



THE STUDY OF THE AFGHANISTAN–PAKISTAN BORDER ISSUE IN THE RESEARCH OF DOMESTIC SCHOLARS

<https://doi.org/10.57033/mijournals-2026-3-0331>

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Abstract. *This article examines how scholars in Uzbekistan have studied the Afghanistan–Pakistan border issue and its relationship to the Afghan conflict and regional security. It reviews dissertations, monographs, journal articles and reference works addressing the Durand Line, Pashtun identity, Pakistan’s policy towards Afghanistan and the implications of instability for Central Asia. The approach is a qualitative review of the literature discussed in the article, comparing the subjects, arguments and explanatory frameworks of individual scholars rather than presenting new field data. The review identifies several connected strands of research: the historical formation of the border, the role of ethnic and territorial questions, the influence of neighbouring states, and the relationship between Afghan statehood and regional security. Studies of the broader Afghan conflict provide substantial context, while works devoted specifically to the Durand Line offer a more focused treatment of the border dispute. The article concludes that these contributions form a useful basis for further research, but that a more integrated examination of the border question remains necessary. This conclusion concerns the works reviewed here and does not claim to establish the completeness of the wider literature.*

Keywords: *UNAMA, the Taliban movement, Durand Line, Pashtunistan, Afghan Turkestan, “Afghan Pandora’s Box,” “Afghan Dualism,” “April Revolution”*

INTRODUCTION

Given the considerable impact of the border issue between Afghanistan and Pakistan on regional and global security, as well as on the prospects for interregional cooperation, this conflict has consistently attracted significant scholarly attention from researchers and specialists. In particular, the issue has constituted a principal subject of investigation for several prominent domestic scholars and has been examined in depth.

The aim of this article is to identify the principal contributions of scholars in Uzbekistan to the study of the Afghanistan–Pakistan border question and to assess how these contributions relate to the wider literature on Afghanistan. The discussion focuses on the works cited below; it is a narrative literature review rather than an exhaustive bibliometric survey.

The method is qualitative and comparative. Dissertations, monographs, articles and reference works are considered in terms of their treatment of the Durand Line, Pashtun



communities, neighbouring states and regional security. Biographical details are included where they explain a scholar's engagement with Afghanistan. The historical assessments quoted in the discussion are attributed to their respective authors.

MAIN PART

One of the prominent domestic scholars of Afghan studies who has conducted extensive research on the Afghan problem, the military-political and ethno-political situation in Afghanistan, and the influence of external powers is Abdusamat Haydarov, Doctor of Political Sciences and Professor. A. Haydarov engaged in diplomatic activities in Iran and Afghanistan for many years. In particular, he served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1996 to 1999, Head of the Southern Regional Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) from 2009 to 2014, and Head of UNAMA's Political Affairs Division from 2014 to 2016. In his dissertation entitled "Central Asia in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Центральная Азия во внешней политике Исламской Республики Иран), A. Haydarov thoroughly examined the unstable situation in Afghanistan in the late twentieth century and the influence of the Afghan factor on Iran–Pakistan relations and the dynamics of international relations in Central Asia. In this dissertation, the scholar of Afghan studies presents valuable information about the situation along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, including the reasons for the emergence of the Taliban movement. For example, the author writes in his dissertation: "The Taliban movement, whose members were Afghan graduates of Pakistani madrasas and who had been financed by the United States through Pakistani intelligence services since the late 1980s, emerged in the southern provinces of Afghanistan in the spring of 1994" (Haydarov, 1996:285). Furthermore, in his scholarly articles, A. Haydarov provides noteworthy analytical information on the influence of certain radical religious organizations that emerged along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border on the security of Afghanistan and the wider region (Haydarov, 2020).

A prominent representative of the school of Afghan studies in Uzbekistan is Abdurahim Mannonov, Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor, and Chairman of the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan Friendship Society. A. Mannonov's professional career has been closely associated with Afghanistan. In particular, he studied at Kabul University in Afghanistan in 1965, worked as a Pashto-language interpreter in Afghanistan from 1971



to 1974, and undertook official assignments there in 1977 and 1983. Since 2018, he has chaired the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan Friendship Society, established at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev. As A. Mannonov himself noted, the establishment of the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan Friendship Society was a historic event, since no such society had previously existed in the history of relations between the two countries to facilitate the establishment of friendly ties with Afghanistan (Mannonov, 2018). The Orientalist and Afghan studies scholar’s research on the Pashto language and the life and activities of the Pashtuns serves as a primary source for younger researchers in Afghan studies. In particular, in the collection of articles entitled “Issues of Oriental Studies,” A. Mannonov points to the use of the term Afghanistan to denote the land of the Pashtuns and writes the following: “In sources dating back to the twelfth century, the term ‘Afghanistan’ was initially used not to refer to a country occupying its present geographical territory, but rather to the ‘land of the Afghans (Pashtuns)’ inhabiting the territories extending from the Sulaiman Mountains to the Indus River on both sides of the present-day common border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan’s current geographical territory took shape by the end of the nineteenth century, and dozens of peoples and ethnic groups who had lived side by side since ancient times in its northern, northwestern, and eastern territories, together with the Pashtuns, became inhabitants of the country known as ‘Afghanistan’” (Mannonov, 2022:111).

Among the scholars who have investigated relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the research of Shoislom Akmalov, Candidate of Political Sciences and Associate Professor, is of particular significance. Sh. Akmalov worked as an interpreter in Afghanistan from 1975 to 1979 and as an attaché at the USSR Consulate General in Mazar-i-Sharif from 1989 to 1991. In 2002, he defended his Candidate of Political Sciences dissertation entitled “The Problem of Resolving the Afghan Crisis in Contemporary Pakistan–Iran Relations” (Проблема афганского урегулирования в современных пакистано-иранских отношениях). In this dissertation, Sh. Akmalov conducts an in-depth analysis of the positions and policies of the Islamic Republics of Pakistan and Iran regarding the political situation in Afghanistan, noting both the convergence of these countries’ approaches to the Afghan problem and, in certain respects, conflicts of interest: “Islamabad viewed the Taliban as the principal instrument for achieving its geostrategic objectives in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Tehran, in turn,



regarded this Pakistani policy as a major threat to the interests of both Afghanistan and the Central Asian states. It was precisely this factor that led Iran, together with Russia and India, to provide comprehensive support to the Northern Alliance, the main obstacle to the implementation of Pakistan's plans" (Akmalov, 2002). In his book "Afghanistan at a Crossroads: Problems and Prospects" (Афганистан на перепутье: проблемы и перспективы), the Afghan studies scholar also presents noteworthy analyses relevant to our research. In particular, the author expresses his views on "Pakistan's Policy toward Afghanistan" as follows: "The main cause of the Pashtun separatist movement is the issue of the 2,640-kilometre-long 'Durand Line,' agreed upon in 1893 between Afghanistan's ruler Abdur Rahman and Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary of British India. Since 1949, this border issue has become a territorial dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It should be particularly emphasized that no government in Afghanistan, whether under the monarchy, the People's Democratic Party (PDPA), the Taliban, or Hamid Karzai, has recognized the 'Durand Line'" (Akmalov, 2014).

Another scholar who has conducted research on the unstable political situation in Afghanistan and its impact on relations with the Central Asian states is Nihola To'laganova, Doctor of Political Sciences and Professor. In 2006, N. To'laganova defended her doctoral dissertation in political sciences entitled "The Afghan Conflict and Its Consequences in the Context of the Formation of a New Security System in Central Asia" (To'laganova, 2006) (Афганский конфликт и его последствия в контексте становления новой системы безопасности в Центральной Азии). In this dissertation, N. To'laganova presents analytical observations on the origins and development of the Afghan conflict and its impact on neighboring regions, as well as scholarly views on the role of the Afghan conflict in the foreign policies of Central Asian states and their approaches to forming a new security system in the region. In her monograph "The Afghan Factor in Contemporary International Relations in Central Asia" (Афганский фактор в современных международных отношениях в Центральной Азии), N. To'laganova interprets the Afghan conflict as a product of the bipolar confrontation of the late 1970s. She also discusses the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and the Afghan dimension of the foreign policies of global and regional actors, namely the United States, China, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan, and provides valuable information on Uzbekistan's participation in efforts to resolve the Afghan conflict. Notably, the author presents the



following analysis in her monographic study: “The most contentious issue in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan is that the status of the border territories inhabited by Pashtuns has not been fully determined. Pakistan and Afghanistan are separated not even by a border, but by the Durand Line. Following the British withdrawal from India, no Afghan government recognized it as a fully established state border” (To‘laganova, 2004:83).

The research of Suhrob Bo‘ronov (PhD), a scholar of Afghan studies who has consistently investigated border issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly the problem of the “Durand Line,” and the scientific and analytical observations presented in his works are of exceptional relevance. In particular, his assessment of the Durand Line as the principal key to resolving the Afghan problem and his characterization of this line as “Afghan Pandora’s Box” have opened new avenues for future research in Afghan studies. Notably, in political studies of Afghanistan, he developed a new theory of “Afghan Dualism,” dividing it into two categories: “Afghan National Dualism” and “Afghan Regional Dualism.” In his theory of “Afghan Regional Dualism,” the author raises dualistic debates concerning whether Afghanistan geographically belongs to Central Asia or South Asia and provides arguments for each position. According to his conclusion, Afghanistan should not be regarded as part of either Central or South Asia, but should instead serve as a “bridge” connecting the two regions. Furthermore, in his research, S. Bo‘ronov comparatively analyzes the positions of Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding the Durand Line and concludes that resolving the issue would lay the foundation for lasting peace in Afghanistan. These observations are also reflected in S. Bo‘ronov’s monograph entitled “Uzbekistan’s Geopolitics in the Processes of Establishing Peace and Stability in Afghanistan” (Bo‘ronov, 2021:204). The information presented in this monographic study is particularly important for examining in depth Pakistan’s influence on the political situation in Afghanistan, ethnoterritorial problems associated with the Pashtuns, and the reasons for the emergence of the Taliban movement on Afghanistan’s political scene. In addition, in his scholarly article “The Durand Line – Key of the Afghan Problem” (The Durand line – Key of the Afghan problem) (Buranov, 2020), the scholar comprehensively addresses the origins of the “Durand Line” problem and thoroughly analyzes the historical, ethnic, and geopolitical dimensions of this line.

Among scholars of Afghan studies, Inomjon Boboqulov, Doctor of Legal Sciences



and Professor, also stands out. In his book “Afghanistan: A Reference Dictionary” (Boboqulov, 2021), I. Boboqulov provides detailed explanations of political, military, and legal terms relating to Afghanistan. In particular, the author devotes special attention to the “Durand Line” and “Pashtunistan.” In addition, the dictionary contains valuable information about individuals who hold considerable influence and political power in Afghan society, making it a rare reference work for specialists in the field.

Domestic scholars have also conducted research on the impact of the border issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan on regional security, the military-political situation in Afghanistan, and border security. Among them, the studies of Po‘lat Makkamboyev, Candidate of Legal Sciences and Associate Professor, merit particular attention. His research on political processes and instability in Afghanistan and their impact on the security of Central Asian states is of considerable importance. In his monograph “The Military-Political Situation in Afghanistan and Its Impact on the Border Security of Central Asian States” (Военно-политическая ситуация в Афганистане и ее влияние на пограничную безопасность государств Центральной Азии), P. Makkamboyev provides extensive information on historical events from the establishment of the Afghan state to the beginning of the twenty-first century, changes in Afghanistan’s political life, particularly the 1978 “April Revolution” (also known as the “Saur Revolution”), and the deployment and subsequent withdrawal of USSR troops from Afghanistan. In the book, the author also presents his analytical views on the escalation of the Afghan conflict and its impact on Central Asia, including the “fratricidal war” in Tajikistan, as well as on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Bonn and London agreements concerning Afghanistan. The author writes the following about the signing of the agreement that established the Durand Line: “Having become convinced that the Pashtun tribes could not be brought within their sphere of influence through military force, the British Cabinet decided to settle the situation through diplomatic negotiations with the Emir of Afghanistan on the delimitation of the Afghan–Indian border. Under intense political pressure from the British colonial regime, Emir Abdur Rahman was compelled to sign the text of the agreement proposed by Durand on 12 November 1893” (Makkamboyev, 2013).

The emergence and formation of the foundations of statehood in Afghanistan have been investigated by Rustam Rashidov, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Sciences. In his monographic study “The Question of Statehood in Afghanistan: History



and the Present,” R. Rashidov analyzes major events in Afghanistan’s history from the establishment of the Durrani state to 2001. The scholar presents his analysis as follows: “The Durand Agreement may be regarded as the culmination of Britain’s policy of interference in the internal affairs of the Afghan state. It is noteworthy that, after Abdur Rahman, the Afghan ruler who had been compelled to sign the Durand Agreement, no leader of the Afghan state or government that came to power recognized it” (Rashidov, 2017). Furthermore, in the abstract of his dissertation entitled “The Influence of International and Regional Processes on the Formation of Afghan Statehood,” R. Rashidov discusses the Durand Agreement and its intended objectives as follows: “It becomes evident that, in response to Afghanistan’s claims to the city of Peshawar, Waziristan, and a number of other Pashtun-inhabited territories situated to the right of the boundary line under the 1893 Durand Agreement, the British government encouraged the Afghan state to annex territories in the north of the country and firmly establish its authority there” (Rashidov, 2018). Writing that the British pursued several objectives through these actions, R. Rashidov singles out two of them: “First, the intention was to prevent the borders of Tsarist Russia from coming into direct contact with British possessions in India. Second, the lands in the north of the country (Afghan Turkestan or Southern Turkestan) were intended to serve as a form of compensation for territories separated from the Afghan state as a result of the Durand Agreement and incorporated into British possessions in India. It has been demonstrated that, by encouraging the incorporation of the north of the country (Afghan Turkestan or Southern Turkestan) into the Afghan state as compensation for the southeastern territories detached from it by Great Britain under the Durand Agreement, and by participating in that process, the British government of the period pursued a distinctive policy” (Rashidov, 2018). Moreover, in his scholarly article “The Geopolitical Factor as a Factor Influencing the Situation in Afghanistan” (Rashidov, 2013:136–141), R. Rashidov discusses in detail the geopolitical interests of the major centers of power—the United States, Russia, and China—in Afghanistan.

The abstract of the dissertation “Pakistan and the Afghan Crisis (December 1979 – April 1988)” (Пакистан и афганский кризис (декабрь 1979 г. - апрель 1988 г.)) by Natalya Xon, Candidate of Historical Sciences, provides a comprehensive examination of the deployment of Soviet troops to Afghanistan, the impact of the “Afghan problem” on Pakistan’s domestic and external environment, and Pakistan’s contribution to



resolving the Afghan crisis during the 1980s. In this dissertation, the scholar analyzes the significant changes in Pakistan's foreign policy associated with the deterioration of the situation in neighboring Afghanistan as follows: "First, Pakistan emerged from the international isolation in which it had found itself before 1979. Second, Pakistan–United States and Pakistan–Saudi Arabia relations developed, while regular exchanges of views with China and Iran were established. Under these circumstances, from 1982 onward, the principal directions of Pakistan's activities on the international stage concerning the 'Afghan problem' began to take shape" (Xon, 1997). Of particular importance are the following observations by N. Xon concerning Pakistan's decisive role and influence on the military-political situation in Afghanistan during the Soviet–Afghan War: "Pakistan participated in the Geneva negotiations held under United Nations auspices to achieve a peaceful settlement of the military conflict in Afghanistan. Ultimately, these negotiations concluded with the signing of the final agreements in April 1988. Under their central provisions, Soviet troops were completely and unconditionally withdrawn from Afghanistan; however, because of the absence of a mechanism capable of resolving the conflict within Afghanistan itself, which remains a principal factor destabilizing regional security, the signing of these documents proved insufficient for a successful and comprehensive resolution of the Afghan crisis" (Xon, 1997). Indeed, the scholar's conclusion regarding the necessity of addressing Afghanistan's internal problems remains a relevant subject of investigation for researchers in this field today.

CONCLUSION

Overall, domestic scholars have conducted numerous studies concerning the Afghan conflict. Although a number of the scholarly works discussed above have partially examined the border issue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the specific problem of the "Durand Line" and its implications for regional and international security have not been investigated sufficiently broadly or deeply. In this regard, it may be said that only S. Bo'ronov's article entitled "The Durand Line – Key of the Afghan Problem" encourages, to a certain extent, a more detailed examination of this issue.

The reviewed literature therefore suggests a research agenda that connects historical boundary formation with ethnic ties, state policy and border security. The value of the works discussed lies in their complementary perspectives; the remaining task is to bring these perspectives together in a study focused explicitly on the border issue. This assessment is limited to the publications considered in the present article.



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