

# **Pak-Afghan Relations (2001-2017): A Prisoner's Dilemma Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

*Pak-Afghan relations in post-Taliban era are a narration of mistrust and a display of the Prisoner's Dilemma. Despite Pakistan's efforts to maintain good neighbourly relations, it is being blamed for chaotic situation in Afghanistan, providing safe havens for miscreants in FATA, sponsoring terrorism and suicide bombing in the latter. On the other hand, Pakistan is also suspicious of Afghanistan's India-centric policies, which results in insurgency and unrest in FATA, Balochistan and different parts of the country. Despite several commonalities and both being allies in the war against terrorism, the trust gap however is so broad that both the countries cannot decipher their disagreements bilaterally. Resultantly, both have become a recipe of never ending violence and allowing regional powers to interfere in their affairs and exploit the situation to their own advantage. Pak-Afghan relations cannot afford mistrust and hostility, which has repeatedly caused negative repercussions on their relations. The paper employs Prisoner's Dilemma approach to examine the nature of Pak-Afghan relations and draw a conclusion for trust building via its repeated reciprocal strategies. In addition, the theoretical framework explains that reciprocal strategies, if adopted, will enable Pakistan and Afghanistan to break Prisoner's Dilemma, sustain trust and convert their limited cooperation into full cooperation based on mutual trust.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mistrust, Prisoner's Dilemma, Pak-Afghan Relations.

## **Introduction**

Pak-Afghan relations revolve around the central theme of trust and mistrust. In Pak-Afghan relations mistrust rather than trust remained a

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dominant and mutual phenomenon. The intensity of mistrust towards each other has varied in different regimes. Although brief cordiality occurred from time to time, it has never been enough to provide a consistent direction.

For most part of Pakistan's independent history, relations with Afghanistan have been problematic, characterised by recurrent mutual suspicions which most of the times are noticeable in the policies of interference and even in attempts at undermining cooperative measures.<sup>1</sup> Following the 2001 invasion of the United States (US) led coalition forces and northern alliance and the resulting overthrow of Taliban regime in Kabul, Pakistan recognised the first democratically elected Hamid Karzai's government, offered aid and expressed its desire for establishing friendly relations. However, the nature of relationship between them showed fragility, marked by heightened mistrust and a situation of dilemma. Relations improved after Ashraf Ghani succeeded Hamid Karzai on September 21, 2014 Both countries vowed again to work for establishing friendly relations; they signed an MoU aimed at eliminating terrorists' safe havens. Pak-Afghan relations were moving smoothly until these were impacted by terrorists' attacks in August 2015 in Afghanistan. The Afghan government pointed a finger towards Pakistan and blamed it for not being honest in establishing friendly relations, which upset the rapprochement process.

The post-Taliban era reflects a situation of the Prisoner's Dilemma for both Pakistan and Afghanistan, not allowing them to develop strong and stable relationship to implement joint cooperative strategies. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan see each other in a zero-sum relationship where the gain of one is the loss of the other. The Prisoner's Dilemma represents a situation of conflict in which the two actors interacting with each other have to opt for a rational choice i.e., cooperation or defection. They are seeking security but any concrete steps for bringing peace and security are lacking on their part and a lack of harmony and defection is dominant.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Feroz Hassan Khan, "Rough Neighbors: Pakistan and Afghanistan" *Strategic Insights*, 2:1 (2003), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/>.

<sup>2</sup>Rahimullah Yousafzai, "The New India-Pakistan Battle Ground," <http://www.rediff.com>.

In view of alleged involvement of the Pakistani media in anti-afghan propaganda, former President Karzai's government banned Pakistani newspapers and their websites. Pakistan's radio and television programmes could hardly be heard.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan, too, banned Afghan channels in response to Karzai's decision of not permitting Pakistani channels to broadcast programmes. Telecast of Dari and Pashtu channels were allowed in the past but then they were stopped for not having a Pakistan Electronic Media Regularity Authority (PEMRA) license.<sup>4</sup> The resurgence of the Taliban, the Afghanistan-India nexus, various internal and external security issues faced by Karzai's government and the deteriorating law and order situation in Pakistan deepened mistrust.

President Ashraf Ghani who succeeded Karzai tried to find common grounds. Unlike his predecessor, Hamid Karzai, President Ghani adopted a policy of rapprochement towards Pakistan. For that purpose, he deferred the execution of the strategic partnership agreement with India; he sought close ties with Pakistan's security establishment and introduced initiatives to ease Pakistani concerns over cross-border terrorism. Pakistan, in turn, managed to bring the Taliban representatives to the negotiation table in Murree on July 7, 2015. The Heart of Asia Conference was held in Islamabad on December 6, 2015. But, unfortunately, Afghan government-Taliban peace process derailed after the announcement of the death of Mullah Omar, the former Afghan Taliban leader. After a brief period of bonhomie, the rapprochement process came to a halt; President Ghani started blaming Pakistan for a series of terror acts in Afghanistan which strained the already fragile relations. This highlighted quotient of mistrust and created the Prisoner's Dilemma.

In bilateral relations cooperation without sufficient trust is possible which can be converted into full cooperation and win-win situation by employing right strategies. In Pak–Afghan case, there is limited cooperation in diplomatic, economic and security fields but without sufficient trust defection is dominant. According to the Prisoner's Dilemma cooperation is always limited because of mistrust, uncertainty and lack of communication. It is important to note that Pakistan provides

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<sup>3</sup>Zahid Iqbal Bajwa, "What Ails Pak-Afghan Relations," *Statesman*, June 23, 2008.

<sup>4</sup>Rahimullah Yousafzai, "Pak-Afghan Relations: A Pakistani Narrative," <http://www.pildat.org>.

transit trade facility to Afghanistan under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATT).<sup>5</sup> It plays a pivotal role in Afghanistan's reconstruction of roads, hospitals, and educational institutions. Moreover, it provides Afghanistan with a market for agricultural commodities, especially food grains and fruits. Both have vowed to cooperate in counter-terrorism efforts and become part of forums like Tripartite Commission<sup>6</sup> to counter terrorism.

Nevertheless, these efforts must be capitalised upon through complete cooperation with mutual trust and understanding. Such a development will help to stabilise the security and economic situation in both the countries as well as break the Prisoner's Dilemma.

This section of the paper focuses on applying the theory of Prisoner's Dilemma to Pak-Afghan relations. It aims to understand the concept of mistrust in bilateral relations in the light of the Realist school of thought, which is the root cause of Prisoner's Dilemma. The second section highlights the application of two actors Prisoner's Dilemma theory to Pak-Afghan relations in the post-Taliban period — where they have two choices, cooperation (C) and defection (D).

The Prisoner's Dilemma is a situation of conflict, which shows why, states or individuals opt whether or not to cooperate. In Prisoner Dilemma, if actors cooperate, they both receive a payoff. If one cooperates and the other does not, the cooperating player receives the smallest possible payoff, and the defecting player the largest. If both players do not cooperate, they receive a payoff, but it is less than what they would gain if both had cooperated.<sup>7</sup> Defection dominated their relationship in the period under study in contrast to cooperation. An effort has been made to adopt a refined course by keeping mathematical modelling minimum. As a substitute, efforts have been made to elucidate issues hypothetically so as to keep the argument parsimonious and focus on problems generating the dilemma.

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<sup>5</sup> ATT was signed in 1965 between Pakistan and Afghanistan under which Pakistan will provide transit facility to land locked Afghanistan.

<sup>6</sup> In order to curb the terrorist threat, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US formed a Tripartite Commission in 2003. The main task of the Commission is to coordinate military efforts in the US-led war against terrorism, <http://www.welpolitik.net/>.

<sup>7</sup> Tehseena Usman, "Trust and Mistrust: A case of Pak-Afghan Strained Relations (2001 –2008), (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Peshawar,2013).

## Prisoner's Dilemma and Mistrust

Mistrust and suspicions are the main elements behind the Prisoner's Dilemma. Mistrust is the thinking that the other actor is determined to take advantage of one's cooperation rather than repaying it. The Cold War period can best explain the phenomena where mistrust was the root cause of a conflict between the US and the Soviet Union, therefore, they resorted to offensive measures against each other. States can live peacefully if both the actors show consent. On the contrary, if they believe that the other side has some hidden agenda and is unwilling to cooperate it leads to conflicts and anarchy.<sup>8</sup> Mistrust can hinder cooperation among groups just as it can between two individuals. Scholars such as Thucydides, Hobbes and Herz has emphasised the anarchical nature of world politics which creates mistrust among states, prevents cooperation and creates the Prisoner's Dilemma. The views of Herz, who gave the concept of the security dilemma, are a reminder of Thucydides' argument that, "what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, attaining cooperation in such an environment of mistrust is against reality. As a result, it becomes extremely difficult for states to trust each other and they largely view other's intentions negatively.<sup>10</sup>

Scholars have analysed different reasons of mistrust between the states. Thomas Hobbes' analysis of human nature as being selfish, aggressive and insecure when applied to International Relations (IR) portrays states as selfish, aggressive and insecure as they are organismic entities. The pursuit of security and the maximisation of power at the expense of other states causes mistrust, uncertainty and leads the states to enter into arms race, lowering their trust level even if they want to cooperate with each other.<sup>11</sup> In such a situation, attaining cooperation is most difficult in international politics. The adversary's military power, geography and its aims and objectives are the underlying factors, which

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<sup>8</sup>Andrew Kydd, "Trust, Reassurance and Cooperation," *International Organization*, 54:2 (Spring, 2000):325-357.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game theory, and Cooperation," *World Politics*, 40:3, (April, 1988), 317.

<sup>10</sup>Brian C. Schmidt, "The Primacy of National Security," in Steve Smith, Amelia Head field and Tim Dunne eds., *Foreign policy: Theories Cases, Actors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008),161.

<sup>11</sup> Brian C. Schamid, "The Primacy of National Security,"16.

create uncertainty and ultimately mistrust. It compels states to adopt hard line policies, which often have disastrous consequences.<sup>12</sup>

However, in the later part of the Cold War structural realist like Kenneth Waltz held international system responsible for anarchy among states. According to him, international system is anarchical and uncertainty is a common phenomenon. Therefore, there is little room for trust. In such circumstances, a state is responsible for its own well being and existence as no other power will come to guarantee its existence. Waltz's structural realism gives birth to two concepts i.e., offensive and defensive realism, giving useful accounts of trust and mistrust.

Hardcore realists or offensive realists believe that there is a deep-rooted, incoercible mistrust between states that prevents states from cooperation and causes conflicts. The main proponent of this view is John Mearsheimer. He says, "There is little room for trust among states because a state may be unable to recover if its trust is betrayed. Each state must guarantee its own survival since no other actor will provide security to it. All other states are potential threats, and no international institution is capable of enforcing order or punishing powerful aggressors."<sup>13</sup> Offensive realists hold that parity of power is responsible for insecurity and mistrust.<sup>14</sup> They view mistrust as a permanent feature of international relations, which shapes the behaviour of the states and compels them to maximise their power at the cost of other states.

Defensive realists such as Jervis do not consider mistrust a static phenomenon and rather calls it a changeable phenomenon. At one point of time, it is high enough to maintain cooperation, they believe that some states trust each other enough to cooperate and enter into agreements and can have normal relations. While there are other states who have deep-rooted mistrust of each other which leads to security dilemma.<sup>15</sup> Strictly speaking, soft core realists or defensive realists believe that states do not trust each other because of anarchic world system and uncertainty about

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<sup>12</sup> Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking out of Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance and the Problem of Uncertainty," *International Security*, 31:2, (Autumn, 2006): 151-152.

<sup>13</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15:1 (Summer 1990), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking out of Security Dilemma," 156.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

the intentions of other countries but they can achieve cooperation on the bases of reciprocity. Signals of good intentions, monitoring each other's actions and retaliation against defection or cheating can compel them to cooperate.<sup>16</sup>

### **Pak-Afghan Relations in the Light of the Prisoner's Dilemma**

The Prisoner's Dilemma theory is suited to analyse the nature of Pak-Afghan relations. It is interesting, innovative and analyses the pros and cons of cooperation. Various studies show that mistrust and suspicions are the main reasons behind the Prisoner's Dilemma. Robert Jervis highlights that when two rival states interact in a situation of the Prisoner's Dilemma one state always looks at the cooperative measure of the other with doubt; anything that is preferred by a state is always viewed with doubt. In addition, if one actor takes keen interest in an issue, it will lead the adversary to develop a policy against the expectations of the former.<sup>17</sup>

Pak-Afghan relations during the period under study depict the same scenario presented in the diagram below.

**Figure No. 1**  
**Pak-Afghan Prisoner's dilemma**

		Pakistan	
		Cooperation	Defection
Afghanistan	Cooperation	3,3	1,4
	Defection	4,1	2,2

mutual cooperation =3, mutual defection =2, cooperation =1 defection=4  
Prisoner's Dilemma.

**Source:** Tehseena Usman, *“Trust and Mistrust: A case of Pak-Afghan Strained Relations (2001-2008). 2013. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Peshawar.*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Jervis, ‘Realism, Game Theory and Cooperation,’ 327.

Interdependent on each other ('in Jail' together), their desire is to maximise their gains, without any concern for the other, which ends up in zero-sum game. Under the rule of the game, Prisoner's Dilemma, Pakistan and Afghanistan have two choices i.e., to cooperate or to defect, no matter what strategy the other adopts. Compromise or cooperation yields better results than defection. When they both defects they do worse than when both cooperates. Herein lies the dilemma. The idea of comparative gains and protecting oneself against the other compels them towards security dilemma leading to the Prisoner's Dilemma. Both countries use all means to attain their objectives that lack cooperation. Each actor takes independent decisions; they do not have complete information about the other actor's intentions and uncertainty remains dominant. Under the Prisoner's Dilemma, strategy of the states emanates from their past experiences of mistrust which prevent them from bilateral cooperation.

There is limited cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Individual rationality dominates which makes them more selfish and less cooperative, resulting in trust deficit. Collective rationality — good for all — takes a back seat as cooperation is suspected to result in losses than a win-win situation for both the neighbours.

Jervis highlights that countries do not cooperate and prefer mutual defection over mutual cooperation. The main logic behind their non-cooperation is not that they cannot overcome the dilemma but because they are facing dead locks on a number of issues.<sup>18</sup>This is true in case of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, as there exists a minimum degree of trust between both which enables them to enter into agreements. Moreover, cooperation could be seen on economic side but, unfortunately, it is usually undermined by political deadlocks. Dead lock in bilateral relations occurs when actors stop to cooperate because of security dilemma, competition or stalemate, even when rewards are greater.<sup>19</sup> There are several reasons which prevented reconciliation i.e., Afghanistan's claim on Pakistani territory, politics of interference, attitude of policy makers and absence of norms and multilateral institutions. In addition, the resurgence of Taliban, various internal and

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<sup>18</sup>Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory and Cooperation", 323.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Donnely, *Realism and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21.



external security issues faced by Afghanistan and the deteriorating law and order situation in Pakistan strain their bilateral ties.

The entrenched cause of their dilemma has been the Durand Line issue and Afghanistan's claim over Pakistani territory. This historical legacy affected even the post-Taliban era, as Karzai's government refused to validate the Durand Line. Afghanistan believes that it was signed with British India, not with the government of Pakistan and rejects its legal status. Pakistan, on the other hand, has always considered Durand Line a settled issue. Pakistan believes that Durand line agreement signed by his highness Amir Abdur-Rahman with British India in 1893 was confirmed by the successive Afghan rulers, Amir Habibullah Khan in 1905 and King Amanullah Khan in 1921 confirmed the legality of the Line.. In addition, the latter citing the clauses of international law reiterates that it does not accept the unilateral renouncement of boundary line. Therefore, be it a declaration of Loya Jirga of 1949 or the Parliament of Karzai, unilateral declarations on renouncing Durand Line have no value.<sup>20</sup> In such a scenario, disagreement over the Durand Line, presented dilemma and created mistrust leading to blame game of using destabilising measures by supporting each other dissident groups.

It is also important to note that both Pakistan and Afghanistan desire to overcome their long-standing deadlocks but are entangled in a manner that has restricted them to move forward on various fronts. Moreover, the policy makers and the society in Pakistan and Afghanistan are such that the conflicts between the two countries are seen as a 'zero-sum' game. These beliefs have been further reinforced by the fact that the nature of the 'game' between the two countries has forced the policy makers to defect. They have justified their acts of defection by blaming the other side for not giving up their strong stances on major issues of confrontation. They do not want to lose to the other side, thereby the Prisoner's Dilemma continued, strengthening mutual mistrust. In addition, the role of individual policy makers, their beliefs and ideology in determining the preferences towards each other cannot be overlooked.

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<sup>20</sup> Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (England: Ashgate Pub Ltd.2005) 65.

Moreover, in the past and during the period under study, both the countries interfered in each other's politics and provides support to the dissident groups on quid-pro-quo. Pakistan is suspicious that Afghanistan was providing support to Baloch and Pashtun nationalists while Afghanistan blames that Pakistan provided support to Islamists and relied on religious slogans and leaders, which further deteriorated their relations resulting in mistrust. In the post-Taliban Afghanistan, Pakistan was suspicious of its support to Baloch nationalists and pursuing India-centric policies; targeted at Pakistan that allows India to forge insurgency in Pakistan. In return, Afghanistan accused Pakistan of tolerating Taliban, believing that Pakistan is using them as its strategic assets against Afghanistan.

Accusations and counter-accusations without taking into account that collective rationality worsens the dilemma in their relations. Confrontational posture in the shape of blame game, accusations and counter accusations proved a set back and created dilemma. As a result, despite pledges of friendly relations by both countries, the Prisoner's Dilemma overshadows the cooperative dealings aggravated by external actors and domestic compulsions. Mistrust leading to the dilemma is socially constructed. The ruling emotions alters the logical thinking of people. Fear and quest for security remains dominant. Both the government and the people, in the wake of the ongoing security situation, think of Pakistan as an interventionist country leaving no opportunity to intervene in Afghanistan. Such ill feelings have widened the trust gap and influenced the attitude of both the countries. Both the countries expressed their desire several times to work closely but this verbal commitment has not translated into actual behaviour. They remained engaged in negative propaganda and blame game and their bilateral relations were marred by mistrust. Afghanistan held Pakistan responsible for the bloodshed and devastation in the country, whilst Pakistan blamed Afghanistan for the insurgency in its tribal areas and the deteriorating law and order situation.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the dilemma is the manifestation of the danger both perceived mutually.

Pakistan in the above-mentioned period did take some measures i.e., established check posts, proposed fencing and mining, which were

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<sup>21</sup> Rahimullah Yousafzai, "The New India-Pakistan Battle Ground," <http://www.rediff.com>.

rejected by Karzai as his government did not recognise the Durand Line. Both the countries are security seekers but real steps for bringing harmony and peace had been missing on their part. This heightened the quotient of mistrust and pushed them towards the situation of Prisoner's Dilemma. Both sought alliances with different countries to protect their interests. Afghanistan got closer to India, which is Pakistan's main adversary in the region. For Pakistan, Afghanistan is a strategic base to counter India from hurting her interests in oil rich Central Asian Republics (CARs). On the contrary, a compliant pro-Indian Afghan regime would exert pressure on Pakistan thus resulting in Pakistan's strategic encirclement. Karzai government allowed India to establish consulates in the provinces near Pak-Afghan border i.e., Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif. India proposed building dams on Kunar and Kabul rivers, which Pakistan believes will deprive it of an important water resource. Such a situation has also added to Pakistan-Afghanistan Prisoner's Dilemma since Pakistan is suspicious of growing India-Afghanistan relations which has deadlocked their fragile relations.

Afghanistan gave India greater role, which increased Pakistan's security dilemma. As a result, Pakistan decries for a minimum Indian role limited to reconstruction only. This behaviour on the part of both disrupts cooperation. Therefore, Pakistan and Afghanistan have two choices either to pursue cooperation (stop propaganda, blame game, and give more concession) or pursue hostile relations (interfere in each other's internal affairs), which will significantly destabilise both the countries. On the other hand, if both countries remain committed to cooperation, this will result in large pay-offs and increased economic activity. Another scenario is that, if one country tries to cooperate and the other country adopts a policy of antagonism, the cooperative country will be punished greatly whereas the non-cooperative country will align itself with other countries and will see internal improvements. Defection as explained earlier is the dominant strategy. Engaging them into cooperation is a complicated task but it is the only way out for their stable relations in the future.

### **Can Pakistan and Afghanistan Break the Prisoner's Dilemma**

The question arises that can Pakistan and Afghanistan break the Prisoner's Dilemma? The answer is positive because both will benefit

from reciprocal and repeated interactions, which can build trust over a period of time. Development of trust is a rational task and cannot be built in a shorter span of time, as a lot of risk taking and anxiety management is required on the part of the trusting actor. Countries can benefit from cheating only in the short run. They cannot benefit from cheating in a long-term relationship. The best option is to alter the pay-off and make defection less attractive by applying reciprocal strategies where both countries can copy each other's cooperative actions. Cooperation may be sustained through strategies such as reciprocity and reassurance. Interacting repeatedly, taking risks and successful implementation of commitments reinforce the motivation of trusting actor to rely upon each other and enlarge the scope of cooperation.

Reciprocity is a principle in international law,<sup>22</sup> that works in international trade where it is a central theme of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It can be effectively used for invoking cooperation and building trust between states.<sup>23</sup> Axelrod, Keohane and Goldstein's analysis explains that reciprocity can be used for trust building in the long term by examining the interactions among the states by using iterated Prisoner's Dilemma. Rajmaira, while referring to Robert Axelrod, believes that daily monitoring is important for reciprocity to work among adversaries which ultimately leads to cooperation. It reduces conflicts by evolving cooperation over a period of time for short term as well as for long term.<sup>24</sup> The reason why the countries do not cooperate in the Prisoner's Dilemma is because it does not give them the chance to communicate with each other, therefore, their motives and interests are unclear. But the strategy of continued and persistent interactions which Axelrod said that tit for tat is effective, simple and sustains cooperation. Wilson maintains that it is predictable and consistent. He holds that "when rewards are applied consistently and promptly to desired behaviour and punishments to undesired behaviour, behaviour can be controlled very effectively."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Zoller, *Peace Time Unilateral Remedies* (New York: Transnational, 1984), 15.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations," *International Organization*, 40:1 (Winter, 1986): 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Sheen Rajmaira, "Indo-Pak Relations: Reciprocity in Long Term Perspective," *International Study Quarterly*, 41:3 (Sep, 1997): 548.

<sup>25</sup> S.S Komorita, J.A. Hilty, and C.D Parks, "Reciprocity and Cooperation in Social Dilemmas," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 35: 3 (1991): 495-499.

Axelrod argues that states can cooperate if they practice reciprocity. He says that reciprocity is the major strategy to enforce agreements and uses the Prisoner's Dilemma game to explain the behaviour. He believes that when a game is played again and again players can retaliate against each other's defection, it makes deception unacceptable and will lead to cooperation. Thus, cooperation does not necessarily need trust.<sup>26</sup>

One of the reasons for strained Pak-Afghan relations and the Prisoner's Dilemma is that both are of the view that none of them is reciprocating instead they are taking benefit of their restraints.<sup>27</sup> Pakistan believes that it established check posts than Afghanistan did, conducted numerous military operations to prevent cross-border infiltration but this act was not reciprocated. Afghanistan continues supporting Baloch and other militants who has escaped from military operations in Pakistan; like Mullha Fazlullah who fled the 2009 military operation in Swat is said to have taken refuge in Afghanistan. Same views of aiding insurgencies are also held by Afghanistan, which inhibit trust. The main way to reduce mistrust and practice reciprocity is through signalling. Signals will convey Afghanistan's intentions to Pakistan or vice versa. Sending cooperative signals play an important role in diminishing fears. Once fear diminishes, cooperation starts the trust gap reduces.

People-to-people contact between Pakistan and Afghanistan including artists, musicians, journalists, traders, researchers may pave path for talks on entrenched issues i.e. water rights, smuggling/drug trafficking, transit trade etc. The importance of people to people contact can be gauged from the fact that they play an important role in conflict resolution as sometimes, official negotiations do not help in de-escalating the conflicts. It changes the perception of the people and builds bridges between them. Schelling highlights that states can reduce mutual mistrust if they enter into small agreements first where mutual risks are less. In this way, states will be able to check the credibility level without taking much risk. Gradually, following this technique, states will

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976): 58-113.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Hoffman, "Détente," in Joseph S. Nyeed., *The Making of American Soviet Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1984), 231-264.

gather much needed information about each other's intentions and credibility before entering into large and risky agreements. Therefore, starting negotiations and entering into small agreements over water rights, smuggling/drug trafficking, transit trade will improve the environment for entering into large agreements on deep-rooted issues.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, reciprocity in trade relations, giving each other trading benefits can further augment their relations. Pakistan's trade with CARs is still in embryonic phase. Afghanistan relies on Pakistan's port for its trade with the outside world. Permitting Pakistan to develop uninterrupted trade with CARs will generate immense revenue for Afghanistan thereby creating an economic interdependence between them. Moreover, power asymmetry in Pak-Afghan relations can play a positive role in overcoming mistrust. Pakistan, being a powerful state than Afghanistan, can set the agenda for initiating a relation based on full cooperation, which Afghanistan can negotiate with the former leading towards full mutual cooperation.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are rational and asymmetrical actors with a shared future. They have choices between cooperation (C) and defection (D) (See Figure 2 below). In the Prisoner's Dilemma, the pay-off in defection is higher than cooperation, therefore, there is always temptation for defection. Whatever strategy one party chooses, the other will always choose defection. In Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma game both party can play repeatedly, for example, in round one and two, Pakistan and Afghanistan chooses to cooperate by using strategy of reciprocity and both are rewarded. In the round three, Afghanistan chooses to defect and profit more, as a result trust is damaged; in round four, both are tempted to defect. Defection inflicts loss because the defector is punished. Both lose as a result they choose to cooperate in the next rounds as it yields more benefits. If both the players play and replay they will learn that cooperation can be a rational choice. This will lead to increased mutual trust.

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<sup>28</sup> T.C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 45.

**Figure No. 2**  
**Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma Game**

	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Afghanistan
Round 1	C	C	3	3
Round 2	C	C	3	3
Round 3	C	D	0	5
Round 4	D	D	1	1
Round 5	D	C	5	0
Round 6	C	C	3	3

C: Cooperation

D: Defection

No. of Players: 2 (Afghanistan, Pakistan)

Reward: 3 points

Defection: 5 points

Mutual Defection: 1 point

Bad Pay off: 0

No. of Rounds: 6

Another policy, which emphasises repeated interaction and builds trust, is the policy of reassurance. To build trust, the reassurance policy emphasises more on formal and informal institutions. Future wars or conflicts cannot be avoided. They will be caused by bad structural and institutional arrangements. Pak-Afghan conflict can be avoided through the use of institutions, which will mediate between them and look for long term benefits. Establishing regimes and institutionalising their relations can play a vital role in promoting cooperative relations.<sup>29</sup> Consistency in cooperation efforts leads to dependency. The creation of regional institutions that act as mediators between Pakistan and Afghanistan can alleviate mistrust and promote transparency. This could result in lessened hostility and reduced mistrust in bilateral relations to the benefit of both the states.

## Conclusion

The Prisoner's Dilemma revolves around the pay-off that evolves from making different decisions. Individual policy makers, their thinking and

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<sup>29</sup> William J. Long, *Economic Incentives and Bilateral Cooperation* (United States: University of Michigan, 1996), 10.

ideologies shape the preferences towards each other. In order to achieve cooperation, Pakistan and Afghanistan need to alter the pay-offs in such a way that cooperation becomes the first choice and collective rationality prevails. As mentioned earlier repeated plays of the Prisoner's Dilemma are called Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma. The Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma studies the long-term decision making where the actors have shared future and interaction. This phenomenon can best be seen in Pak-Afghan relations. Pakistan and Afghanistan have to interact repeatedly For developing trust if they are to achieve their desired objectives. They have to compromise on several fronts i.e., they have to cooperate and compromise on the issue of the Durand Line and Pashtunistan as well as on each others' strategic sensitivities in order to build trust. It is hypothesised that repeated and monitored interaction on all fronts is the best strategy for cooperative relations. Pakistan realises that in order to secure its western flank and to secure the trade routes to Central Asia in quest for oil and gas in the wake of current energy crises, it needs to work closely with Afghanistan; while Afghanistan being land locked will benefit from repeated interaction.

In the Prisoner's Dilemma, third actors like the US, China and Russia can play a vital role by facilitating Pakistan and Afghanistan to communicate clearly and encourage them to collaborate and work together. Whatever happens in Afghanistan has a direct impact on Pakistan's security and vice versa. Policy makers on both sides should realise that cooperation has better pay-offs. 'Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma' considers the nature of the conflict to be a positive sum game, as it is a win-win situation for both the countries. The first and foremost thing in Pak-Afghan cooperative relations is to transform the game from 'zero-sum' to a 'non-zero sum'. Realists in a "zero- sum game" stress upon keeping the strategies secret to put their opponents off guard. In contrast, in a "non-zero- sum game" it is important to achieve the cooperation of the other actor through transparency in strategic intentions.<sup>30</sup>

In order to come out of this dilemma, transparency and consistent policies need to be adopted. This will signal positively to the other actor

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Van Ness, "Designing a Mechanism for Multilateral Security Cooperation in North East Asia," *Asian Perspective*, 32, 4 (2008): 114.



and will help build confidence and encourage cooperation.<sup>31</sup> In addition, it can be hypothesised that the policy of reciprocity and reassurance in the form of governmental dialogues and mediation can succeed in reducing conflict and inculcating mutual trust. The economic integration of the region can change their limited cooperation into full cooperation, solve the Prisoner's Dilemma and end their rivalry.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 114.