

Bernard Shaw, an Irish dramatist and Nobel prize winner, once said that a British “does everything on principle”. He fights you on patriotic principles, he robs you on business principles and he enslaves you on imperial principles. And this is exactly how the British dealt with the Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan who ruled Afghanistan from 1880-1901. He was robbed of his territory, and his people were subjected to British influence.

The Durand Line agreement, signed between the British diplomat and civil servant Mortimer Durand and the Afghan monarch Amir Abdur Rahman Khan on the 12 November 1893, was written in a language which even the Afghan monarch himself did not know or understand. The Afghan Amir considered the agreement as a temporary understanding and would never have imagined that by signing one simple document, he would not only divide the Pashtoons but also lose a huge portion of Afghan territory.

The Durand Line agreement was a bilateral treaty which did not contain any clause regarding the transfer of territory to a third party or state. Moreover, all treaties concluded with the British, along with Durand Line agreement, were abrogated by Ghazi Amanullah Khan according to the great convention (*Loya jirga*).

Towards the end of World War II (1939-1945), the British influence over its colony in the subcontinent declined and two new states, by the names of Pakistan and India, were created in August 1947.

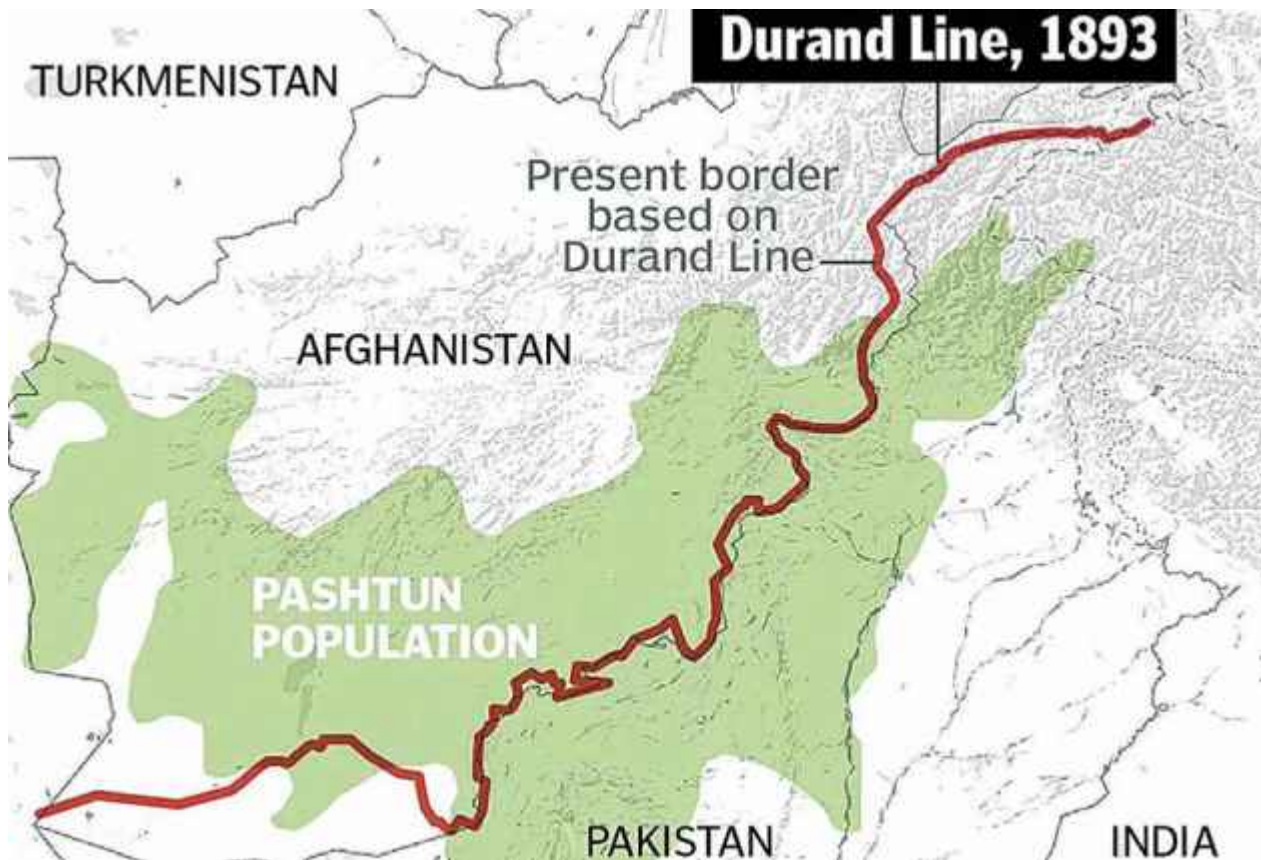


Image: Durand Line Map/ Outlook

The issue of Durand Line was highlighted in world politics when Afghanistan claimed its territory from the newly found state of Pakistan after the British withdrawal from the region. **This was the reason why Afghanistan did not recognize Pakistan and objected to the country's membership in the United Nations.**

Afghanistan and Pakistan are two Islamic states that share a similar civilization, similar culture and many other similar values and norms. But, unfortunately, both states have been entrapped in this hereditary enmity for the last 100 years. Durand line has been a major obstacle that has prevented both states from developing good relations and working towards absolute gains instead of relative gains.

Furthermore, the instability and destruction backed by Pakistan through different proxies in Afghanistan is the consequence of the Durand Line along with some other factors.

Both Afghanistan and Pakistan have their own logic and argument for supporting their stance, but Afghanistan is not currently in a position to get back its land or even to

detriment Pakistan through this mean.

Durand Line is only a trump card for the politicians in Afghanistan to gain support from the public and has affected all the spheres of Pak- Afghan relations, particularly trade relations.

These two neighbouring states could have reached billions of dollars worth of bilateral trade and could have had good relations had they resolved this issue. Whenever any of these two states have found the opportunity, they have exploited this issue and this has led to further deterioration instead of a solution to the problem.

Afghanistan, being a war-ravaged state, needs to build good relations with all the regional states in order to recover and improve its collapsed economy. Moreover, Afghans have realized that, in this era of regionalism, trade, and globalization, both states need to collaborate for common interests. It is a popular saying among the Afghans that, **“even if there is only a single Afghan left on the Earth, the Durand Line will not be accepted because it has deceptively separated Afghan brothers”**.

Both nations need to find a manageable way instead of a permanent solution. By putting the issue aside, the two states can work towards the development of cordial relations. Moreover, this is not the time for the Afghans to raise this issue internationally because we know that comparatively, Pakistan is in a better position and has very strong international diplomatic support through which it could win the case.

The current Afghan government also has the same policy for the Durand line issue which is clear from their stance on the unilateral fencing by Pakistan. We are also well aware of this geographical fact that we, the Afghans and the Pakistanis, will be here forever and don't have any alternative to leave this region. We should take lessons from the past and follow the current European policies of collaboration.

Furthermore, Afghanistan is the heart of Asia. If there is a stable Afghanistan, there will be a prosperous Pakistan and if there is an unstable Afghanistan, there will be no tranquillity and peace in the whole region and all the states will face the consequences.

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