Strategic Geographic Area of Pakistan and Afghanistan

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | World Geography*

Why in News?

Recently, tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan escalated into armed clashes along the disputed Durand Line, with both sides carrying out cross-border strikes and military operations.

The Durand Line

- It is the ***international land border that stretches for about 2,600 km*** between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Intended to establish "spheres of influence" rather than a permanent international border.
- It is an agreement between the *British (Sir Henry Mortimer Durand) and Abdur Rahman Khan*, the then-emir of Afghanistan.
- **Established in –** 1893.
- **Stretches –** From the border with Iran in the west to China's border in the east, spanning through the Karakoram range to the Registan desert.

- It cuts directly through the ***Pashtun tribal heartlands***, making it a long-standing source of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Important Border Crossings

- They are critical trade and transit points between the two countries, particularly for goods moving between South Asia and Central Asia.
- **Torkham Border Crossing –** It is a major border connecting ***Nangarhar province of Afghanistan with Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.***
- **Operational Status –** As of early 2026, the border frequently faces closures due to cross-border skirmishes and security tensions.

- **Ghulam Khan Crossing –** It connects North Waziristan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan) to Khost province, Afghanistan.
- **Chaman – Spin Boldak Crossing –** It connects Chaman town in Chaman District, Balochistan (Pakistan) to Wesh and Spin Boldak in Kandahar Province (Afghanistan).
    - **Part of –** A key route linking the provincial capitals Quetta (Pakistan) to Kandahar (Afghanistan).

Important Regional Provinces

- **Kandahar (Afghanistan) –** The historical and political power base of the Taliban.
- **Paktia (Afghanistan) –** Known for its rugged, mountainous terrain and deep-seated tribal autonomy.
- It has historically served as a staging ground for cross-border resistance movements.
- **Nangarhar (Afghanistan) –** It is the eastern gateway of Afghanistan to Pakistan.
- **Khost (Afghanistan) –** Khost is a southeastern Afghan province bordering Pakistan's North Waziristan and surrounded by mountainous terrain.
- The Khost–Waziristan region has long been a centre of militant activity and cross-border insurgency networks.

Reference

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