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Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long border of over 2,600 km (the Durand Line) and strong historical, ethnic and cultural ties. Despite this, their relationship has always been tense. The return of the Taliban to power in 2021 and recurring conflicts along the border have increased mistrust. Efforts by countries like China to mediate have helped somewhat, but challenges remain. Some of the major factors responsible for tense relationship between the countries are given below

(1) Border Disputes:

Afghanistan does not formally recognise the Durand Line though it had signed the treaty in the late 19th century. This has led to regular clashes along the border. In October 2025, Pakistan and Afghanistan exchanged heavy fire along

'the border, causing casualties and forcing some civilians to flee.

(2) Terrorism and Security Concerns:

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of giving safe havens to militants especially the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who carry out attacks in Pakistan. Afghanistan on the other hand struggles to control all militant groups because of political and tribal constraints. In June 2025, a TTP suicide bombing in North Waziristan killed 17 people, including security personnel.

(3) Refugees and Humanitarian Issues:

Millions of Afghan refugees live in Pakistan, putting pressure on resources like education, health and jobs. Disagreements on repatriation and access to services create additional tension.

(14) Trade and Economic Disputes:

Frequent border closures disrupt trade and hurt economy of border regions. After the October 2025 clashes, Pakistan closed crossings like Torkham and Chaman, affecting commerce and transit.

(15) Regional and geopolitical factors:

Third-party influences from China, the US, Iran, Qatar etc. complicate relations sometimes.

Sometimes mediations fail because both sides still distrust each other.

Despite these factors, there are some very effective ways to improve relations between the two neighbouring countries. Some of these ways are discussed below.

(i) Dialogue and Confidence building:

There is a dire need of

regular talks at diplomatic, security as well as economic levels. Also at borders, joint border committees should be set up to quickly resolve disputes.

(2) Joint Security Measures:

Both the countries need to work together to stop militants crossing the border. For this purpose, we need to share intelligence and allow neutral observers to verify claims.

(3) Economic Cooperation:

Trade is a very important key to improving relations and bilateral ties. Trade and border crossings should be reopened under agreed security rules.

Both countries should also invest in cross-border roads, markets and energy projects to create shared interest.

(4) Humanitarian Cooperation:

Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work together on refugee management and support services.

International agencies can be used to help with repatriation and prevent disputes.

(5) People-to-People Contacts:

Cultural, educational and media exchanges should be promoted. For this purpose, local communities and tribal leaders should be involved to build trust at the grassroots level.

Pakistan and Afghanistan face complex challenges i.e. border disputes, terrorism, refugee issues, trade problems and mistrust. Recent incidents like the 2025 cross-border clashes and TTP attacks show how fragile relations are.

To achieve lasting peace,

both countries need cooperation on security, trade and humanitarian issues, combined with efforts to build trust among people and communities. Only a balanced and long-term approach can bring stability to the region.