The People of Afghanistan and Pakistan Have Common Pains and Enemies

written by Keyvan | November 8, 2025

Summary: The people of Afghanistan and Pakistan are trapped in the same vicious circle — victims of their ruling elites, militaries, and clerics who use religion and war for power and profit. It is time both nations' ordinary people recognize their shared pain, common enemies, and mutual destiny — to break free from the chains of extremism and exploitation that have enslaved them for generations.

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The Associated Press reported on 29 October about another failed round of peace talks between the Pakistani government and the Taliban regime in Turkey, with another round being planned. It is ironic to see two war-mongering parties talking about peace — and even more ironic that the Pakistani government, with its long history of nurturing and harboring every brand of Islamist terrorist faction, now presents an anti-terrorism plan to its once "blue-eyed" creation, the Taliban — and vice versa.
https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-afghanistan-peace-talks-stalled-istanbul-a82bd2ea927a6096a58f784ba9579e82

The tensions reignited when Pakistan carried out airstrikes in the heart of Kabul, near Macroryan Square, claiming to have targeted Noor Wali Mehsud, the head of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Later, an unverified audio recording of Mehsud surfaced, suggesting he was alive. Zabiullah Mujahid, the Taliban's official spokesperson, dismissed the reports on X, claiming that "everything is fine" — while clearly, nothing was fine. The Taliban retaliated by attacking several Pakistani army checkpoints along the border, prompting Pakistan to strike back, killing civilians in Kandahar, Helmand, Paktika, and once again in Kabul.

Pakistan claimed its strikes targeted TTP militants allegedly sheltered by the Afghan Taliban and supported by Indian agencies. However, according to a BBC News report published on 18 October, citing the Afghan Cricket Board, among the dead were civilians — including three Afghan cricket players and five other people — while seven others were wounded. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c20pnz01x0eo

I attended the mourning ceremony of a relative from Parwan Province killed in the second wave of airstrikes on Kabul. Shakir, 22, worked as a tricycle driver for a crockery-rental business. He had left his village at 13 to work as a cleaner because their small plot of land could no longer feed the family. Shakir, or his family, probably never heard of the TTP or could name the capital of Pakistan — yet they lost their breadwinner to the fight between two monsters.

The people of Pakistan face a similar tragedy. Every day, civilians lose their lives in suicide bombings — victims of the very state policies that nurtured Afghan and Pakistani fundamentalist groups. The people of both nations have been used as cannon fodder in the dirty wars of the U.S. and NATO, the former Soviet Union, modern-day Russia, and regional powers, as well as in the power games of generals and clerics.

Pakistan's long romance with fundamentalism dates back to the era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971 1977) — a contradictory figure who wore a Mao-style cap to signal socialist ideals while

simultaneously nurturing Islamist groups. During his rule, Pakistan trained Afghan "Ikhwanis," followers of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood ideology, later exploited by the CIA during the Cold War. Bhutto sent figures such as Ahmad Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to destabilize the secular regime of Daud Khan, Afghanistan's first republican ruler.

The bloody April Coup of 1978 in Afghanistan, backed by the USSR, and the subsequent Soviet occupation — which committed some of the most heinous crimes in the name of socialism, communism, and internationalism — gave the Pakistani government and the CIA a convenient excuse to further arm and fuel Afghan Islamic fundamentalist groups. These groups later became known among Afghans, out of resentment, as the "seven donkeys," due to their dependence on Pakistan's ISI. The Soviet Union derailed Afghanistan's potential path toward democracy by installing its puppet factions — the Khalqists and Parchamites — during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, modern-day Russia is once again backing the Taliban, recognizing their regime and signing agreements to "fight ISIS," though in reality, it seeks to pull the Taliban into its own sphere of influence and away from the U.S. and NATO.

The project expanded dramatically under military dictator Zia-ul-Haq in 1978. The number of Islamic seminaries (madrassas) in Pakistan skyrocketed from 700 in the 1970s to 40,000 in the 2000s, generously funded by the CIA and Arab monarchies. These madrassas produced thousands of jihadists and exported extremism across the region.

Pakistan is home to the largest madrassa in the Islamic world — the Jamia Darul Uloom Haqqania, in Akora Khattak, known as the "University of Jihad." It follows the rigid Deobandi ideology, rooted in a movement once encouraged by the British Raj to weaken secular and revolutionary resistance. Most Taliban leaders are graduates of this madrassa, and the Haqqani Network took its name from it. Benazir Bhutto and her interior minister (1993–1996), Naseerullah Babar, proudly admitted their role in creating the Taliban as proxies. Umar Khan Ali Sherzai, Pakistan's Consul-General in Afghanistan during the Taliban's first rule, later boasted of helping install Mullah Omar and of enforcing discriminatory orders such as forcing Afghan Sikhs to wear yellow badges.

For decades, Afghanistan has been treated as a cash cow by Pakistan's political and military elites. During the Cold War, the Pakistani establishment siphoned off a huge share of the funds and weapons sent by the CIA and its allies for Afghan mujahideen. During the 1990s civil war, military equipment was smuggled into Pakistan. All international NGO funding for Afghanistan once passed through Pakistani banks, pumping millions into its shaky economy. After 9/11, Pakistan earned billions by providing airbases and supply routes to U.S. and NATO forces. Before their withdrawal, the U.S. and NATO gifted Pakistan weaponry worth $7 billion. The government made billions more hosting Afghan refugees, facilitating evacuations, and processing visas — now costing Afghans from S400 up to $1,800 under-the-table.

The Pakistani government and fundamentalist groups have long enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship, each empowering the other to suppress their people. When the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, even many Pakistani liberals celebrated. But their "victory" soon poisoned both nations.

In Afghanistan, girls are barred from schools, women from work, and musicians from their art. In Pakistan, similar darkness prevails: schoolchildren have been massacred, musicians like Ali Haider and Haroon Bacha fled for their lives, and extremist attacks have become routine. While Afghans sink deeper into poverty under war and repression, Pakistanis suffer from economic strangulation by the IMF and other financial institutions.

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ruling elites, militaries, and clerics who use religion and war for power and profit. It is time both nations' ordinary people recognize their shared pain, common enemies, and mutual destiny — to break free from the chains of extremism and exploitation that have enslaved them for generations.