

# 2.2. Regional context

## 2.2.1. Relations with Afghanistan

The border between the two countries, the Durand Line, remained a key point of contention.128 Heavy fighting broke out along the border in October 2025 after Afghan Taliban forces attacked several Pakistani military posts, amid accusations that Pakistan had earlier conducted airstrikes on Afghan territory, including in Kabul.129 The conflict was described as the deadliest between the two nations since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 2021.130 Consequently, a ceasefire was agreed upon but talks to achieve long-lasting peace stalled.131 Pakistan reportedly continued to accuse the Taliban *de facto* administration of harbouring groups like the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA),132 which Afghanistan denies.133 Afghanistan, for its part, alleged that Pakistan was sheltering the local offshoot of the Islamic State group.134 TTP's alleged refuge in Afghanistan and its militant actions within Pakistan were reported central to the ongoing tensions between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban.135

Pakistan continued border fencing and fortification efforts during 2025,136 with clashes at the border leading to a lengthy closure. Economic relations deteriorated as a result, with border closures disrupting cross-border trade flows137 and the political disagreements leading to a halt of reciprocal trade between the two countries.138 Furthermore, Pakistan’s policy of deporting Afghan nationals continued throughout the reference period.139 According to Medecins Sans Frontieres the policy initially focused on undocumented Afghans, mainly the refugee population, but was later broadened to cover Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders as well as holders of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, who had been granted short-term legal stay.140 An acceleration of the number of deportations was reported in April 2025141 as well as between September 2025 and January 2026.142

By the end of February 2026, Pakistan and Afghanistan conducted a series of cross-border airstrikes targeting areas along their shared frontier, including, *inter alia*, Pakistani strikes on Kabul.143 Hostilities intensified throughout March,144 with the UN reporting severe impacts on civilian populations,145 such as the airstrike on a drug rehabilitation facility in Kabul, which killed over 400 people.146 Following a brief ceasefire during the Eid al-Fitr holiday, Pakistan resumed military operations against Afghanistan, which, as of the end of March 2026, were reported to be continuing and increasing in intensity.147 For more information, see section 4.1.2. Border security, including incidents along the Durand Line (Afghanistan), the Line of Control (India), and the Pakistan–Iran border.

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