

Cross-Border Exchanges: A Bibliometric Analysis Of Pak-Afghan Bilateral Trade Dynamics And Future Research Agenda

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Abstract

Purpose: This study will conduct a bibliometric analysis to map the intellectual structure, key themes, influential publications, and research trends in the domain of Pak-afghan trade and transit. The objective will be to fill a niche on the topic in question.

Methodology: Data was gathered from Google Scholar and Scopus databases. The analytical tools used is VOS Viewer, which includes co-citation mapping, bibliographic coupling, and co-word analysis. The pattern of citations, the co-authorship networks, and the keyword co-occurrence in the papers regarding Pak-Afghan trade and transit were subjected to analysis.¹

Findings: important topics, landmark publications, and major trends and gaps in the field. The inadequacy of ICT, political hostility, security issues, and various other factors, were also among the issues that are faced in bilateral trade. Opportunities for policy-level intervention and regional initiatives for improvement in trade relations were also pointed out.

Contributions: This study is a rare examination of Pak-Afghan bilateral trade using bibliometric analysis. Such findings would elucidate the complexity of interactions in the realm, making this area a fertile one for further research on regional economic cooperation and trade dynamics.

Policy Implications: This findings of the research point toward a dire need for strategies to remove impediments hindering Pak-Afghan trade relations. The policymakers should focus on the reduction of trade barriers, such as customs delays, infrastructural constraints, and nontariff barriers, through the enforcement of agreements like APTTA and ATTA. Improved political stability and governance along these trade routes, alternation of improved alternative trade routes, and people-to-people connections through easy visa procedures and cultural exchange can further improve trade relations. Addressing these issues will create a conducive environment for robust trade, contributing to regional stability and economic growth.

Keywords: Pak-Afghan Trade, Bibliometric Analysis, Regional Economic Integration, Trade Barriers, Geopolitical Dynamics, VOS-Viewer.

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Introduction

Afghanistan, a landlocked country, lacks access to a seaport, a crucial requirement for establishing a sustainable and lucrative trading network. For an extended period, this geographical limitation has been utilized by neighboring countries as a means of exerting pressure (S. Rahim, 2018; Rehan et al., 2024; Watandar et al., 2023). Historically, Afghanistan has engaged in substantial trade with India, China, Central Asian nations, and European countries. However, due to geopolitical shifts in the region and the worsening political conditions within Afghanistan, these trade links have significantly diminished, particularly since the founding of Pakistan. Despite Afghanistan's opposition to Pakistan's membership in the Security Council, it has strongly depended on Pakistan (Khan, 2008).

Since the establishment of Pakistan, Afghanistan has sought to utilize the Gwadar port for international trade, particularly with India (S. A. Rahim, 2018). However, trade between India and Pakistan has experienced fluctuations over time. Consequently, landlocked countries such as Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bolivia, and others initiated a movement within the UN to gain access to seaports (Onon, 2020; S. Rahim, 2018). This movement convinced the UN to address the concerns of landlocked countries, leading to the organization of the first conference on the law of the sea in 1973, followed by a second in 1974. Ultimately, these efforts culminated in the establishment of the Law of the Sea, granting landlocked countries the right of free access to the sea (Onon, 2020; S. Rahim, 2018).

Afghanistan shares a border of approximately 1250km with Pakistan, making it the closest neighbor and a lucrative market for its exports. According to statistical data, Afghanistan ranks at the top of the list of countries to which Pakistan exports goods, and reciprocally, Pakistan holds a prominent position in Afghanistan's import and export activities. In efforts to enhance trade facilitation, Afghanistan entered into an agreement known as the Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) with Pakistan in 1965, initially for a duration of 40 years. Subsequently, this agreement was renewed under a new name, Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) in 2010 but failed to implement (Ahmed & Ahmad, 2018; Hotak & Publish Article In the United States, 2021; Stanikzai, 2022). Despite the existence of these agreements, international laws, and the bilateral movement of high-level political and commercial authorities (S. Rahim, 2018), the question arises as to why border closures between the two countries persist. Why informal trade, and What prompted Afghanistan to explore alternative trade routes and seek new markets and seaports for its trade activities?

This study aims to address these questions by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the existing literature on Pak-Afghan trade and transit. By utilizing bibliometric methods, this study will map out the intellectual structure, key themes, influential publications, and research trends in this domain. This approach not only helps in understanding the historical and current state of research but also identifies gaps and future directions for scholarly work.

Academic research on Pak-Afghan trade has primarily concentrated on assessments of accords like ATTA and APTTA, as well as bilateral trade challenges between the two nations, despite its strategic relevance. A rigorous bibliometric review of Pak-Afghan trade and transit is lacking in the literature. Pakistan-Afghanistan commercial ties receive little scholarly attention. The lack of comprehensive study on Pak-Afghan trade's benefits and drawbacks hinders policymaking and regional economic development.

This bibliometric study aims to fill knowledge gaps by reviewing the literature on Pak-Afghan trade routes and their mutual advantages. Pak-Afghan trade and transportation are complex, and this study seeks to illuminate stakeholders' potential and problems through a detailed analysis of citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrence. This study contributes to the existing literature by three ways.

1. **Academic Contribution:** This study pioneers the application of bibliometric analysis to Pak-Afghan bilateral trade research. Researchers and scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the intellectual landscape and pursue new academic pathways by illuminating this complex interaction. This work can inspire further research on regional economic cooperation and trade dynamics.
2. **Policy implications:** the results of the study have several important policy implications, especially in terms of policymakers concerned with Pakistan –Afghanistan trade policy. The policymakers could better understand the issues and opportunities related to bilateral trade through scrutiny of the subtleties of these arguments. Such understanding could allow policy optimization on the part of the governments to derive and explore maximum opportunities for bilateral trade between these countries due to the proximity, therefore enhancing trade routes between these two neighboring countries, which could help in regional economic growth and stability.
3. **Trade potential realized:** the study highlights that the trade potential between Pakistan and Afghanistan should not be wasted. Policymakers can optimize trade benefits for both countries by identifying areas where the framework of trade policies can be improved. Understanding how geographical proximity reduces cost and risk related to products and looking for mechanisms to harness this advantage to increase traded volumes will keep the chain of economic growth active. In this regard, the present study contributes to sustainable economic cooperation and growth in the region by identifying the problems and recommending measures to rectify the current state of Pak-Afghan bilateral trade.

Methodology

This study aims to establish the framework for the bibliometric analysis of bilateral and transit agreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A comprehensive analysis of existing scholarly works pertaining to the fluctuations in trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is provided by this study. Bibliometric analysis also offers collective views in the aforementioned topic. This study has been conducted through established principles in the conduction of bibliometric research, ensuring that the research method is straightforward, replicable, and carried out rigorously (Tranfield et al., 2003). After identification, selection, and assessment of the articles in a non-biased manner, an organized methodology is defined. A synthesis is then produced as a result of this, which illustrates the breadth and depth of understanding in the discipline (Watson, 2015).

Search Strategy

Selecting the research papers from the academic journal to ensure high quality work on intellectual ideas. Those documents were cross-checked precisely through comparison with the peer reviewed literature on the Pak-Afghan trade. The scholarly standards of the work were maintained because the study excluded books, book reviews, practitioner writings. To encompass all the academic literature, Scopus and Google Scholar were looked up.

The search utilized a range of relevant terms, including trade, bilateral trade, commercial relations, economic relations, transit trade, as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan, to ensure a thorough investigation. Although there is a scarcity of research articles on bilateral trade and transit between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the search criteria were only restricted or limited to articles, review and conference papers. Although no start date was specified the first paper being published at 2015 in Google Scholar and research papers has been considered up to 2024, however in Scopus the start date was 1983 to ensure that the most up-to-date developments and insights were included. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing topics that have received minimal research attention. Its significance and novelty are underscored by the lack of previous studies on these subjects.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

We have used two types of data in term of database, first 26 articles have been selected from google scholar as per their relevance randomly, data has been inserted in a XLS data sheet consist of the following information regarding to each study: authors, year of publication, journal, title, variables (IV, DV, MOV, MV), population, sampling design and sample size, theory/model or approach, finding, future directions or limitation of the study. A thorough synthesis was conducted to organize and analyses the data from the selected papers (Dakalbab et al., 2024; Dey, 2003; Sarmiento & Simões, 2018). Second, in Scopus, we used the keywords "Afghanistan," "Pakistan," "trade," and "transit agreements" as search queries and received 180 articles. By using the "limit to" option, we limited it to articles, reviews, and conference papers, and received 118 articles. This study identified patterns, themes, and trends that were common across the literature. One of the core purposes of this analytical technique was to explain Pak-Afghan bilateral trade and transit patterns from different research contributions, in addition to the identification of similarities, this process of synthesis also identifies the conflicts, contradictions, and gap within the literature. Critical analyses revealed these research intricacies and areas where disagreement or further study was needed. The synthesis sought to enhance the understanding of research and discussion on Pak-afghan bilateral trade and transit by recognizing such subtleties. A systematic review done through the select papers in itself requires synthesizing the depth and breadth of the materials into a structure, insightful analysis. This review systematically described Pak-afghan trade and transportation; it encapsulated insights, arguments, and consequences. It was an attempts to carefully integrate empirical evidence into a synthesis to reveal themes and subtleties running throughout the literature. In this way, it furthered the scholarly discourse on bilateral trade and transit between Pakistan and Afghanistan, promoting new perspective and ideas. The methodological rigor enriched existing knowledge and laid the basis for future endeavors by consolidation widely different research efforts within a coherent framework.

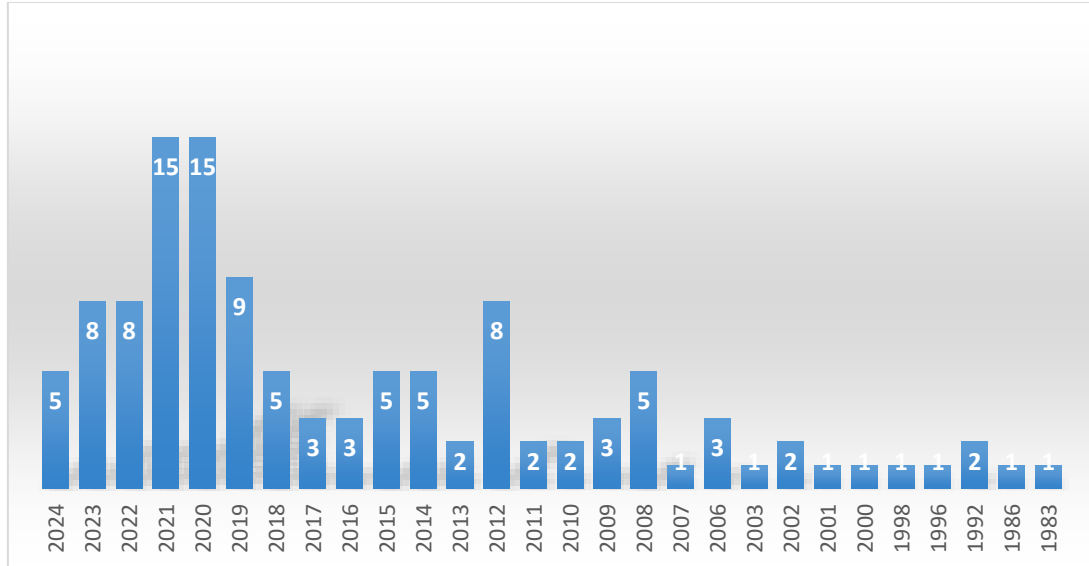
Findings

The first study on Pakistan and Afghanistan trade was published back in 1983. After that, there has been a lacuna of literature; only a few research articles have been published over the years. This also testifies that in the trade and transit relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, many areas are still left unexplored for potential opportunities. Further research is required to understand and boost trade between the two nations.

Trends in Annual Publications

In the year 1983 to 2006, there were only very few publications, and articles appeared sporadically in those different years. On the graph, it is clear that an increase in interest was marked between 2008 and 2012, from 5 publications in 2008 to a peak of 8 publications in 2012. From 2013 to 2019, on the other hand, it has followed a jagged up-and down trend about publications. The mean for the number of publications each year has varied between 2 and 9. This means there was also some intermittent research within this period. In the years 2020-2024, there has been a notable increase in publications, reaching a peak of 15 articles in both 2020 and 2021. On the other hand, there has been a slight decline in the numbers for 2022 and 2023, with only 8 publications each year, followed by 5 publications in 2024. As shown in below figure (1).

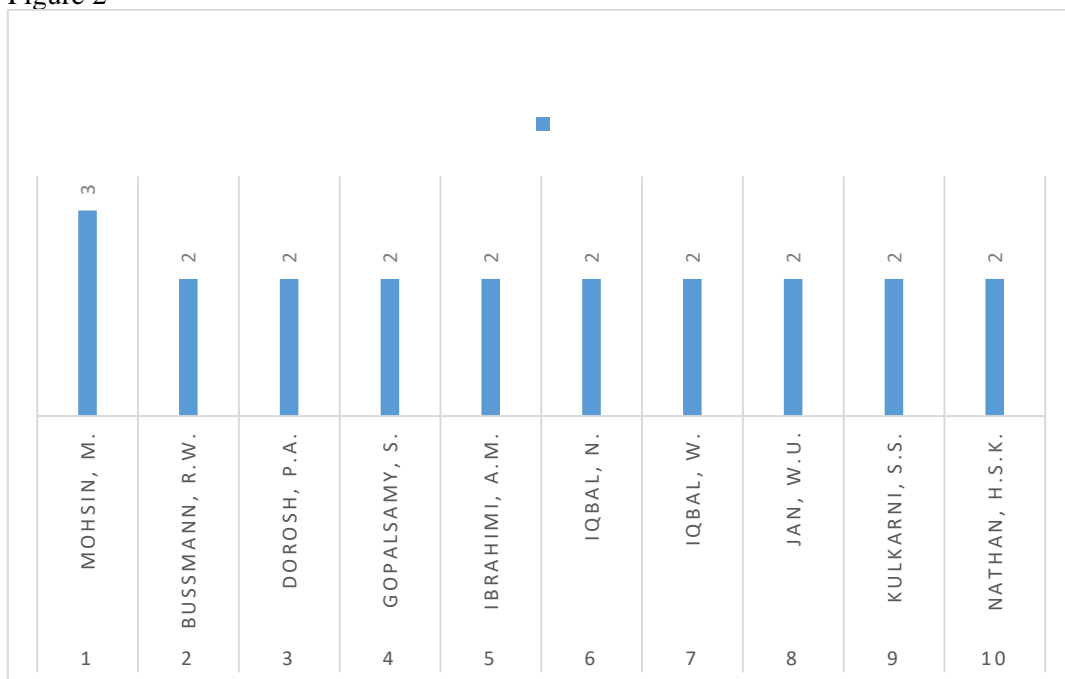
[Figure \(1\)](#)



Leading Authors

According to the findings of the bibliometric analysis of the research on trade and transit between Pakistan and Afghanistan, there are various important authors who have contributed to this topic. The primary authors who have published many works on this subject are listed in figure 2, which can be found below. The names of the writers are included in the table, along with the total number of publications that they have published. Based on the information presented in this table, it is clear that Mohsin, M. is the most prolific author in the subject, having published a total of three works. There are two publications that each of the remaining authors on the list has published. Based on this, it appears that there is a relatively small pool of researchers who continuously contribute to the body of literature concerning Pakistan-Afghan trade and transit.

Figure 2



Documents Type

The document type analysis gives a comprehensive look at the different publications related to Pakistan-Afghanistan trade and transit. Here is a summary of the data:

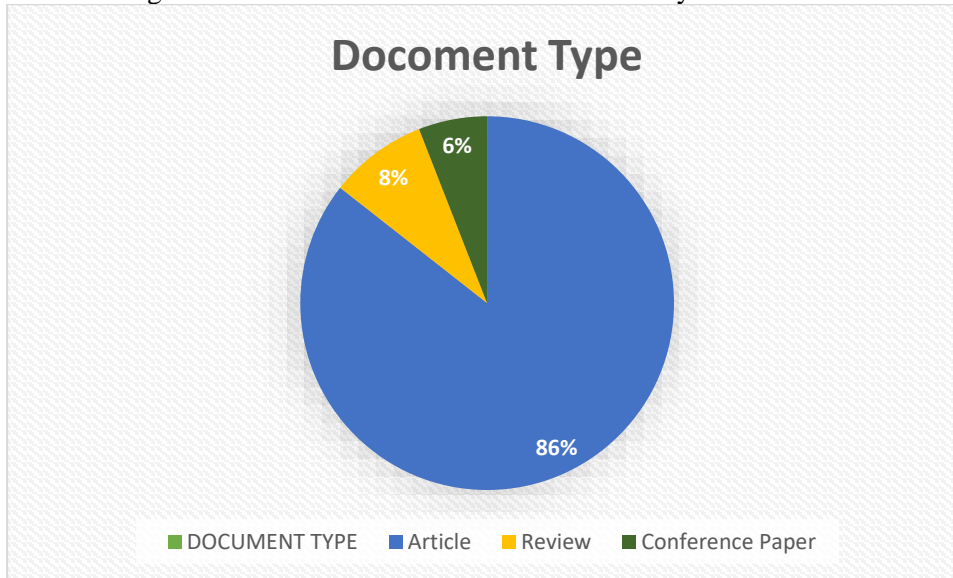


Figure 3

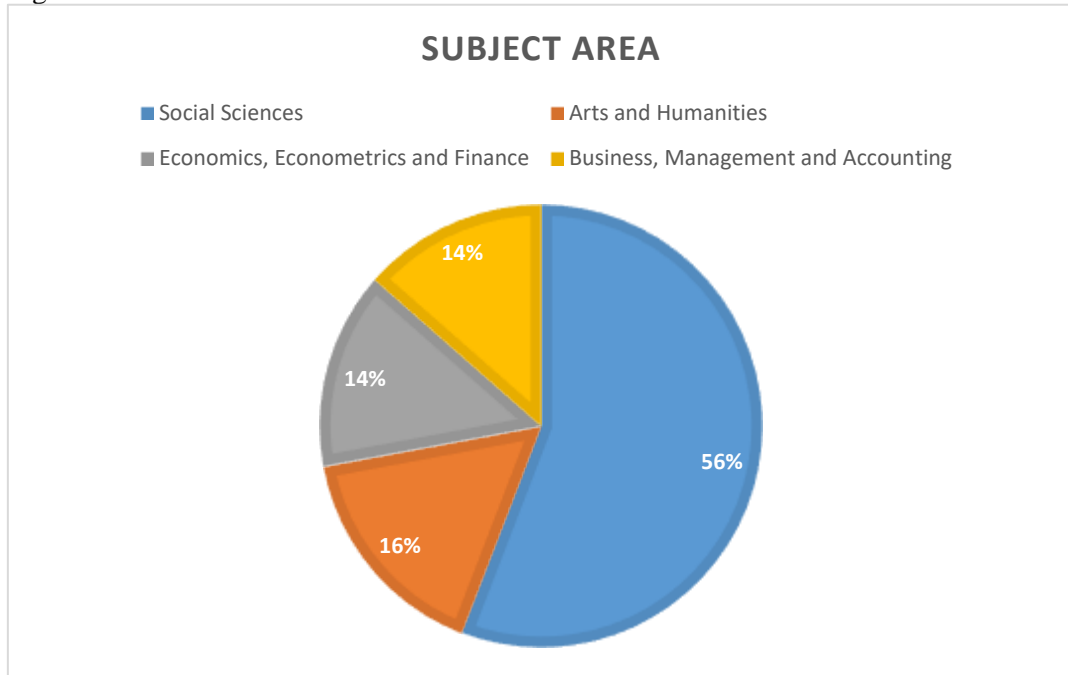
In the above figure3, there are a total of 101 articles in this collection, with the majority of them being research papers. It is evident that the majority of research on Pak-Afghan trade and transit consists of well-crafted, peer-reviewed articles that present unique research findings. The reviews consist of 10 papers that offer comprehensive overviews and syntheses of existing research on the topic. The data show that, to some extent, an attempt has been made to bring together and consolidate the research in this area, but there is still a significant gap where the need for a broad review of this knowledge would be beneficial and necessary. Conference papers (7), the number of conference paper indicates that few findings are brought up to the stage of academic conferences. There seems to be more of a trend toward publishing complete research studies in journals rather than sharing preliminary findings or ongoing research at conferences.

Subject Area

The analysis of subject areas is informative regarding the focus of studies by the disciplines on trade and transit of Pakistan-Afghanistan. Figure 4 depict a summary of the data:

Figure

4

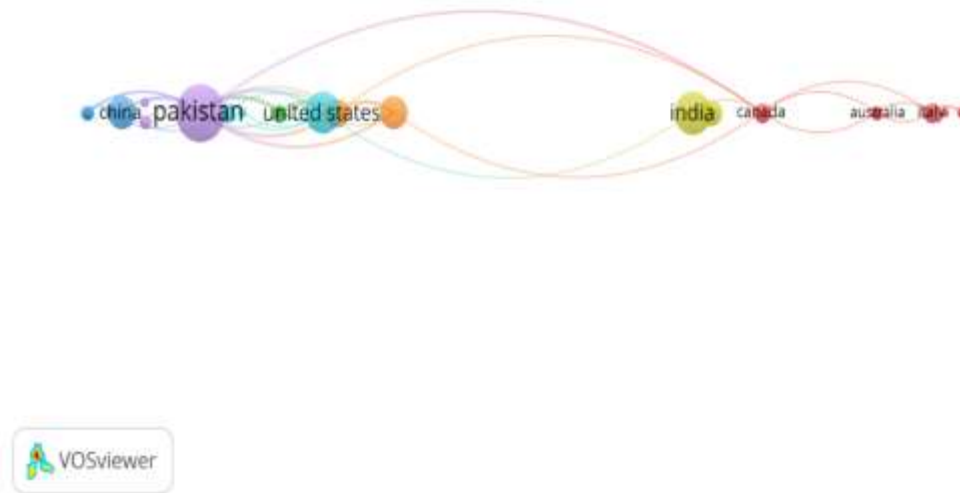


there are 62 documents under social science, which focuses on understanding the social aspects and implications of Pak-afghan trade and transit. It is research into various dimensions, including political relations, social impacts, and cultural exchanges. In the domain of Arts and Humanities, 18 studies reflect this ability to explore issues in culture and history that concern trading practices between Pakistan and Afghanistan. These can range from studies culture heritage and trading routes through history to the place of trade in art and literature. Economics, econometrics, and Finance (16) papers; this particular area focuses on the economic analysis Pak-Afghan trade and transit. The research conducted in this area is wide-ranging: it comprises a broad area of economic theories and trade models, not to mention financial impacts and econometric analyses of trade patterns and polices. Business, Management, and accounting articles in this areas suggest an enormous interest in the business practices, management strategies, and accounting principles involved in Pak-Afghan trade. In these papers, supply chain management, business negotiations, and financial reporting have been discussed as applicable to bilateral trade.

Co-Authorship Analysis

Several studies have investigated the trade and transport between Pakistan and Afghanistan, in this line some of the key countries that have positively impacted the reports include Pakistan, the united states of America, china, India and Afghanistan. According to the total number of publications and the number of citations, Pakistan leads in these areas. China have pushed its research to achieve big honor, which is a sign of this country's impact on the community of scholars. This united states published fewer articles that India; however, this country possesses a move extended influence on the scope of research that India. Bothe of these countries have significant inputs in the field of study. Afghanistan has shown a strong impact, with an average number of citations per document much lower than the total amount of documents. From this information, it seems as if the country of Afghanistan exerts large amount of influence on this field. It has been identified as a shared scholarly interest and collaborative work that goes on globally in knowing, understanding, and appreciating the trade dynamics existing between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

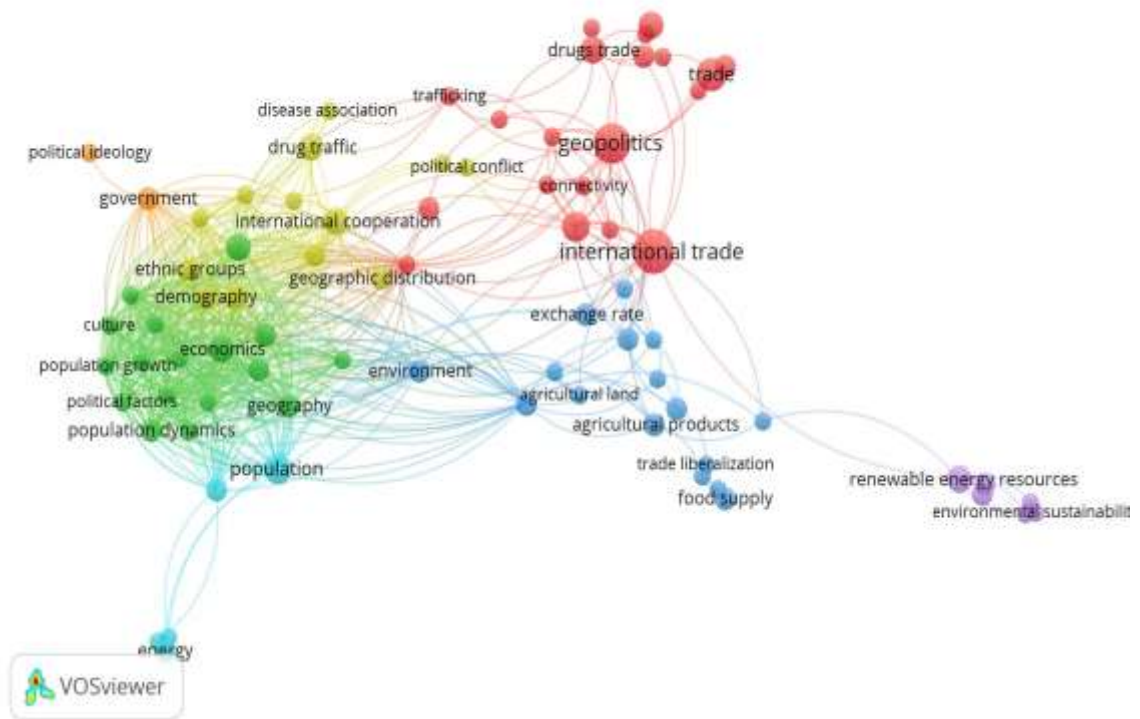
Figure 5



Co-occurrence Analysis

The dataset comprises of a very wide scope of topics relevant to the trade and transit happening between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The topics are then clearly classified into thematic clusters that are about the weight accorded upon the themes themselves and the weighting accorded those given clusters based on academic relevance. For the geopolitical and economic concepts include in the in the literature for research, take the examples “Afghanistan” and “Pakistan”, they both rank as essential topics. Not only are these terms extremely common, but they are also frequently quoted, which demonstrates the substantial importance that they play in the whole discussion. Climate change, energy policy, and renewable energy resources are examples of topics that have garnered a significant amount of interest and are receiving a large number of citations, which indicates that their significance is continually growing. Notable phrases in this context include "geopolitics," "international trade," and "CPEC," all of which show the ongoing talks on subjects pertaining to economics and strategy. Socio-political topics relevant in this region, e.g., “terrorism” and “Taliban”, were represented within the first few clusters. results shed light on the complex research landscape –one in which geopolitical concerns from the past intersect with current challenges, such as energy policy and sustainability.

Figure 6



Findings of a few studies in below Table (1)

Title	Variables IV	DV	Findings
Can a path to peace promote export growth? Evidence from Pakistan and its trading partners	IV= peace, remaining are control variables: size of the economy, market size, infrastructure, and real effective exchange rate	Export	After considering economic growth, market size, infrastructure, and exchange rates, the analysis showed that peace is essential for promoting exports compared to its trading partners. This sector is intricately linked with local industry and the overall welfare of human beings. Furthermore, there is a significant correlation between the economic and market size of exports and their overall export volume. Nevertheless, if the currencies of Pakistan's trading partners experience a decrease in value compared to Pakistan's currency, it leads to a decline in the amount of exports.

PAK-AFGHAN
BILATERAL
AGRICULTUR
E TRADE:
CHALLENGES
AND
OPPORTUNITI
ES

GDP, population,
taxes,
transportation
costs, and distance

bilateral
trade
between
Pakistan
and
Afghanist
an

The study's results demonstrated that major determinants of Pak-Afghan total trade flow include distance, GDP per capita, transportation, taxes, and the population of both countries. The findings revealed that a higher GDP per capita leads to increased trade, distance acts as a trade deterrent, and historical ties, The findings of the study suggest that both internal and external factors have a significant impact on the manner in which the two countries interact with one another in terms of their commercial connections. By doing so, it highlights the need of strengthening trade links in order to overcome impediments, encourage economic collaboration, improve bilateral relations, and promote regional connectivity and stability. Additionally, the study reveals that the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has suffered as a result of a lack of political commitment towards prioritizing economic cooperation. This is in addition to a variety of other challenges, such as legal complexities, inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, insecurity, and corruption. The findings of this study indicated that there has been a decreasing trend in land trade routes over time, while there has been a possible growth in maritime trade. in spite of the fact that China's One Belt and One Road Initiative presents an important opportunity. The majority of these trade routes are located in the district of Kurram, according to this study, which identifies multiple trade routes together with the Durrand line. As a result of fencing on the Durand line, trade reached its peak in 2019 and then began to fall. Consequently, the result is centered on notifying and facilitating all land

Breaking Down
Barriers: An
Analysis of the
Impact of Trade
Policies on Pak
Afghan
Relations since
2010

Trade polices

Bilateral
relations
between
Pakistan
and
Afghanist
an

Impact of
Fencing upon
Pak-Afghan
Bilateral (Un)
Declared Land
Trade Routes:
District Kurram

Fencing

Pak-
Afghan
Bilateral
(Un)
Declared
Land
Trade
Routes

routes in the Kurram district with all of the necessary facilities installed.

PAK-AFGHAN
BILATERAL
TRADE:
TRADE
DIVERSION,
NTBS AND
GRAVITY
MODEL
ANALYSIS

Trade

GDP,
Distance,
Populatio
n growth,
common
borders

According to the findings of the study, which were based on quantitative results, the trade that takes place between Pakistan and Afghanistan is not at the potential level since it does not align with the line of GMT. On the basis of qualitative research, the non-tariff barrier is a possible problem for commerce between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The complex security and defense relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are examined in this paper. It studies refugee issues, security agreements, and defense strategies using qualitative approaches including content analysis. The results illuminate both countries' historical complexities and security issues, especially following 9/11. The conclusion emphasizes their complex interconnectedness, including refugee crises, political instability, and international participation. International engagement remains crucial to regional stability and collaboration.

Analyzing the
Role of Cross
Border Trade
Policies in
Facilitating Pak-
Afghan Trade
Post –Taliban

content analysis of various factors such as refugees, security agreements, trade policies, and defense strategies, to shed light on the complexities of this relationship.

THE IMPACT OF PAK AFGHAN BILATERAL TRADE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH OF AFGHANISTAN

Bilateral Trade Volume Foreign Exchange Rate GDP

Based on the co-integration test, it appears that there is a long-term relationship among the variables. Additionally, the Error Correction Model (ECM) indicates that in the short run, bilateral trade and foreign exchange rates have negligible and non-significant impacts on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In addition, the ECM value suggests that short-term changes move towards long-term balance. Therefore, this study provides evidence that bilateral trade has a positive impact on economic growth. Despite the initial lack of significance and apparent negative effects, the variables demonstrate a lasting connection in the long run. First results indicate that South Asia's Regional Trade Agreement (RTA) isn't doing much to boost regional trade. When looking at the institutional effects, however, empirical research shows that SAFTA is a major factor in increasing bilateral commerce. This analysis teaches us that regional agreements can fail to produce the results we want when there are insufficient institutional structures. The participating countries' institutional framework is the lynchpin of a successful trade reform. Therefore, in order to fully reap the benefits of RTAs, governments should put a premium on building strong institutions. The empirical findings show that the GDPs of Pakistan and its partner nations have a favorable impact on bilateral commerce. However, market size has a negative impact, owing to the absorption effect. Distance and exchange rates also have a negative correlation with trade. Despite sharing a border, Pakistan's commerce with India and Afghanistan is far lower. A shared language has a beneficial but minor impact on bilateral trade in Pakistan.

Institutions, Regional Integration and Bilateral Trade in South Asia: PPML Based Evidence

regional integration, institutional framework, GDP, Inter country distance, common border, common language, SAFTA and landlocked. bilateral trade

A Gravity Model Approach towards Pakistan's Bilateral Trade with SAARC Countries

population, RGDP, exchange rate, distance, common border, common language Bilateral trade

<p>A panel analysis of trade gravity between Pakistan and South Asian countries</p>	<p>population, RGDP, exchange rate, distance, common border, common language</p>	<p>Bilateral trade</p>	<p>The report also evaluates Pakistan's trade potential, finding a strong potential with all SAARC member countries except Afghanistan and the Maldives.</p>
<p>Export competitiveness with border-sharing countries: an assessment of Pakistan</p>	<p>Exported Commodities, comparative advantages, comparative disadvantages</p>		<p>The study's findings indicate a clear link between Pakistan's Real GDP (RGDP) and population with bilateral trade among South Asian countries. On the other hand, bilateral trade is adversely affected by exchange rates and distance. In addition, it is worth noting that there is a positive relationship between bilateral trade and qualitative variables such as language similarities and shared borders. Pakistan's trade with neighboring Afghanistan and India falls short of expectations, primarily due to ongoing conflicts and political issues between the countries. Afghanistan, China, India, and Iran receive 160, 155, 133, and 60 three-digit Standard International Trade Code (Rev 3) items from Pakistan. Pakistan has the highest and marginal comparative disadvantage in almost half of these commodities sold to neighbors. Pakistan can boost rice exports to Afghanistan, China, and Iran to increase market share. To make cotton, textile yarn, and cotton fabric export competitive in neighboring countries, extra measures and productivity initiatives are needed.</p>
<p>A New Hadrian's Wall: Managing Pak Afghan Border Security, Diplomatic and Economic Dimensions</p>	<p>Fencing</p>	<p>Pak-afghan border (political and economic impact)</p>	<p>The study's findings suggest that in order to promote peace and stability in the region, it is necessary for both neighboring countries to collaborate and work together to build economic interdependence and provide security along the border.</p>

The impact of Mutual Benefits of Pak-Afghan Transit Trade	Economic Growth, Employment, Smuggling and Nature of Business and trade	Trade	The study found numerous causes of Pak-Afghan transit trade drop. Delays, security concerns, transit-related damages, poor execution of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), and low Afghan demand for Pakistani goods are among them. Pakistan's seasonal tariff rises on Afghan natural products and Afghanistan's industry protections worsen the problem. The study shows that trade and politics are intertwined, resulting in poor APTTA implementation. Allowing Afghanistan to trade openly with India, streamlining customs procedures to reduce transit time, limiting trade and transit goods smuggling into Pakistan, and putting minimal tariffs on each other's exports are recommendations.
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This bibliometric analyzed Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations, including development drivers, constraints, and cooperation prospects. The evaluated works illuminate both the qualitative and quantitative components of the two countries' economic connection through trade dynamics.

Several research efforts have demonstrated the Pakistan-Afghanistan trade growth potential. Since the Taliban era, trade volume has increased from \$25 million during the first Taliban government to \$2.5 billion a decade later in 2009 and 2010. Due to shifting trade partners and transit trade issues throughout Pakistan, there was a decrease to 1.6 billion in 2011 and 2012 (S. A. Rahim, 2018). (Khan & Shafiq, 2018) used a gravity model to show that Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan may grow with facilitation. Even though Pakistan and Afghanistan have great trade potential, numerous challenges stand in the way. Studies found that poor risk management, unfair demurrage charges, and security concerns hamper trade (S. A. Rahim, 2018). Political issues including border conflicts and security concerns also hinder trade cooperation (Raja et al., 2022). The evaluated papers suggested many trade policy changes between Pakistan and Afghanistan. (Watandar et al., 2023) stressed trade official negotiations on customs, transportation insurance, and container safety. (Haidari, 2024) also underlined the need of cross-border trade policy in post-Taliban economic cooperation.

Multiple studies investigated bilateral trade's economic effects. (Shabbir & Ahmed, 2015) examined how Afghan trade affects Pakistani provinces (Baluchistan and KPK), finding show that there has been a potential increased in employment and real income in trade-related sectors as compare to non-trade related sectors due to the flow of goods through Gawdar port into Afghanistan. (Sediqi et al., 2017) examined Afghanistan's renewable energy development and suggested that cross-border electricity trading might benefit both nations like in short-run especially in summer Afghanistan can export 2654 MW electricity to Pakistan but in long-run either fulfilling internal need and can export to Pakistan as well.

Regional integration and institutional frameworks were also studied for trade facilitation.

(Nawaz, 2020) evaluated SAFTA's promotion of regional trade and stressed the significance of institutional development for trade reforms. (Jan & Shah, 2019) examined Pakistan's bilateral trade with SAARC countries, demonstrating The empirical results indicate that the GDPs of both Pakistan and its partner countries positively influence bilateral trade. Market size, however, negatively affects trade, a trend attributed to the absorption effect. Similarly, distance and exchange rates also show a negative correlation with bilateral trade. Despite sharing borders, Pakistan's trade with India and Afghanistan remains notably low. Although a shared language has a positive impact on Pakistan's bilateral trade, it is statistically insignificant. Additionally, the study endeavors to estimate Pakistan's trade potential, uncovering high potential with all SAARC member countries except for the Maldives and Afghanistan.

Numerous research studied legal and policy frameworks governing transit trade. according to (Watandar et al., 2023) The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement was plagued by uncertainty border closure, war along the border, non-tariff taxes and procedural impediments. (Onon, 2020) examined international law principles in the practice of bilateral transit treaties, emphasizing good faith and amicable dispute resolution. Here we can conclude that the bibliometric analysis shows that Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations are complicated and require collaboration to overcome obstacles and capitalize on economic potential. Policymakers, academics, and stakeholders striving to improve bilateral trade and regional integration can benefit from quantitative and qualitative research synthesis.

Discussion

The bibliometric analysis of reviewed literature provides valuable insight into the complexity and dynamics of commercial relation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This insight highlights various factors influencing trade flow between the two nations, the challenges faced, and the consequences for both countries. The purpose of this discussion is to share an overview of the findings, aiding in further understanding of the subject and identifying significant implications and areas needing further exploration.

The findings of the bibliometric analysis revealed that, from 1983 up to the year 2006, there was a sporadic publication on Pak-Afghan trade, but it is from the year 2008-2012 that some effort has been made with an increase to up to 8 publications in the year 2012. From the year 2013 to 2019, the trend of publications has been varied with the lowest being 2 to the highest being 9. From the year 2020 to 2021, publications have increased significantly, and there are 15 publications each year, and in the year 2022 and 2023, the number reduced to 8 and further reduced to 5 publications in the year 2024. Mohsin, M., is among the top authors and has three works, and others with two each. In the 101 documents, there are also research papers followed by reviews and conference papers. Most research works were devoted to social sciences (62), followed by significant contributions in arts and humanities (18), economics (16), and business management. Co-authorship analysis shows strong contributions from Pakistan, the USA, China, India, and Afghanistan. Co-occurrence analysis finds that prominent topics are "Afghanistan," "Pakistan," vast interest in climate change, energy policy, and geopolitics such as CPEC and terrorism. The findings are further discussed below:

- **Role of Trade Relationships:** The literature emphasizes the role of trade relationships between Pakistan and Afghanistan in promoting economic growth, regional integration, and addressing everyday challenges. Despite historical and geographical relations, bilateral trade faces several challenges such as limited utilization of information and communication technology, inadequate government support, delays in trade clearance, border clashes, political tensions, security concerns, and infrastructural constraints. However, past studies indicate considerable scope for improvement in trade cooperation through specific policy actions and regional initiatives (Rehan et al., 2024).

- **Trade Barriers and Facilitation Mechanisms:** An important implication from the findings is the need to address trade barriers and improve trade facilitation mechanisms to fully tap the potential in bilateral trade. Facilitation policies that can promote further enhancement in trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan include smoothing customs procedures, enhancing transport infrastructure, and reducing non-tariff barriers (Rehan et al., 2024). These measures aim to address the current hindrances to trade between these countries. Additionally, efforts to establish trust and closer economic collaboration through simplified visa procedures and extended cultural exchanges are crucial.
- **Geopolitical Factors:** Scholarly literature highlights the importance of actors outside the region and regional dynamics in determining trade relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Geopolitical factors, including the influence of neighboring countries and international stakeholders, significantly impact trade cooperation and regional stability. Understanding these dynamics is necessary to design effective trade policies and navigate complex geopolitical challenges, ultimately enhancing durable economic growth and development.
- **Divergence of Opinions:** Divergence of opinions within the literature arises regarding the effect of specific policy interventions on trade flows, necessitating further investigation. Several research works have studied the impact of trade agreements and infrastructure development projects on bilateral trade. While some highlight their positive role, others emphasize their limited impact due to political tensions and security concerns. Understanding these differences and designing evidence-based policies that address the root causes of trade barriers is essential for sustainable trade cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- **Challenges Due to Border Closures:** The dynamics of trade and transit often face challenges due to border closures, resulting from political tension or border conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These effects were more prominent during Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's first presidency. In his second term, strategic attempts were made to build more trade relationships to reduce reliance on Pakistan, considering alternative routes like Chabahar and air links with China, India, and Europe. Other alternatives include implementing strategies to open borders, such as land ports, enabling Afghan traders easy access to global markets and solidifying Afghanistan's economy.
- **Recent Decline in Pakistan's Exports to Afghanistan:** Several factors contribute to the recent decline in Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan, including the use of trade as a political tool, regional political instability, poor governance along trade routes, the reduced presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan, Afghanistan's tilt towards Iranian goods, and delays due to Pakistani customs staff. Further trade agreements were made with Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.
- **Gwadar Port and Informal Trade:** The strategic location of Gwadar port benefits both Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, various obstacles have led to a shift in bilateral trade away from Pakistan towards other northern countries. Additionally, the enforcement of non-tariff duties has resulted in a scenario where informal trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan surpasses legal trade (Saeed & Ullah, 2023). This emphasizes the complex and challenging aspects of the commercial partnership between the two countries.

The bibliometric analysis suggests that commercial relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are intricate. Expanding trade offers significant potential, yet addressing political challenges, security issues, and institutional obstacles is crucial. Through proactive policy measures, enhanced regional collaboration, and strengthened legal frameworks, both countries

have the potential to boost trade and investment, thereby promoting regional economic growth, stability, and prosperity.

Future Research Agenda

The findings and gaps in existing literature suggest many study options that will shed light on Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations and transit. These research areas could greatly improve scholarly understanding and policymaking.

1. Longitudinal studies of Pakistan-Afghanistan trade interactions are needed. Researchers can better understand bilateral trade dynamics' long-term trends, difficulties, and opportunities by researching trade patterns, policy changes, and economic indicators across different time.

2. Regional cooperation is crucial to commercial connections and economic integration, therefore future studies should examine Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, and India's possibilities for cooperation. Comparative studies of regional trade, investment, and policy frameworks can help promote cross-border trade and collaboration.

3. Compare Pakistan-Afghanistan commercial relations with other landlocked nations to identify shared challenges, best practices, and governmental interventions to facilitate trade and transit. By studying countries with similar geographical limits, academics can find ways to overcome trade barriers and boost regional economic development.

4. Given CPEC's transformative impact on regional trade and connectivity, future research should examine its effects on the Pak-Afghan transit route. Researchers can study CPEC-related infrastructure projects, trade facilitation measures, and economic corridors' effects on Pakistan-Afghanistan trade flows to improve bilateral trade cooperation and regional integration.

5. Research is needed to determine how strengthened security measures along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border affect merchandise trade and investment. Investment prospects and trade dynamics between Pakistan and Afghanistan can be gleaned from studies on possible investments, value chain analysis of Pakistani SMEs interacting with Afghanistan, and informal trade and smuggling estimates.

6. Afghanistan-Pakistan services trade should be studied, focusing on regulatory issues including double taxation agreements. By studying the legal and regulatory framework for services trade and investment, researchers can uncover trade barriers and suggest policy changes to improve cross-border commerce.

7. Various economic variables have been examined in relation to Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as GDP, exchange rate, population, common border, and shared language and culture, in terms of their impact on GDP, bilateral trade, and exports. Future research should explore the impact of other macro-economic and institutional variables like security and political stability, along with inflation rate, in light of the high inflation and exchange rate fluctuations experienced by both countries. These factors can significantly impact their export and trade relations.

8. Transit trade agreements, notably UNCLOS and bilateral treaties, require further study of international law principles. Researchers can better understand transit trade law and identify ways to improve bilateral cooperation and dispute resolution by examining state practices and legal interpretations of ambiguous terms in transit trade agreements.

9. Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral trade should be estimated to affect Pakistan's economic growth in future studies. Researchers can examine the causal relationship between trade flows, investment patterns, and macroeconomic indicators using rigorous econometric methodologies and causal inference methods, providing policymakers and stakeholders with useful insights. Finally, there is a lack of international trade theories in research studies between Pakistan and Afghanistan, in the future research researcher can apply different theories of international trade like, comparative advantage, Mercantilism, trade theory...etc. addressing these research

agendas can help us comprehend the complex dynamics and problems of Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations and discover potential for economic cooperation, regional integration, and sustainable development. By filling knowledge gaps and providing actionable insights, future research can support evidence-based policy actions and promote regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

Limitations of the Study

1. **Literature Scope:** The study may not cover all relevant Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations studies. Language hurdles, publication bias, and database restrictions may have omitted relevant studies.
2. **Data Quality and Consistency:** Data sources are crucial to bibliometric analysis's trustworthiness. Variations in data reporting standards, inadequate datasets, and citation record errors can impair findings robustness.
3. **Geopolitical Influences:** The region's complicated geopolitics can affect research. Political or ideological biases in regional studies can effect Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations.

Conclusion

This study thoroughly analyzed recent literature published between 1983 and 2024 to assess the status of Pak-Afghan bilateral trade and transit. The study analyzed the challenges and financial advantages linked to this trading partnership. There is a lack of literature that specifically focuses on the trade and transit between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as revealed by the bibliometric analysis. Many studies focus on the difficulties related to trade and transit, but only a few discuss the consequences of not implementing the APTTA and ATTA agreements. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that there is a significant lack of research on the economic implications of altering trading partners and the decrease in Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan, despite their close proximity. The research suggests that the Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of both Pakistan and its partner countries have a positive influence on bilateral trade. It is widely believed that the absorption effect is responsible for the adverse effects of market size on commerce. There is a negative correlation between bilateral trade, distance, and exchange rates. Despite being in close proximity, Pakistan's trade with India and Afghanistan is severely restricted. Although a common language may have some impact on Pakistan's trade with other countries, the statistical data suggests that its influence is minimal.

The study emphasizes Pakistan's trading capacity, uncovering substantial opportunities with all SAARC member nations except for the Maldives and Afghanistan. Political issues, conflicts, disagreements among military forces, and changes in trade partnerships appear to be the primary factors contributing to the closure of borders. The security situation in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly concerning, with political instability in the region and ineffective governance along trade routes. Additionally, the decreased presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan and Afghanistan's preference for Iranian goods over Pakistani exports are contributing to these challenges. Furthermore, delays caused by Pakistani customs authorities are further exacerbating the situation. The researchers prioritized improving bilateral trade, fostering regional integration and cooperation, reviewing trade policies, implementing transit trade agreements, and upholding trade laws and bilateral rights. These efforts strive to establish a seamless trade process and promote harmonious trade and political ties between the two nations, which are closely linked through cultural, linguistic, geographical, and religious connections. This bibliometric study highlights the importance of conducting thorough

research on Pak-Afghan trade relations, including the consequences of not implementing crucial trade agreements and the economic effects of changing trade partnerships. Future research should also take into account the wider geopolitical and economic factors that impact trade dynamics in the region. By acknowledging and addressing these gaps, policymakers can develop strategies that are more effective in enhancing bilateral trade and promoting regional stability and economic growth.

This findings of the research point toward a dire need for strategies that might be broad in comprehensive terms to remove impediments coming in the way of Pak-Afghan trade relations. The policymakers should work on the reduction of trade barriers, such as customs delays, infrastructural constraints, and nontariff barriers, through the enforcement of agreements like APTTA and ATTA. Improved political stability and governance along these trade routes, alternation of improved alternative trade routes, and people-to-people connections through easy visa procedures and cultural exchange can further improve trade relations. Addressing these issues will create a conducive environment for robust trade, contributing to regional stability and economic growth.

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