperation in a negative sense and anything that happens in a positive way would be taken by the other in a reverse way (Jervis, [2006](#)). Moreover, if one state acts to cooperate well or deeply then the policy taken by it would come beyond all expectations of the other.

When the actors depend on each other then each one desires to obtain the benefit maximum of it rather than considering another actor too which results in zero percent of cooperation. If we apply this situation to the relations between Pakistan and India, then it has been seen that there are two

situations for both i.e. to cooperate or to defect each other. While the cooperation results in better results as compared to the defection between them. In the past, it has been observed that whenever there has been a defect between them the loss remains dominant over the benefit due to cooperation. From here starts this situation as if cooperation comes then on the other hand protective measures are also which leads to a Prisoner's Dilemma. Both the states use anything for their benefit whether cooperation is present or not. When they make a decision then they don't have complete information about the other's goals and then the uncertainty remains forceful in this regard. According to the Prisoner's Dilemma situation, the strategy could not build up as viewing the past experience to lack trust bilateral relations failed to conduct.

The cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is limited due to uncertainty. As there is individual shrewdness is prominent in this region so giving less trust as well as less collaboration and becoming selfish. If both countries had the collective decision-making power, then the loss they got from cooperation would be not worse. According to Jervis countries prefer to have mutual defection instead of mutual cooperation (Fearon, [2018](#)). There is not the dilemma behind their back that forces them to non-cooperative behavior but the stoppage to the solution of their internal issues. This is true in the case of Pak-Afghan relations as minimum trust has been found agreement can be the solution to overcome that situation. Cooperation should be seen on an economic basis but due to political issues, it's not possible yet. When deadlocks about bilateral relations occur then states stopover to cooperate because of the security dilemmas and opposition even if the rewards are greater.

Many things happened when the understanding process was under consideration such as attitude from policymakers, internal affairs, absence of averages, and polygonal institutions. In addition to these situations internal and external factors, the insurgency produced by the Taliban and the security issues of Pakistan are also important to discuss. The deep-rooted reason behind all this is the issue of Durand Line and Afghanistan's claims to have rights over the Pakistan territory (Mousavi, [2018](#)). This historical cause affected the era after the

Taliban and the Karzai Government did not validate the Durand Line. Afghanistan had a point that the signs were done against the British era not with Pakistan and rejected this line. While Pakistan has always taken this Line as a solved issue. According to Pakistan's belief, the Durand Line was confirmed by the government of Afghanistan. Firstly, by Amir Abdurrahman in 1893 as he signed with the British Empire, then Amir Habibullah in 1905, and King Amanullah Khan in 1921 (Omran & Ledwidge, [2009](#)). On the other hand, Afghanistan cites an international section in the case that the boundary is not confirmed by one side's acceptance. In 1949, by Loya Jirga or Karzai's parliament, it was decided that unilateral announcements on abandoning the Durand Line had no worth. The issues of Durand Line produced a dilemma situation and the blaming game started as a result, both countries started to support each other's, rebellious groups. Both these Islamic countries want to remove the deadlocks over bilateral relations, but they have been tangled in different ways that it is not easy to go forward and make relations possible. Pakistan and Afghanistan have societies and policymakers that are in full swing to say that there is no positive or negative situation only a zero-sum state from both sides. These beliefs have made policymakers state that it is a defective situation that defines the nature of game playing. These policymakers have provided the data that has justified their thoughts and have blamed the other side for not stopping the stances over the problems faced by the state and giving the status of hostility. Because they don't even want to lose from the other side hence maintaining the situation of Dilemma and deteriorating trust with each other. The preferences including beliefs and philosophies made by the policymakers cannot be ignored as they have the best role to play (Rais, [2019](#)).

The relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are very exclusive as both have interfered in their politics and provided support to the rebellious groups on an exchange basis. Pakistan made Afghanistan responsible for giving support to the Pashtun and Baluch separatists while Afghanistan was blamed for supporting Islamists and making them based on religious slogans and leaders have decreased the trust between them. But considering the post-Taliban era, Pakistan was doubtful because Indian policies

were the main concern as these were generating insurgencies in Pakistan. Afghanistan makes Pakistan responsible for supporting the Taliban and it is using it as its own part strategically against Afghanistan. Blaming from one side and blaming then from the other to the other could not come peace as collective shrewdness can damage more and increase the Dilemma. Challenging attitudes of both the accusations and counter-accusations have proved the dilemma creation. Although there exist the recruits of friendly relations the Prisoner's Dilemma situation dominates over the cooperative concerns and additionally of domestically implemented forces and external factors. Mistrust can also be created socially which leads to dilemmas. People's thinking can be changed through the emotions produced by the ruling authority and fear with security concerns also go with these. People as well as the government are of the view that Pakistan being the dominant country would acquire every possibility to interrupt the politics of Afghanistan. Such impact has decreased the gap of mistrust and has produced frustration further. Both countries tried many times to work together but this action remained verbal, there was no implementation of this prospect. Both sides carried on blaming each other and thinking negatively which added to the mistrust only. Afghanistan blamed Pakistan was that it has been the reason for bloodshed and the overwhelming condition in the country while Pakistan accused Afghanistan of interfering in the tribal areas of Pakistan. So, the case of the dilemma was faced by both countries equally (Lambah, 2012).

Regarding this context, Pakistan proposed many things for better cooperation like check posts, fencing, and mining but the government of Karzai rejected all this stuff because he and his government did not accept the Durand Line (Qassem & Durand, 1994). Security is required by both countries but the initiatives which should be taken were not taken for the peace and stability of both the states in the Asian region. This situation would lead to the position of the state in the Prisoner's Dilemma. Both countries then joined hands with other countries to protect their interests for the future. Afghanistan got close to India which has been the archrival of Pakistan from the beginning of its independence. For Pakistan, Afghanistan is the best option to retaliate against India to save its interest in the oil-rich CARs i.e.

central Asian republics. On the other hand, the pro-Indian regime is focusing on the exertion of hold in Pakistan. Herat, Jalalabad Kandahar, and Mzaar-I-Sharif are the areas of the Pak-Afghan border in which Karzai permitted India to make consulates. India offered to build dams on the rivers of Kunar and Kabul which in Pakistan are believed to be disastrous if the dams were built because Pakistan would be deprived of water resources (Pant, 2010). Pakistan also complains the Indian role to be restricted to reconstruction only rather than building a castle. This kind of situation has decreased cooperation as well. So, both countries are on the line of choice is yours whether to cooperate or remain hostile. In this way, there would be either no blaming games or interruption in their internal affairs creating the stability of both the states. If they try to remain dedicated to collaboration, then a large amount of pay-off will be obtained by both, and the economic situation of both countries will be satisfied. If only one contributes to cooperation while the other is on the path of antagonism, then the cooperated state will be rebuked hardly, and the non-collaborative party will shake hands with other countries to make changes to its internal system. Although defection is the leading cause if they have to maintain peace and constancy they would be at the line of cooperation (Rubin & Rashid, 2008).

### **Can Pakistan and Afghanistan Break the Prisoner's Dilemma**

There is a question that has gained access to that situation whether both countries can break such a Dilemma or not? The answer to this question can be positively stated because if the situation remains normal both will benefit from repeated interactions and it can build trust between them, as time would pass, as well. Trust can be built on a balanced assignment basis and needs time to produce long and strong relations and well-managed policies regarding risks and anxiety over relations by the trustworthy actor. If a country benefits at large then it would be possible in a short time rather than long time agreements. Reciprocal strategies can be beneficial as countries copy the cooperative plans and get an advantage through this scheme. Reciprocity and reassurance would be the reason for the sustained cooperation between the countries (Monsutti, 2004). Interacting frequently

and making the right commitment would gain trust in developing strategies and it would encourage the countries to cooperate well and ensure the stability of the country by themselves.

One of the reasons for Prisoner's Dilemma is that there is no reciprocation between the relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan claims that it arranged check posts while Afghanistan did not, and Pakistan also made operations well to reduce terror, but Afghanistan did not reciprocate. Afghanistan says that operations were not successful as members fled from the scene and took shelter in Afghanistan such as Mullah Fazlullah in a 2009 operation in Swat and it is believed to have protection in Afghanistan (Fair & Jones, 2009). The same concerns have also been observed by Pakistan as well. To avoid mistrust, one should focus on the signaling process which yields the reduction of mistrust. Through this channel, both countries can be aware of their intentions of the issues. Cooperative signals are indications of lessening of fear between them also. And once the fear decreases the trust gap will start to decrease as well. There are many people in these countries such as musicians, researchers, traders, etc. who talk about the issues rooted deeply like smuggling issues, water problems, trading conditions, etc. People-to-people contact is very important in resolving conflicts as sometimes officials talking could not do well to reduce tensions. In this way, people's perceptions can be changed about a problem and trust is developed further. Schelling says about small agreements in order to avoid major risks by both parties. The credibility level in this process can be checked easily and mistrust is reduced. From these smaller agreements, one can get other intentions well and the ambiguity is resolved before going into the large and risky agreements. Getting going like this on small issues like water or trade agreements both can go further to the deeply rooted issues and can solve them through negotiation and an environment can be created to have these situations. Pakistan's affairs with CARs are in the early stages but not weak. Afghanistan uses Pakistan's port to have access to the outer world. If Afghanistan allows Pakistan to trade with CARs like an uninterrupted trade route, then on one side revenue will add up but economic independence will also be a part of their dealings as well (Zeb, 2006).

Unevenness in the power between these two countries can help in maintaining trust. Through this Pakistan can have an agenda of full cooperation because it is more powerful than Afghanistan and Afghanistan with negotiation can form full mutual cooperation as well. Both countries have a common future with having rational and unequal factors for proceeding. According to the Prisoner's Dilemma, through defection the payoff is larger than if it gets from cooperation methods therefore, they pay attention to defection methods. If one of the actors selects any option, the other one will definitely choose defection. In the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, the first two rounds are beneficiary, and both are rewarded, and trust is developed like the case of the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, while in the third round, one chooses defect as Afghanistan while in the fourth both defect and the trust becomes volatile. Defection refers to the cause of loss and both teams lose and then the rounds of benefits are acquired in a more pronounced way. If both actors learn to play and replay the game, then they would understand that it's a better way to adopt the rational system on both sides, and mutual trust is developed as well (Weinbaum, 1991).

The policy of reassurance is another term that is in the right of frequent interactions leading to trust generating. To have trust it emphasizes the institutions in formal and informal ways. Conflicts are the natural parts of the world that result from the negative influences of institutional and structural measures. These institutions can play their role in avoiding the conflicts between Pakistan and Afghanistan because they see the long time benefits rather than the short time. Through the establishment of governments and then institutionalizing their roles can resolve the issues well. Cooperation in the long term may lead to dependency and the mistrust would be diminishing through the mediators which can be regional institutions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Using this kind of policy both states can be benefitted through bilateral relations and can build trust between them as well (Hilbe et al., 2013).

## **Results and Discussion**

Although the situations are very critical on both sides, they have some common points also and

want to stabilize their bilateral relations as well. Pakistan has taken steps with respect to this agenda and is helping Afghanistan in rebuilding the construction of torn pieces of the building. Pakistan has invested in many aspects like the construction of the road from Torkham to Jalalabad and the formation of Jinnah Hospital Complex, Kabul, and the Allam Iqbal Faculty of Arts at the University at Kabul. Pakistan has also offered scholarships for many students of Afghanistan as well. Pakistan has provided facilities to Afghanistan as it is a landlocked country and Pakistan provides the nearest trade transit through seaport. Afghanistan is the third on the list among countries to which Pakistan exports so in this way it is the best option for Pakistan to trade with its neighboring countries and both countries will benefit from this session. Pakistan has enthusiastic feelings about the new project linking the South Asian states and the name of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline. This project will not only increase the relations with Pakistan on better values but also America will focus on Afghanistan as its energy areas availability and will win the confidence of America. The hurdle in the fulfillment of the peace in this region is not through bilateral relations. TAPI pipeline will make Pakistan an independent state in regard to the energy doles from the states of the Middle East. Doing this project will enable the other central Asian republics as well as Afghanistan itself to be recipients for other members of the project as well. Pakistan is facilitating Afghanistan further by including her in the CPEC project using the route of Gwadar-Khuzdar-Ratodero Rail connection. Afghanistan has helped Pakistan against terrorism. There is another huge success for both countries is the formation of an MOU of sharing the intelligence between ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) of Pakistan and NDS (National Directorate of Security) to promote bilateral relations. Both countries need strong bilateral relations which were not possible due to mistrust and the blaming themselves for the situations created along the border. They need to cooperate to a large so that mega projects would not be backed up by superpowers (Khan et al., 2009).

If they continued to cooperate, then peace could be developed in either way and the situation would get normal instead of blaming each other and this region would be prosperous until these

two nations would agree. Although the situations are very critical on both sides. The prisoner's dilemma spins around a pivot point of payoff and it is generated through decisions from the policymakers and ideologists setting preferences for each other's. If this region wants stability, then cooperation is necessary, and it would come through planning how cooperation comes first and the payoff after it. So that the total rationality would be sustained. It requires long-time-based agreements for their common future and communications. Pak-Afghan relations are the best example of an Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma. Pakistan and Afghanistan should act together repeatedly if they want to establish cooperation for their interests. To achieve this goal both countries should compromise on the issues of Durand Line as well as the issue of Pashtunistan and other problems if there exists. A hypothesis was reported saying that if repeated interactions and regular checks and balances are maintained then they can get trust for cooperation. To save and sound the western edge of Pakistan, it would make stable relations with Afghanistan and for other purposes such as the demand of oil and gas from CARs in such an energy calamity while on the other hand, Afghanistan will benefit too. There is another third actor that can take part in the trust-building scenario and this factor includes the US, Russia, and China. They can encourage both countries to develop relations on a cooperation basis and work together for the prosperity of the region. Whatever happens in one country the other will be affected in any way as a result. The policy builders should acknowledge that cooperation-based payoff is better than defection. Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma has proved to be the best way for a win-win situation for both countries and there is no sum-up zero state in this policy rather it is. The first part of the game would be to convert the sum zero state to positive categories. In a zero-sum situation, the opponent remains unaware of the intentions of the realists. While in non-zero conditions the transparency is managed to have cooperation. In order to eradicate zero results, there should be transparency and awareness of strategic concerns so that the region would go to stability instead of terrorism. Through this action the other factors will get a positive signal and the cooperation level will be cheered. The policies regarding reciprocity and reassurance involving dialogues at the government

level and the process of mediation can help in resolving the problems and building trust. By becoming economically strong by both sides then it can help in understanding each other well and to finish the rivalry interrupts between them. On an international level, risks are taken which then propagate in the system. Andrew H. Kydd has an opinion of trust as a belief and the other side prefers it due to the benefits of their own. If there are bilateral relations and they have trust, then it can go long but if there is mistrust of a dominant party then the problems generated as a result of this are not resolved easily. Mistrust produces many abnormalities in the state such as confusion, hostility, and expensive agreements for both sides. And it all happens due to not being committed to their words on the agreements. Therefore, non-cooperative strategies destroy the harmony in the relations and the solution to this becomes difficult. The relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan have been best described by Prisoner's Dilemma. Both countries want their own benefits without investing anything. Both countries avoid compromises and persistent nature because both think that it's useless to act upon these things. They think that there is always a zero-sum in which one loses and the other gets. Individual rationality is overwhelmed which decreases the trust by less cooperation and selfishness to not give importance. The collective response to rationality is negative as they think that it would be a loss rather than taking advantage of it. There is the belief that if they turned the page of cooperation the loss be the fate, and other strained conditions would be considered such as military vulnerability.

Hence the cooperation was not adopted because they gave importance to the defection. Between them, the strategy of one is completely opposite of the other. There is a need to understand the concept of mistrust regarding bilateral relations as the realists give the name of Prisoner's Dilemma. There is a discussion on the prisoner's Dilemma in which defection was dominant. Analyses have revealed that defection cannot give enough payoff as cooperation can give. Several deadlocks can be solved by long-time cooperation. The theoretical strategies suggest that reciprocal plans if worked out then the situation of dilemma will be broken and both countries will benefit from that. Doing that will build trust on

which basis the limited cooperation can be replaced with full cooperation.

### **Recommendations**

Pakistan is now facing problems regarding security so security should be on the top of the list ignoring the welfare of the people of the state. The need was raised due to the hostility of the neighboring countries. There is a need to prevent India from intruding into Afghanistan politically and by any military means as it happened after 9/11, and India held its ground in Afghanistan to have access to the Central Asian Republics. If India made interruptions, then Pak-Afghan relations became not compatible.

It has been seen that whenever Pakistan has adopted dual policies, it has got a bad impression on the world because of an increase in the mistrust as well as the suspicious among the regional countries. There is the issue of the porous border situation which has not benefitted the US in the war on terrorism because there are no exact points of entry or exits. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan consists of mountains and both sides have less control over it. Trade programs, giving Pakistan access to CARs and giving Afghanistan access to the Gwadar port with sea as well, can decrease tensions and increase the trust between them. Ethnic tensions could be reduced and national identity would be stronger. And all these efforts would provide the way for the formal acknowledgment between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The development of the Durand Line would yield a system in which the coordination would be enhanced and the Pashtunistan issue would be settled. The uncontrolled movement of the refugees will be handled and the safe havens will no longer exist in the tribal areas and Baluchistan. There should be actions against the illegal flow of financial support to insurgents as they get from the smuggling of narcotics and other means. International communities can help both countries by counter-terrorism activities and reforms in tribal as well as FATA region giving more access to the government. Pakistan should have restructured its foreign policy and it does not mean that it should progress with and desert Taliban. Its meaning is that the environment should be altered in which it is constructed.

ROZs (Reconstruction Opportunity Zones) can be built along the border for the betterment of home-grown economy as an access to international markets is made easy for the local products. In this people would join these opportunities for young generation instead of joining militant groups. In this way, positive impact will go to the world from Pak-Afghan relations.

Gwadar port and TAPI projects can increase the importance of the region but Afghanistan should understand the importance of Gwadar port in order to develop strong relations. Pakistani policymakers should focus on the people's will as it enhances the reflection of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is a need to strengthen the policies regarding civilian law implementation in the country so that Anti-Terrorist activities would come to an end and peace would circle in the region. For this, all the departments working on this issue should be well equipped and data access should be ensured. Political parties are of the view which contribute towards the policy-making scenario and these should be reformed and remodeled so that positive impact will go internationally.

## Conclusion

Pakistan and Afghanistan remained in a good state of affairs. Now again there is a need to find room to revive the links among these states so that the volume of energy trade can be enhanced. Again it is on the part of researchers to seek and give guidelines to both the states with a view to prove in a pragmatic way that the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Afghanistan is more beneficial for these states. Then there is the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD) which has the payoff of having the central position in making the choices. The reactions of policy makers having different thinking and philosophies towards the preferences

are of great importance. It depends on both countries to have strategies in a way that there would be cooperation at the top of the list to have trust and the sustenance of rationality as well. There is another aspect that has been discussed a lot and it is the Iterated PD, the reappearance of the plays of PD. This new term is related to the making of decisions for a long time for their future and communication. The best example of this kind is the relations occurring between Afghanistan and Pakistan having a long journey. There is a condition for both countries to have trust and cooperation of continuous interface each other and in this way the desirous goals can be gained. There is a compromise deal as well between these two Islamic countries i.e. compromise on Durand Line as well as on the issue of Pashtunistan and any other issue on the sensitivities of these two countries for developing belief. There is an imaginable thing that if there is constant checking and interaction between them on projects then cooperation can be built. There are strategies set by other countries like China, Russia, and the United States to inspire Afghanistan as well as Pakistan to collaborate and interact continuously in order to have trust between them. There is a big need for Pakistan to establish friendly relations with Kabul owing to the advantage of access to the Central Asian Republics for the availability of gas and oil reserves. Afghanistan can benefit by managing the trading routes to the port of Pakistan and, hence increasing its economy. Pakistan's plans in this region are to increase the positive response from the neighboring countries, especially from Afghanistan. On the other hand, there is an element of reciprocity that can overcome the PD and make the relations healthy. Mutual cooperation is the key to transforming half cooperation to full cooperation and it can be acquired through dialogues on the government level and negotiation as well.

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