

The Evolving Dynamics of Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations under the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) Regime: A Comprehensive Analysis and Prospects

Ms. Noureen Akhtar, Dr. Abdul Rauf Iqbal

Abstract

This research examines the intricacies of the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Taliban's assumption of power in August 2021. The study emphasises the impact of regional and global factors on the dynamics of their relationship and the evolving security landscape in Afghanistan under the Taliban. A significant concern looming within Pakistan's strategic community is the possible future trajectory of relations. To answer this geopolitical riddle, Research uses a scenario analysis framework and finds that Pakistan-Afghanistan concerns can go in one of three possible directions: cooperation, hostility, and coexistence. It produces valuable insights based on scenario methodology while challenging existing assumptions. It would help policymakers to preempt policy decisions in an informed manner to propose practical policy recommendations for peaceful coexistence. Consequently encouraging pragmatism, negotiations, inclusive political settlements, collaborative efforts to address security challenges, and economic integration through regional connectivity enterprises. The significance of regional and global collaboration in ensuring the prosperity and security of Afghanistan and the broader region is highlighted through comprehensive insights and actionable policy recommendations. The study aims to facilitate informed decision-making and pave the way toward lasting peace, development, and prosperity in the region.

Keywords: Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations, Regional Cooperation, IEA Regime, Taliban.

Introduction:

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long and complex history of political, economic, cultural, and security ties. The relationship between the two has experienced both cooperation and conflict, impacted by various internal and external factors. With the reemergence of the Taliban in 2021, following the US troops withdrawal, there are now new challenges and opportunities for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), Pakistan, region and beyond.

Historically, Pakistan was one of the three countries (along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) that recognised the first IEA regime which ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. However, it also faced backlash from the international community, especially after the 9/11 attacks (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021).

Pakistan joined the global War on Terror (WoT) after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. It became a vital partner of the US and NATO in providing logistics, intelligence, and military support. Nevertheless, Pakistan also faced accusations of duplicity and selective cooperation. It maintained ties with some factions of the Taliban and other militant groups that sought refuge in its tribal areas

along the border with Afghanistan. Pakistan justified its policy as a hedge against a pro-India government in Kabul and a potential US abandonment of the region (Abbas, 2014).

However, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations deteriorated over the years due to mutual mistrust, border disputes, cross-border violence, refugee influx, and interference allegations by Afghan government against Pakistan. Pakistan accused Afghanistan of harbouring anti-Pakistan militants such as the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)* and supporting separatist movements in Balochistan. Similarly, Afghanistan accused Pakistan of sponsoring terrorist attacks inside its territory and undermining its sovereignty and legitimacy. Despite several attempts to improve bilateral ties through dialogue, confidence-building measures, trade agreements, and regional initiatives, it failed to achieve lasting results (Abbas, 2014).

Challenges:

The IEA regime's swift takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 surprised Pakistan and the world. However, Pakistan welcomed the end of violence and bloodshed in Afghanistan. It expressed its readiness to work with any government that is inclusive, representative, and respectful of human rights and international law. Pakistan also urged the international community to constructively engage with the IEA and provide humanitarian assistance to prevent humanitarian crisis and economic collapse in Afghanistan. At the same time, Pakistan also faces several challenges and risks in dealing with the new reality in Afghanistan. The foremost for Pakistan is to balance its relations with the Taliban regime and other Afghan stakeholders, such as former government officials, ethnic minorities, women's groups, civil society, and resistance forces. Pakistan has to avoid being seen as interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs or favouring any one group. Pakistan has to respect Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It should only support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process (Baqai & Wasi, 2021).

Secondly, Pakistan has to manage its relations with the regional and global actors to protect its interests and influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan must continue to cooperate with countries like China, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, India, the US, UK, and EU, on counter-terrorism, refugees, trade, and connectivity. Pakistan needs to continue with its non-partisan relationship with all the stakeholders in order to avoid any destabilisation within Afghanistan. Any compromise on Afghanistan's security and interests could be detrimental to both Pakistan and the region (Baqai & Wasi, 2021).

Moreover, Pakistan has to deal with the security implications of the Taliban's rise. It has to prevent any spillover of violence or extremism from Afghanistan into its border areas or mainland. Pakistan has to ensure that the IEA regime does not provide sanctuary or support to anti-Pakistan militant groups such as the TTP or others that could threaten its internal security or external relations. There are millions of refugees living in Pakistan who have either migrated to Pakistan or seeking asylum there (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). Pakistan needs to ensure their basic human rights.

The problem statement of this study is to understand the evolving dynamics of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations under the IEA regime and their implications for regional stability and cooperation. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- How has the rise of the IEA regime in 2021 affected the bilateral relationship and the prospects for peace and development in Afghanistan?
- What are the potential challenges for both countries in forging a cooperative and constructive relationship under the new circumstances?
- What are the roles and interests of regional and global actors in influencing Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and the future of Afghanistan?
- What policy recommendations are for both countries and the international community to build sustainable and mutually beneficial ties?

The objectives of this study are to:

- Provide a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations before and after the rise of the IEA regime based on historical context and future scenarios.
- Identify the key drivers of conflict and connection between both countries and how they affect their bilateral relationship and regional stability.
- Assess the impact of the IEA regime's rise on Afghanistan's internal situation, regional dynamics, and global implications.
- Propose recommendations and policy implications for both countries and the international community to enhance cooperation, dialogue, trust, and development.

Brief Historical Context of Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations:

Pakistan and Afghanistan have a long and complex history of interactions dating back to pre-colonial times. The region that now comprises both countries was part of various empires and kingdoms that often remain engaged in wars, alliances, and trade. The Pashtun tribes settled on both sides of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, had a significant impact on the history of the region. The British also faced resistance from the Afghan rulers and Pashtun tribes while establishing control over India during the colonial era. Eventually, in 1893, the contentious Durand Line was drawn to demarcate the border between British India and Afghanistan that continues to remain a dispute even today (Raikar, 2021).

Moreover, in the post-colonial era, Pakistan and Afghanistan experienced strained relations due to political, ideological, security, and geopolitical factors. Afghanistan opposed Pakistan's admission to the UN in 1947 and supported Pashtun nationalist movements within Pakistan. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, further complicated Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan since it became a vital supporter of the Afghan *mujahideen* (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021). In the 1990s, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and their alliance with Pakistan further fueled tensions. In 2001, The US-led invasion of Afghanistan changed the dynamics following the 9/11 attacks, with Pakistan becoming a partner in the global WoT.

2.1- The Impact of Previous Afghan Governments on Bilateral Ties:

Earlier, the successive Afghan political setup(s) and governments had different impact on bilateral ties with Pakistan depending on their political orientation, ideology, security interests, and regional alignment. The summary is shown in the table below:

Regime	Relationship with Pakistan	Key Aspects
Monarchy 1747-1973 (Yazdani, 2020)	Mixed relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomatic ties and trade relations. • They claimed Pashtunistan and opposed the Durand Line. • Supported Pashtun nationalist movements within Pakistan. • Sought ties with India and other countries.
Daoud regime 1973-1978 (Winger, 2017)	Hostile relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertive policy toward Pakistan. • Support for Pashtunistan and Balochistan. • Aligned with the Soviet Union and socialist countries to counter Pakistan's alliances.
Communist regime 1978-1992 (Halliday & Tanin, 1998)	Confrontational relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faced uprising by mujahideen supported by Pakistan. • Invited Soviet intervention, triggering a decade-long war. • Destabilisation of both countries.
Mujahideen regime 1992-1996 (Seswita, 2021)	Chaotic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided factions with internal conflicts. • Pakistan, others by Iran, India, and Russia support some factions. • They failed to establish peace and stability.
IEA regime 1996-2001 (Ibrahimi, 2017)	Close relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported by Pakistan as a strategic ally against regional rivals. • Faced international isolation for human rights violations and harboring terrorists.
Karzai regime 2001-2014 (Gall, 2014)	Complicated relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installed by the US-led coalition after ousting the IEA regime. • Depended on US and NATO support. • Attempted to improve ties with Pakistan and address grievances.
Ghani regime 2014-2021 (Farooq, 2022)	Tense relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Came to power after a disputed election. • Faced resurgent Taliban and engaged in peace talks facilitated by Pakistan. • Accused Pakistan of supporting the Taliban.

*The table summarises the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan during different regimes. It highlights key aspects and characteristics of each period, reflecting the fluctuations and complexities in their bilateral ties over time.

1- Regional and Global Influence on Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations:

Pakistan and Afghanistan are influenced by their bilateral dynamics and the role of

neighboring countries and international actors with interests and influence in Afghanistan and the region (Javaid, 2020).

Neighbouring Countries / International Actors	Role in Shaping Pakistan-Afghanistan Relationship	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
China (Ali, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major economic partner and strategic ally of Pakistan. Concerned about terrorism and instability in Afghanistan. Interested in Afghanistan's resources and potential market for its goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can provide economic incentives and political leverage to improve bilateral ties. It can facilitate dialogue and engagement between the two countries. Can contribute to Afghanistan's reconstruction and development through BRI projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some actors may view China's involvement as threatening their sovereignty. China's support for Pakistan may create mistrust and resentment among some actors. Some actors may doubt China's sincerity or reliability as a partner or mediator.
Iran (Hanif, Butt, & Ashraf, 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about security threats and instability from Afghanistan. Has historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic ties with Afghanistan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can provide humanitarian assistance and trade facilitation to Afghanistan Can contribute to regional stability and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflects rivalry and mistrust with Pakistan. May undermine Pakistan's interests and influence in Afghanistan. May challenge Pakistan's position on issues such as Kashmir or Balochistan.
India (Alaverdoy, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic partner and significant donor of Afghanistan. Concerned about security threats and instability from Afghanistan. Has historical, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can provide humanitarian assistance and trade facilitation to Afghanistan Can contribute to regional stability and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflects rivalry and mistrust with Pakistan Undermine Pakistan's interests and influence in Afghanistan May challenge Pakistan's

	cultural, economic, and political ties with Afghanistan.		position on issues such as Kashmir or Balochistan.
US (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic ally and major donor of Pakistan and Afghanistan. • Involved in Afghanistan since 1980s. • Has interests in counter-terrorism and stability in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can provide incentives and pressure to improve bilateral ties. • It can facilitate dialogue and engagement between the two countries. • Can contribute to Afghanistan's reconstruction and development through aid and investment projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some actors may view US involvement as a source of instability and interference. • Some actors may perceive the US as a hegemon or a bully. • US's withdrawal has affected its credibility as a partner or mediator.
Turkey (Ahmed & Basit, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friend and partner of Pakistan and Afghanistan. • Has historical, cultural, and religious ties with Afghanistan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can bridge and mediate between the two countries and Afghan stakeholders. • Can contribute to regional stability and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US and India may view Turkey's involvement with skepticism. • Turkey's role may be limited due to its regional stature and capacity.
Russia (Yar, Ihsan, & Hafiz, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional rival of the US. • Has historical, political, and security ties with Afghanistan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide humanitarian assistance and trade facilitation to Afghanistan. • Can contribute to regional stability and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US may view Russia's involvement as threatening their interests or sovereignty. • Russia's support for Pakistan may create mistrust and resentment among some actors. • Some actors may doubt Russia's sincerity or reliability as a partner or

			mediator.
Qatar (Nasim, 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friend and partner of Pakistan and Afghanistan. • Provides a neutral platform for dialogue and engagement between Afghan stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can provide a neutral and trusted platform for dialogue and engagement. • Can contribute to regional stability and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some actors may view Qatar's involvement with skepticism. • Qatar's influence may be limited compared to other significant actors.

*The table highlights the role of neighbouring countries and international actors in shaping Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. It outlines positive aspects of their involvement, such as facilitating dialogue, providing humanitarian assistance, and contributing to regional peace and stability. It also identifies harmful elements, including potential challenges to mistrust between actors, rivalry, and sovereignty, which can influence bilateral dynamics.

2- Managing Security Concerns Along the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border under the IEA Regime:

The Pakistan-Afghanistan border, also known as the Durand Line, is a 2,570 km long boundary disputed by successive Afghan governments, who have never accepted it as a legitimate international boundary. The border has also been porous and volatile, as it cuts through the Pashtun tribal areas with solid cross-border ties and movements. The border has also been a source of conflict and violence, as it has been used by militant groups such as the TTP, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS-K (Ahmed, 2022) to launch attacks on both sides of the border.

In Afghanistan, the rise of the IEA regime has elevated new challenges and security concerns for managing the Pak-Afghan border.

- According to Ahmed (2022), the IEA administration did not recognize Pakistan's position on the Durand Line and advocated the right of individuals to move freely across borders, in line with its previous position in the 1990s. Pakistan is currently building a border fence, which is essential to deter terrorism, smuggling and illegal border crossings. However, the IEA administration intervened to sabotage or destroy this project.
- The IEA faces resistance from anti-Taliban forces such as the National Resistance Front (NRF) in the Panjshir Valley, which could lead to a civil war or proxy war in Afghanistan. There were also internal divisions and infighting among the various factions and leaders of the IEA regime, including the Haqqani Network, Quetta Shura, and Peshawar Shura. It also faced external pressure and isolation from some regional and international actors such as India, the United States, and the European Union, which refused to recognize the country as Afghanistan's

legitimate government (Ahmed, 2022). These factors could undermine the stability and legitimacy of the IEA regime and create a security vacuum and chaos in Afghanistan.

- The IEA administration has pledged not to allow terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS-K to use its territory. However, questions remain about his ability and willingness to do so. The IEA regime maintains contacts with al-Qaeda and considers it an ideological ally and strategic partner. It is also being challenged by other extremist groups, including the TTP, once an ally but now an enemy. These groups could take advantage of the situation in Afghanistan to launch attacks on both sides of the border or expand their influence and territory in Afghanistan.

3- Trade and Economic Ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan under the IEA Regime

Afghanistan allows Pakistani trade access to its markets, products, resources, and transit routes. Pakistan and Afghanistan have also signed various agreements and initiatives to enhance their business and economic cooperation, such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), (Ali, Farooq, & Lodhe, 2022) the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) (Ranjan, 2022) the Economic Cooperation Organization Trade Agreement (ECOTA) (Khan, Li, & Iqbal, 2023) the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) (Jabbin et al,) and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) (Kalyuzhnova & Holzhacker, 2021).

However, the trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have faced various challenges and constraints, such as political instability, security threats, border disputes, customs barriers, smuggling activities, corruption practices, infrastructure deficiencies, and bureaucratic hurdles (Ahmed, 2022). The trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan had also been affected by the changed political situation in Afghanistan, especially after the US-led invasion in 2001, and the subsequent rise and fall of different regimes in Kabul. The trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have also been influenced by the role of other regional and international actors, such as India, China, Iran, Turkey, and the US, who have their interests and agendas in Afghanistan (Ahmed, 2022).

4- Scenario Analysis for the Future Trajectory

In order to provide a detailed scenario analysis for the future trajectory of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan based on the current trends and developments some of the following recommendations for strengthening ties, mitigating potential challenges, and enhancing dialogue, cooperation, and confidence-building measures are offered. A method of scenario planning approach to analyse the possible outcomes of the bilateral relationship in the short (one year), medium (five years), and long term (ten years), based on different assumptions and variables is adopted. The study identifies three main scenarios: cooperation, confrontation, and coexistence. Each design is described in terms of its drivers, indicators, implications, and likelihood.

Scenario Methodology

The scenario methodology is bespoke a set of structured concepts for both testable and contestable narratives.

6.1- Scenario 1: Cooperation

In this scenario, Pakistan and Afghanistan would be able to build a cooperative and constructive relationship based on mutual respect, trust and cooperation. Not only can common challenges and interests be identified, but historical grievances can also be amicably overcome and cooperation can be made to resolve these issues. Mechanisms for regular dialogue and consultation at multiple levels can be developed. Trade partnership, energy projects, and transit pacts are ingredients of regional connectivity. If implemented with just and transparent manner can help IEA regime to boost economic cooperation and connectivity at regional level. The dividend of such cooperation will come in the form of better physical infrastructure across the country allowing quick goods transportation, opening new trade venues and making Afghanistan better integrated in global market. Similarly, cooperation in security domains will not only enhance regional stability and but will usher regional prosperity as well. The cornerstone of such cooperation would include the prevention of use of Afghan soil by terrorists against any country. There is a unanimous agreement on the fact that Afghanistan needs an inclusive and representative regime in Kabul that recognizes the rights and aspirations of all Afghans. A cooperation in this direction could certainly be a viable confidence-building measure.

Drivers	Indicators	Implications	Likelihood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful political settlement in Afghanistan involving all stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent high-level visits and meetings between Pakistani and Afghan leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved bilateral relations contributing to peace, stability, and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low to medium (short-term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition by both sides of the need to improve relations for peace and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of bilateral mechanisms or forums for dialogue and consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced economic opportunities and connectivity for both countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium to high (medium term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructive role by regional and international actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The signing of bilateral agreements or memoranda of understanding on trade facilitation, transit, and energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced security threats and challenges from terrorism and extremism 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in violence and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in regional cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased trust and confidence 	

human rights violations in Afghanistan	platforms or initiatives	between both countries and the region	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willingness to address sovereignty concerns, cross-border movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint efforts to combat terrorism or extremism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved human rights and democratic situation in Afghanistan 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to prevent the territory from being used by terrorist groups or other spoilers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for an inclusive and representative political settlement in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened regional stability and cooperation 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of people-to-people contacts and cultural exchange between Pakistan and Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced understanding and goodwill between citizens 	

6.2- Scenario 2: Confrontation

In this scenario, Pakistan and Afghanistan enter into a hostile and adversarial relationship based on mutual mistrust, accusations, and rivalry. Unable to overcome historical grievances, they blame each other for Afghanistan's conflict and violence. They engage in minimal or no dialogue and consultation at various levels to peacefully resolve differences and disputes. Economic cooperation and connectivity are also being undermined through trade barriers, transport restrictions, energy disruption and regional isolation efforts. They also clash over security issues and accuse each other of supporting or harboring terrorist groups and other spoil sports. Moreover, an inclusive and representative political solution in Afghanistan that respects the rights and aspirations of all Afghans will also be rejected or undermined by Pakistan, and vice versa

Drivers	Indicators	Implications	Likelihood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrequent or no high-level visits and meetings between Pakistani and Afghan leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deteriorated bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High (short-term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of threat or interference from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of bilateral mechanisms or forums for dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced economic opportunities and connectivity for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium to low long-

each other	and consultation	both countries and the region	term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The destructive role of other regional and international actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imposition of bilateral sanctions or restrictions on trade, transit, and energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased security threats and challenges for both countries and the region 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escalation of violence and human rights violations in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdrawal from regional cooperation platforms or initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased trust and confidence between both countries and the region on various issues 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insistence on sovereignty claims, such as the Durand Line issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accusations or allegations of supporting or harbouring terrorism or extremism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worsened human rights and democratic situation in Afghanistan 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of commitment to prevent territory use by terrorist groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposition or sabotage of an inclusive and representative political settlement in Afghanistan 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced people-to-people contacts and cultural exchange 			

*The table summarizes the key drivers, indicators, implications, and likelihood associated with Pakistan and Afghanistan entering a hostile confrontation. This is assessed as high in the short term and medium to low in the medium to long, based on various factors influencing their relations.

6.3- Scenario 3: Coexistence

In this scenario, Pakistan and Afghanistan maintain a pragmatic and realistic relationship based on mutual recognition, tolerance, and coexistence. They acknowledge their historical grievances but agree to disagree on some issues. They engage in occasional dialogue and consultation at various levels to peacefully manage their differences and disputes. They also pursue economic cooperation and connectivity through selective trade agreements, transit arrangements, energy projects, and regional integration initiatives. They also coordinate on security matters to avoid confrontation or escalation with each other. They also accept or accommodate an inclusive and representative political settlement in Afghanistan that respects the

rights and aspirations of all Afghans.

Drivers	Indicators	Implications	Likelihood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial or incomplete political settlement in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional high-level visits and meetings between Pakistani and Afghan leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan 	Medium (short-term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pragmatism of both sides on limitations or constraints in their relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of bilateral mechanisms or forums for dialogue and consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate economic opportunities and connectivity for both countries and the region 	Medium (medium to long term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed role of other regional and international actors in cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiation of bilateral agreements or memoranda of understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manageable security threats and challenges for both countries and the region 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variation of violence and human rights violations in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in regional cooperation platforms or initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate trust and confidence between both countries and the region on some issues 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compromise by both sides on sovereignty issues, such as the Durand Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication or coordination to avoid or de-escalate terrorism or extremism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed human rights and democratic situation in Afghanistan 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial commitment to preventing territory use by terrorist groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance or accommodation of an inclusive and representative political settlement 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of people-to-people contacts and cultural exchange between Pakistan and Afghanistan 			

*The table summarizes the key drivers, indicators, implications, and likelihood associated with Pakistan and Afghanistan maintaining a partially stable but pragmatic relationship. The possibility is assessed as a medium in the short and medium term in the medium to long term, based on the various factors influencing their relations.

5- Recommendations

First, Pakistan should continue to engage with the IEA regime diplomatically and politically and provide humanitarian and economic assistance to the Afghan people. Pakistan has a long history of ties with the Taliban, and it can use its influence to encourage the IEA to uphold its commitments to prevent terrorism, respect human rights, form an inclusive government, and pursue a peaceful resolution with other Afghan factions. Pakistan can also facilitate communication and cooperation between the IEA and other regional and international actors, including China, Russia, Iran, Turkey, India, the United States, and the United Nations.

Action	Description	Responsible Party
Diplomatic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the IEA leadership through diplomatic channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Humanitarian Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide aid to the Afghan people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, NGOs
Economic Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Afghanistan's reconstruction and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, Private sector
Encouraging Counterterrorism Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage IEA's commitments to counterterrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan's intelligence agencies, Ministry of Interior
Promoting Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate human rights protection in Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Human Rights
Inclusive Government Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate dialogue between the IEA and Afghan factions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic envoys
Peaceful Settlement Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a mediator for peaceful settlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stakeholders
Dialogue with Regional/International Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with various actors for coordinated efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Addressing Refugee Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in addressing the refugee crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan Ministry of Interior, Ministry of States and Frontier Regions
Combating Drug Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with IEA and international partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan's law enforcement agencies, Intelligence services
Border Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen border security and cooperation with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan's Ministry of Interior, Border

	Afghanistan	authorities
Trade and Economic Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate trade and economic ties with Afghanistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, Trade authorities

The IEA regime needs to show that it is dedicated to being a trustworthy and accountable partner to Pakistan and the global community. All Afghans, including women, minorities, and civil society activists, must also have their rights and freedoms respected. A broad, representative government that represents the diversity and ambitions of the Afghan people should also be established by the IEA. It should also work with Pakistan and other nations on matters of regional security and development.

Action	Description
Renounce Violence and Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly declare a renunciation of violence and terrorism, both domestically and internationally. Sever ties with groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.
Respect Human Rights and Freedoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the protection of the rights and freedoms of all Afghans, particularly women, minorities, and civil society activists.
Form an Inclusive and Representative Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a broad-based government that represents the diversity and aspirations of the Afghan people.
Cooperate on Regional Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Pakistan and other countries on regional security issues, including counter-terrorism efforts and intelligence sharing.
Cooperate on Regional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Pakistan and other countries on development initiatives, such as counter-narcotics programs, infrastructure projects, energy cooperation, trade facilitation, and transit agreements.

IEA regime must be told in unequivocal terms that any international legitimacy for it is bound to condition of Kabul meeting some pre-defined standards of human rights, gender equality, women rights and democracy. It is important to exert diplomatic pressure on Kabul regime to fulfill these demands and at the same time, such efforts by Kabul regime must be reciprocated by solid assurances of cooperation, protecting mutual interests, and uplifting Afghanistan's deteriorated infrastructure. In this regard, all major multilateral institutions and humanitarian organizations must chart out plans for coordinated policies and actions related to Afghanistan. World Bank and IMF must provide financial assistance to UNHRC, ECO to work on socio-economic front while ECO, SCO etc. must present plans for regional connectivity and trade integration.

Action	Description	Responsible Entities
Recognition and Legitimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider recognising and legitimising the IEA regime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Community, UN, Diplomats
Conditional Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer engagement and support based on specific benchmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Community, Diplomatic missions
Pressure through Sanctions and Diplomatic Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impose targeted sanctions and diplomatic isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Community, UN, Diplomatic missions
Withholding Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition aid on meeting certain benchmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor countries, International organisations
Incentives for Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer incentives if the IEA demonstrates progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Community, Donor countries, International organizations
Multilateral Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate policies and actions through multilateral platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Security Council, UN Human Rights Council, IMF, WB, SCO, SAARC, ECO

8- Conclusion

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is complex and multifaceted and has serious implications for the stability and prosperity of both countries and the region as a whole. The subsequent occupation created new challenges and opportunities for bilateral relations and required coordination, cooperation and trust-building. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive situational analysis of the future development of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan based on various assumptions and variables and to make recommendations to strengthen relations and reduce potential problems.

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