

RCAS Bulletin

Vol.3, No.2, 2024

Nian Peng: Philippine President Marcos Jr's visit to Vietnam:

Creating a 'united front' over South China Sea issue?

Zafar Nawaz Jaspal: US Weapons' Sales to India De-stabilize

South Asia's Fragile Stability

Mairaj ul Hamid Nasri: Durand Line: A Perpetual Bone of

Contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan

March 1, 2024

About RCAS

香港亞洲研究中心| The Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies (RCAS) is a nonprofit research organization focusing on Asian affairs. It is a newly established institution founded in February 2022 by Dr. Nian Peng in Haikou and subsequently moved to Hong Kong in September 2023. We currently have an international research team with nearly 100 resident/nonresident researchers from China and other countries.

RCAS aims to become a leading research institute and think tank on Asian affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. To date, RCAS has conducted research programs on maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS), China's relations with the Indo-Pacific states, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), terrorism/counterterrorism in the Afg-Pak region, and so on. It is committed to promoting maritime cooperation, regional integration, and regional peace in the Indo-Pacific region at large.

RCAS has published nearly ten books in Chinese and English and more than 20 papers in SSCI/SCOPUS/CSSCI-indexed journals. Recent English publications include *Populism, Nationalism and South China Sea Dispute: Chinese and Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022); *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Contemporary Developments and Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2022); *Crossing the Himalayas: Buddhist Ties, Regional Integration and Great-Power Rivalry* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *The Reshaping of China-Southeast Asia Relations in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *Territorial Disputes, The Role of Leaders and The Impact of Quad: A Triangular Explanation of China-India Border Escalations* (2023); *Managing the South China Sea Dispute: Multilateral and Bilateral Approaches* (2022); *China-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan: Assessing Key Interests and Implementing Strategies* (2022); *Hedging Against the Dragon: Myanmar's Tangled Relations with China since 1988* (2021); and *China-Pakistan Conventional Arms Trade: An Appraisal of Supplier's and Recipient's Motives* (2020).

RCAS has also published hundreds of articles, and its researchers have been interviewed in various local and international media outlets, such as *The Diplomat* in the United States, *East Asian Forum (EAF)* in Australia, *Bangkok Post* in Thailand, *Jakarta Post* in Indonesia, *Lian He Zao Bao*, *Think China* in Singapore, *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *China-US Focus* in Hong Kong, *CGTN*, *Global Times*, *World Affairs* in China. RCAS researchers have actively participated in international conferences or study visits in the United States, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, and other places.

Welcome to visit our website: <http://www.rcas.top>.

Address: 1507B, EASTCORE1, No.398, Kwun Tong, Kooloon, Hong Kong
Ph: 00852 2397 7886|Email: hkrcas@163.com|Web: www.rcas.top

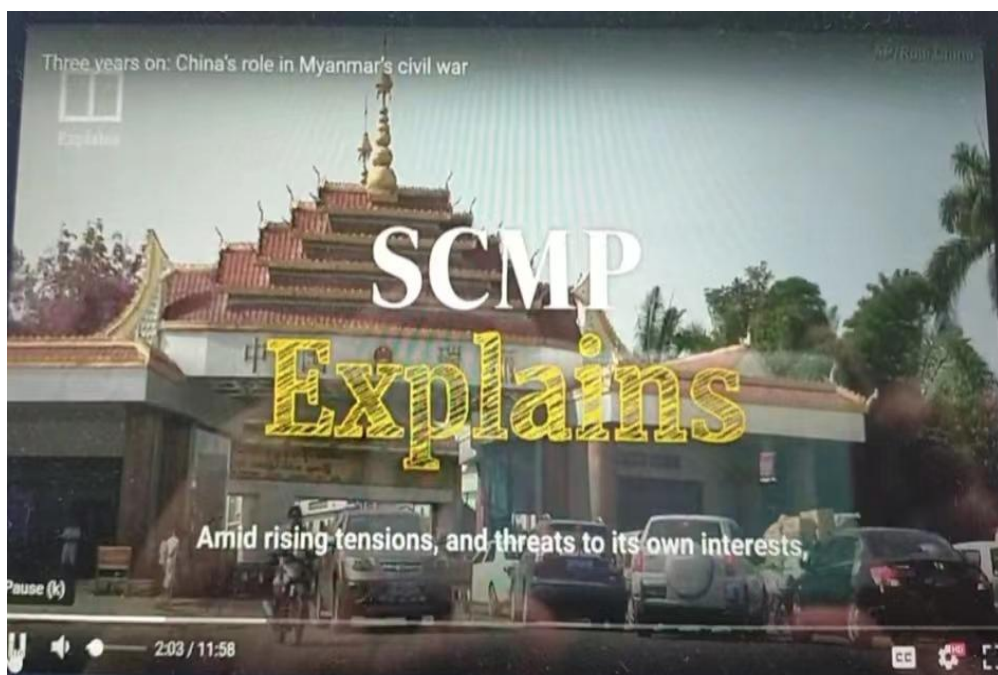
Content

About RCAS.....	1
RCAS Event.....	2
RCAS Commentary.....	7

RCAS Event

Dr. Nian Peng was Interviewed by SCMP on Myanmar's Civil War

On 30 January, 2024, Dr. Nian Peng, Director of RCAS, accepted an video interview from South China Morning Post (SCMP) on Myanmar's civil war. He analyzed the Chinese investment in Myanmar and the China-Myanmar relations.



▲ SCMP's Myanmar Video

The interview can be seen on the SCMP page:

<https://www.scmp.com/video/asia/3250185/after-three-years-civil-war-myanmar-what-has-been-chinas-role-conflict>

RCAS Event

Dr. Nian Peng was Interviewed by HKCNA on SCS Issue

On 6 February, 2024, Dr. Nian Peng, Director of RCAS, accepted an interview from Hong Kong China News Agency (HKCNA) on South China Sea (SCS) Issue. He analyzed the SCS tensions between China and the Philippines and the maritime security of the Indian Ocean.



▲ HKCNA's interview

The interview can be seen on the HKCNA page:

<http://www.hkcna.hk/docDetail.jsp?id=100592753&channel=4661>

RCAS Event

Dr. Nian Peng was Interviewed by HKCNA on China-Maldives Relations

On 8 February, 2024, Dr. Nian Peng, Director of RCAS, accepted an interview from Hong Kong China News Agency (HKCNA) on China-Maldives Relations. He analyzed the Western narrative of BRI's debt trap in Maldives.



▲ HKCNA's interview

The interview can be seen on the HKCNA page:

<http://www.hkcna.hk/docDetail.jsp?channel=2813&id=100594410>

RCAS Event

Dr. Nian Peng was Interviewed by HKCNA on Philippine-US Relations

On 23 February, 2024, Dr. Nian Peng, Director of RCAS, accepted an interview from Hong Kong China News Agency (HKCNA) on Philippine-US relations. He analyzed the impacts of the US elections on the Philippine-US relations and the SCS situations.



▲ HKCNA's interview

The interview can be seen on the HKCNA page:

<http://www.hkcna.hk/docDetail.jsp?id=100604335&channel=2813>

RCAS Commentary

Philippine President Marcos Jr's visit to Vietnam: Creating a 'united front' over South China Sea issue?

Nian Peng

On 29 January, almost two months after the call for a separate South China Sea (SCS) code of conduct (COC) with ASEAN members, Philippine President Marcos Jr initiated his first state visit to Vietnam. Reportedly, both sides signed agreements to prevent untoward incidents in the SCS and to broaden cooperation between their coast guards.



▲The Philippine's Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr (left) and Vietnam's President Vo Van Thuong (right) attend a welcoming ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi on 30 January 2024. (Nhac Nguyen/AFP).

According to Marcos, the accord on maritime cooperation “aims to establish a comprehensive partnership between our coast guards on capacity building, training and personnel and ship exchanges to enhance interoperability operations between our two countries”.

Since the Philippines has sought to build a “united front” with the ASEAN claimant states on challenging China’s claims in the SCS, these agreements might be considered a good start. The Philippines would, therefore, describe them as “great victories”, thus leveraging their ability to garner external and internal support for the Marcos administration.

Giving intra-ASEAN maritime cooperation a boost

Moreover, there is a likelihood of increasing the political will of ASEAN states to promote maritime cooperation. Before Marcos’s Vietnam visit, Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited three claimant states, namely, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei, in January 2024, during which defence cooperation, COC consultations, and trade and investment were the top priorities of discussions. In September of last year, Indonesia conducted its first joint military exercises with its ASEAN neighbours in the SCS.

It is clear that the ASEAN states have expanded their maritime cooperation in the wake of rising tensions in the SCS and intensified competition between China and the US. It seems that the ASEAN states are trying to strengthen their joint capabilities and enhance ASEAN countries’ centrality in hedging against the security risks of great power rivalry in the region. Given ongoing SCS tensions and China-US confrontations, there might be more maritime cooperation between the ASEAN states after Marcos’s state visit to Vietnam.

That said, the significance of Marcos’s Vietnam visit and the agreements on coast guard cooperation should not be overestimated. In fact, coast guard agreements are common among maritime states, especially among SCS claimant states.

For instance, China has signed a coast guard agreement with Vietnam, and the coast guards of the two countries have conducted several joint patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin. China even signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on establishing a joint coast guard committee on maritime cooperation with the Philippine Coast Guard during former President Duterte’s first China tour in October 2016.

Vietnam not necessarily standing with the Philippines

More importantly, Vietnam has taken a very cautious stance on maritime cooperation with the Philippines, as the latter has repeatedly provoked China in the SCS.

In November of the previous year, Vietnam did not overtly respond to Marcos’s call for a separate COC. Instead, it agreed to build a shared future for humankind with China and avoided escalating tensions in the SCS.

Therefore, the coast guard agreement with the Philippines does not mean that Vietnam stands with the Philippines on the SCS disputes or shows support for Marcos's hawkish SCS policy. It is actually an element of Vietnam's balancing act in the SCS; that is, it is expanding maritime cooperation with all the partners, including the claimant states, to enhance its maritime capability without provoking China.

In addition, the main function of the maritime cooperation agreement is to manage the fishing activities of the two countries, as Vietnamese fishing boats usually enter waters claimed by the Philippines as part of its exclusive economic zone.

Different objectives from the Code of Conduct

Although analysts believed that the top leaders of the Philippines and Vietnam included the COC consultations, no bilateral COC agreement was released during the visit.

The two countries have different focuses on the COC. The Philippines mainly focuses on Spratly Islands (Nansha Islands), while Vietnam prefers to protect its interest on Paracel Islands (Xisha Islands).

Furthermore, the Philippines welcomes the deep involvement of external actors, particularly the US, in the COC consultations process, while Vietnam is worried about the escalated tensions in the SCS, especially those brought about by external actors.

No 'united front' against China

Even so, Marcos suggested submitting a joint proposal on the limits of the continental shelves of coastal states to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) at the UN, in which he stated "The Philippines is willing to work with Vietnam for a joint submission at the appropriate time." However, he did not receive a clear response from Vietnam.

In 2009, Vietnam and Malaysia made a joint submission to the CLCS on "information on the limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured in respect of the southern part of the South China Sea". However, they failed to obtain approval from the CLCS due to China's opposition. Since then, there have been no joint submissions.

Given that China has consistently indicated that any form of "ganging up" by Southeast Asian claimants would be considered a hostile act by Beijing and met with strong dissatisfaction, it is unlikely that Vietnam will support the Philippines' proposal for a joint submission to the CLCS.

Overall, Marcos's state visit to Vietnam and the positive outcomes of maritime cooperation could be regarded as successful, but the visit would not be able to generate joint actions or a "united front" against China.

The article was first published at Think China, Singapore, <https://www.thinkchina.sg/philippine-president-marcos-jrs-visit-vietnam-creating-united-front-over-south-china-sea-issue#:~:text=Overall%2C%20Marcos'%20state%20visit%20to,%E2%80%9Cunited%20front%E2%80%9D%20against%20China>.

RCAS Commentary

US Weapons' Sales to India De-stabilize South Asia's Fragile Stability

Zafar Nawaz Jaspal

The transformation of international geopolitics has increased strategic cooperation between India and the United States, which has a deterministic effect on the South Asian strategic environment. Besides, India's aspiration to be a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region reinforces the Americans' Indo-Pacific strategy, Quad, and I2U2-mini-lateral strategic groups stewarded by the US. But such developments encourage a de-stabilizing arms race rather than conflict resolution in South Asia.



▲ The General Atomics-made MQ-9B SkyGuardian drone flies over Europe. (General Atomics).

China and its like-minded littoral states of the Indian Ocean are sensitive to India's blue water Navy buildup with the assistance of the US. Pakistan considers India's military improvement a direct threat to its national security. Therefore, Islamabad has been carefully monitoring the US transfer of sophisticated military hardware to India and adopting a balancing strategy without joining any strategic bloc.

The Biden administration desires India's leading role in the US and NATO's perspicuous strategy to contain China's systematic rise in global geopolitics. It has sanctioned India to purchase state-of-the-art weaponry from the United States. Notably, India has been the major defense partner of the US since 2016; Washington has agreed to sell advanced weaponry, including new emerging technologies, to India in recent years.

On February 2, Washington agreed to sell \$4 billion worth of the most advanced Predator drones built by General Atomics to New Delhi. India's armed forces purchased 31 MQ-9B Sky Guardians for the Indian Air Force, eight for the Army, and fifteen Sea Guardian drones for the Indian Navy. According to the US State Department: "The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet current and future threats by enabling unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance patrols in sea lanes of operation."

The Sea Guardians drones can monitor the seas and submarines, remain airborne for 35 hours at a time, fire hellfire missiles, and carry around 450 kg of bombs. Moreover, to enhance its naval capability, India also bids to purchase six Boeing P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft from the US. These will supplement 12 P-8I Poseidon aircraft that the Indian Navy already operates. These weapons increase the Indian Navy's punch in the Indian Ocean region.

The US is also assisting India in the realm of new emerging technologies. They signed the US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) agreement to collaborate in artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, 5G/6G, biotech, semiconductors, and space. Notably, the cooperation in the said technologies contributes significantly to modernizing India's missile systems.

The induction of these lethal, long-range weapons in the Indian military arsenal will increase India's military capability and compel Pakistan to acquire more advanced ships and submarines, modernize its air force, and invest more in fabricating and integrating emerging technologies to solidify its defensive fence.

Pakistani defense policymakers seem mindful of the changing geostrategic dynamics in their neighborhood and increasing military threats from their eastern neighbor. They understand that if they do not take timely action, New Delhi will have such a lead over Islamabad in defense spending and armed forces modernization that Pakistan will be left with few options. Therefore, despite economic constraints, it has been advancing its armed forces' conventional and nuclear war-fighting capabilities.

On January 2, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) displayed the induction and operationalization of the advanced weapon systems in its arsenal, which evolve it into an effective next-generation air force. Pakistan's Army Chief General Syed Asim

Munir opined that installing new weapons in the air force substantially contributed to ensuring the balance of power in the region.

The Pakistan Navy has been upgrading its fleet as well, by purchasing technologically advanced naval vessels, including submarines from China and Turkish-designed Babur-class corvettes, and indigenously manufactured drones. Besides, Pakistan retested the Ababeel medium-range ballistic missile, designed to carry multiple nuclear warheads, on October 18. It was in response to India's buildup of hypersonic cruise missiles and ballistic missile defense systems.

The modernization of Pakistani missiles, air forces, and the Navy could sustain the conventional balance of power with India. It increases the nuclear threshold between India and Pakistan and could endure strategic stability in South Asia. Paradoxically, the modernization of both sides' armed forces boosts the arms race between them, which has the built-in characteristics to de-stabilize regional strategic stability.

In summary, the steadily increasing firepower of the Indian military with the transfer of American military technology and equipment compel Pakistani defense policymakers to equip their armed forces with state-of-the-art weapon systems to sustain the strategic equilibrium between India and Pakistan despite the defense budgetary constraints due to economic fragility. Nevertheless, this action-reaction further worsens the ugly strategic stability in South Asia.

The article was first published at ARAB News Pakistan, Feb.7, 2024, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2455496>.

RCAS Commentary

Will US-Philippines Dialogue Only Worsen South China Sea Tensions?

Nian Peng

The United States and the Philippines are expected to conduct a “2+2” dialogue in Manila in March, involving US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, and their Philippine counterparts Enrique Manalo and Gilberto Teodoro Jnr.



▲(L-R) Philippine Senior Undersecretary and Officer in Charge (OIC) of National Defense Carlito Galvez Jr., Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo, US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III.

The Philippines will host the talks for the first time since the dialogue began in 2012, with three unambiguous messages likely to be conveyed.

First, Manila is trying to increase its bargaining chips in bilateral talks with China by deepening its diplomatic engagement and defence cooperation with the US.

The Marcos administration has attempted to strengthen its hand in South China Sea disputes with China, primarily by trying to involve other countries in its protests against Beijing while negotiating with it at the same time.

The more robust the ties that the Philippines builds with foreign powers, the more leverage it has in negotiations. Therefore, a reinforced relationship with the US via the “2+2” dialogue would be beneficial to Manila’s negotiations with Beijing.

Second, the US intends to bolster the Marcos administration’s stance towards China by offering substantial support. So far, the Philippines has been dealing with whether and how to continue its hard line against China, given the potential costs involved. The dialogue gives the US a chance to support Manila’s continued assertiveness in the region.

Third, last year’s “2+2” dialogue took place in April, not long before the annual Balikatan exercises between the US and Philippines militaries. Given their enhanced levels of strategic cooperation, both sides may discuss policy coordination on maritime activities, thus broadening the scope of their defence cooperation.

During last year’s meeting, Washington and Manila resolved to “modernise” their alliance and optimise mutual defence capabilities. This year’s dialogue comes as the Philippines continues its operations in disputed waters in the South China Sea.

Late last month, a small aircraft from the Philippines dropped off supplies for troops on a grounded vessel at Second Thomas Shoal, known as Renai Reef in China and Ayungin Shoal in the Philippines. Continuing resupply missions to troops on the beached vessel is likely to be a top priority for the Philippine military going forward.

Given this, Philippine officials are expected to highlight the Second Thomas Shoal issue during the latest dialogue with the US, and Washington is likely to advise on how to maintain the Philippines’ presence in the disputed reef. The two sides are also likely to discuss enhancing the Philippines’ maritime strength by upgrading and modernising its fleet, and holding more joint patrols and military exercises to counter what they see as Chinese aggression in the South China Sea.

On January 17, Teodoro said the Philippines was planning to conduct “more robust” military activities with the US and its allies in the face of a “more aggressive” China. Even so, Washington could still curb Manila’s activities in the South China Sea.

The Biden administration’s attention is currently divided between Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and trying to keep Israel’s war in Gaza from spilling over into the wider Middle East. As such, it is unlikely that the US would be eager to open another front.

If there is to be any confrontation in the South China Sea, Washington would probably prefer the non-military kind.

Last November, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr raised the prospect of a separate code of conduct for the South China Sea with fellow claimant states Malaysia and Vietnam. More recently, he travelled to Vietnam to sign agreements that included establishing a joint coastguard committee to discuss common issues.

While consultations over the code of conduct might come up during the US-Philippines dialogue, a similar bilateral agreement between the two is unlikely any time soon. Manila and Washington have strengthened their policy coordination amid the consultations over the South China Sea code of conduct, as they seek to ensure their interests are protected.

For its part, China has expressed strong disapproval over what it sees as US intervention in code of conduct talks. It has repeatedly warned that it would see the presence of external actors in territorial disputes in the South China Sea as a hostile move and treat it as such.

In conclusion, next month's "2+2" Philippines-US dialogue is likely to advance defence cooperation between the two countries. Any resulting increase in Manila's assertiveness in the South China Sea could risk intensifying confrontation in the disputed waters.

*The article was first published at South China Morning Post (SCMP), Hong Kong, Feb.10, 2024,
<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/asia/article/3251227/will-us-philippines-dialogue-only-worsen-south-china-sea-tensions>.*

RCAS Commentary

Durand Line: A Perpetual Bone of Contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Mairaj ul Hamid Nasri

Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanakzai; the Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan and the then top interlocuter of Taliban during Afghan Peace Process, pronounced that “Afghanistan will never accept Durand Line as permanent official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.” He made this announcement while addressing a huge gathering for commemorating 35th anniversary of withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan in Logar province of Afghanistan.



▲ The Durand Line is the 2,640-kilometer (1,640-mile) border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
(National Geographic)

While responding to the claim made by Mr. Stanzakzai, Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry has rejected his statement and stated that it is a “Self-serving and fanciful claim because the legitimacy and sanctity of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border are firmly grounded in Geography, History and International Law.”

Pakistan and Afghanistan both face many issues, that are persistently disturbing their mutually beneficial relationships. Blame Game related to cross border terrorism and irredentist claims have always dominated the news regarding their relationships. Regardless of the government system in Afghanistan, border management and legality of the border has time and again brought both the countries at bull's eyes situations. Pakistan has been facing cross border terrorism and infiltration since the NATO invasion that has augmented the instability inside Pakistan. Although, Pakistan covered majority of the border with barbed wire, yet due to hard mountainous terrain it becomes impossible to cover the whole border. Thus, the blame game between the two states remains intact.

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, Durand Line-the internationally recognized border between Pakistan and Afghanistan-has been a point of tension in their ties. Even though both Afghanistan and British India, the two states at the time, had mutually agreed to, but Afghanistan refused to recognize Pakistan, because of this border. But because of incorrect information and a misinterpretation of the relevant document, this problem persists.

The majority of Afghans think that this agreement was only intended to last for a century. In the event that this was accurate, the contract would have ended in 1993. The prominent members of the mainstream in Afghanistan are likewise unwilling to dispute this fact. However, no explicit evidence or testimony has yet been provided by the Afghan government or the activists to support their claims.

But initially, the agreement's legality was limited to the lives of the Afghan kings who approved it. Amir Abdur Rahman and Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, the British India's foreign secretary, initially signed the pact in 1893. Following Abdur Rahman's demise, Sir Louis Dane and his son King Habibullah Khan signed the accord when they subsequently came in Kabul in 1904 carrying the draft of a new one. March 21, 1905, saw the signing of the "Dane-Habibullah agreement" between the two states. This arrangement lasted until 1919, when the Third Anglo-Afghan War broke out.

On August 8, 1919, after the Anglo-Afghan War, Afghan Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Khan signed a "peace agreement between Great Britain and Afghanistan" in Rawalpindi with a peace delegation. "The Afghan Government accepts the Indo-Afghan Frontier accepted by the late Emir" (Habibullah Khan), according to Article 5 of this treaty.

Thus, the King released the Durand Line from any personal undertaking for the first time. On November 22, 1921, the "Kabul Agreement" reaffirmed this understanding. As to the Rawalpindi agreement of 1919, Article 8, the "Respective Parties recognize the Indian Afghan Border."

Moreover, on July 30, 1930, King Nadir Khan approved the agreements with the British Government via a diplomatic instrument. “I am proud to officially confess that our position about both the agreements [the 1919 agreement and the June 1923 trade agreement] enjoy complete validity and are enforceable with full force,” the statement reads.

At a later meeting with the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs on July 31, 1947, Afghan Prime Minister Shah Mehmood Khan proclaimed that all border agreements between the Afghan and British governments would be void upon the former’s abdication of control over British India. As a result, the border dispute caused Pak-Afghan relations to deteriorate from the moment of its foundation. Since then, Afghan consulates and embassies have made a concerted effort to spread this official perspective throughout the globe.

International law, however, disagrees with the Afghan government’s position. The Vienna Convention on the Succession of States in Respect of Treaties (VCSST) of 1978 addresses state succession difficulties on a global scale. Once this treaty was ratified by a large number of states, it came into effect in 1996. “Succession of states cannot impact international borders agreed upon as a result of an agreement and rights and obligations concerning international borders created through an agreement,” the VCSST’s Article 11 makes very clear. Therefore, the legality of the Border is unaffected by Pakistan’s establishment as the successor to British India.

Pakistan is among the several states that have ratified the Treaty, despite Afghanistan not being a signatory. Furthermore, the VCSST preamble specifies that matters outside of its purview will be resolved in line with international customary law. Since customs are the source of law, Afghanistan’s position about the Durand Line is nullified in light of Pakistan’s existence. Even in the unlikely event that the Parties take this matter to the International Court of Justice, it does not appear that the Afghani position regarding illegitimacy could be validated and supported.

The fact that Afghanistan’s borders are shared by countries other than Pakistan is also cause for concern. Without Afghanistan’s assistance, these borders were drawn by the Great Powers, namely, Britain and Russia and Britain and Iran. With the exception of the Durand line, which is the only boundary that both states have mutually agreed upon, Afghanistan has not yet questioned the legitimacy of these borders.

With the Taliban’s taking control of Kabul administration in August 2021, it was firmly believed that most of the issues including border management, between the countries will be resolved now. But the hopes were in vain, as the Taliban administration is not cooperative as was thought earlier. Cross border attacks have been increased during the last two years and the safe havens of Pakistani militants in Afghanistan are still operating against Pakistan.

Many incidents in this year are reported to have been controlled from Afghanistan. The incident of Peshawar police mosque attacks in January, and D. I Khan incident in December are reportedly controlled from Afghanistan. The militants are operating from Afghan land with full impunity and support of Afghan Taliban that brings Pakistan to a position where it will eventually decide to target the safe havens across the border.

Soon after the D. I Khan incident, Pakistan's army chief visited United States of America with the aim to take US administration into confidence so that American defense mechanism and drone technology present in Afghanistan may be used against the militants' hide outs.

In light of the above facts and figures, it is high time for Afghanistan to accept the reality and embrace the Durand Line as permanent legal border between the countries so that both the states may move ahead for resolving many other issues that are still unresolved. Pakistan is second home for Afghans and in hard times Pakistan has always supported Afghans, so Afghanistan should not turn their second home into an enemy just because of its unjustified claims and hollow jingles.

Cited as: Mairaj ul Hamid Nasri, "Durand Line: A Perpetual Bone of Contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan", RCAS Commentary, Feb. 21, 2024.