



PAK-US RELATIONS AND AFGHANISTAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This article examines the developments of Pak-US relations since Pakistan's independence, with a specific focus on the impact of conflict situations in Afghanistan on bilateral ties. Through an in-depth analysis of cooperative dynamics between both the countries during Cold-War and two distinct periods of Afghan conflict, Soviet occupation (1979-1989) and post-9/11 era (2001-2022), this study provides insights into complexities of Pak-US relations. The study highlights shifting nature of cooperation and tension between both the countries, influenced by regional and global events, and offers nuanced understanding of intricate dynamics shaping their bilateral relation. The study was commenced for examining impacts of Afghan war situations on dynamics of Pak-US relationship. The content analysis technique was used the study this phenomenon.

Keywords: Pak-US Relations, Cold-War, Afghan Conflict, Soviet Occupation, Bilateral Ties.

Introduction

Pak-US relationship was complex and dynamic, marked by periods of cooperation and tensions. Both the countries had close bonds since independence of Pakistan and cooperated to counter influence of USSR in region from 1947 to 1989. In aftermath of 9/11 attacks, Pakistan emerged as key ally in US-led war on terror, providing crucial support in form of intelligence sharing, logistical assistance, and military cooperation. This partnership led to significant economic aid and assistance from United States, helping to stabilize Pakistan's economy. However, beneath surface, tensions seethed, driven by differing strategic objectives and approaches to conflict in Afghanistan. One of primary sources of friction was US accusation that Pakistan harbored militants, including leaders of Taliban and Haqqani Network, within its borders. Pakistan, on other

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hand, maintained that it was committed to combating terrorism but faced significant challenges in doing so. US drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, aimed at targeting high-value targets, were particular point of contention, with Pakistan viewing them as violations of its sovereignty. Afghan conflict further complicated relationship, with both countries having differing visions for region's future. US sought to negotiate peace deal with Taliban, while Pakistan maintained ties with various militant groups, ostensibly for strategic purposes. This led to perceptions of Pakistan being an unreliable partner and contributed to trust deficit between both countries. Despite these challenges, both partners continued to engage with each other, recognizing importance of their relationship in maintaining regional stability. The study was done by using the qualitative content analysis technique and was initiated with aim to explore the Pak-US relation in context of Afghan situations and Pakistan's effort to support America in this geostrategic region.

Literature Review

Rubin (2020) presented comprehensive and authoritative account of Afghanistan's history. Depiction on decades of research and firsthand experience, Rubin offered nuanced analysis of country's complex history and examined internal and external factors that shaped its trail. The book balanced breadth and depth, providing comprehensive overview while delving into specific events like Bonn Talks and Afghan Constitutional Loya Jirga. He highlights significance of ethnic rivalries, the drug trade, human rights, state-building, and US strategic choices. The book is a landmark study, essential reading for scholars, policymakers, and anyone seeking to understand Afghanistan's complexities. Rubin's analysis is both comprehensive and nuanced, making the book a definitive account of Afghanistan's modern history (Rubin, 2020).

Rizvi (2020) analyzed US-Pakistan relations, focusing on Pakistan's strategic significance during Cold War and its subsequent

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decline. It explored Pakistan's involvement in Vietnam War and support for anti-Soviet fighters in Afghanistan made it key US ally, earning significant military aid. However, Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and end of Cold War led to decline in US interests, further exacerbated by Pakistan's nuclear program and US sanctions. The book argued that decline in US-Pakistan relations created power vacuum, exploited by militant groups, with significant regional implications (Rizvi, 2020).

Haqqani (2013) examined complex and unbridled relationship between United States and Pakistan. Haqqani's analysis revealed profound mutual incredulousness between two countries, shaped by historical events like Soviet-Afghan War. He challenged the conventional narrative, exposing Pakistan's manipulation of the US to further its own interests, often at the expense of regional stability. Haqqani's unique perspective provided unparalleled insight into the complex interactions between the two nations. It analyzed shifting perceptions, power plays, and security interests, identifying consequences for regional security and opportunities for improved cooperation and conflict resolution and provided a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play and inform policy decisions to promote regional stability (Haqqani, 2013).

Mustafa et al. (2020) analyzed India's growing influence in Afghanistan and its implications for Pakistan's regional interests. After the 9/11 incident, India seized opportunity to establish strategic presence in Afghanistan, driven by pragmatic considerations to counter Pakistan's influence and secure its own interests. India invested in infrastructure development, capacity building, and humanitarian assistance, while providing training and equipment to Afghan National Security Forces. The study highlighted complex dynamics at play and underscores need for cooperation to ensure regional stability (Mustafa G. , Junaid, Khan, & Wakil, 2020).

Dynamics Of Pak-US Relations

Pakistan and United States historically had an asymmetrical relationship,

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with Pakistan often being treated as peripheral or subordinate partner (Khan M. , 2020). The Pakistan-US relationship during the Cold War has been analyzed through various theoretical lenses, one of which is neorealism. This perspective is not unique, however, as other theories such as constructivism, neoliberalism, and realism have also been utilized to understand the complexities of this bilateral relationship. Each of these theoretical frameworks offers distinct insights into the motivations, interactions, and outcomes that have shaped the dynamics between Pakistan and the US, providing a nuanced understanding of their historical connection (Schroeder, 1994).

The United States had begun contemplating relations with Pakistan even before its independence, recognizing the country's strategic significance. This forward thinking laid the groundwork for the future trajectory of Pak-US relations. Notably, in July 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall underscored Pakistan's importance in a memo to President Truman, highlighting that the newly formed nation, home to 70 million Muslims, would be the world's largest Muslim state and occupy a geopolitically pivotal region (Rose & Husain, 1985).

As Pakistan emerged as an independent state on the world map, US acknowledged Pakistan as independent state (Ali & Anwar, 2023). Since then, Pakistan and United States have frequently enjoyed close relationship. The relationship between Pakistan and the United States was marked by periods of close cooperation, with Pakistan often aligning itself with American foreign policy objectives. In return, the US provided Pakistan with significant support, including financial assistance and military equipment. This dynamic was particularly evident during times of regional crisis, such as the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Despite fluctuations in the relationship over the years, Pakistan consistently sought to leverage its strategic location and partnership with the US to address perceived security threats, particularly from neighboring India and Afghanistan. Through loans, debt relief, and

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military aid, the US played a crucial role in supporting Pakistan's economy and defense capabilities (US, 2009) . Despite these developments, Pakistan and the United States had disagreements on regional issues, which intensified pressure on Pakistan in the post-Cold War era. During that period, Pakistan faced stringent US sanctions that had remained in place until the 9/11 attacks occurred (Sheikh, 2021) . The 9/11 attacks marked a significant turning point in Pakistan-US relations, prompting a strategic alliance during the War on Terror that was defined by shared goals and complex challenges (Hussain T. , 2005).

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan and the United States forged a crucial partnership in the global War on Terror, with Pakistan becoming a key frontline state in the region. Pakistan played a vital role in supporting US military operations in neighboring Afghanistan, driven by their shared goal of dismantling terrorist networks, particularly those linked to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda (Rehman, 2003) . This cooperation involved Pakistan providing critical support, including intelligence sharing, logistical assistance, and military cooperation, to help disrupt and defeat terrorist organizations. In return, the United States provided substantial financial and military aid to Pakistan, aimed at bolstering its counterterrorism capabilities and enhancing its ability to tackle extremist groups operating within its borders. However, the alliance was marked by complexities and challenges, including differing priorities, concerns over Pakistan's commitment to counterterrorism, and the impact of US military operations on Pakistan's sovereignty and stability. Despite these challenges, the partnership remained a critical component of regional security efforts, with both countries working together to address the evolving threat of terrorism (Khan, 2020).

Pakistan's efforts to eliminate safe havens of terrorist are hindered by challenges, particularly along its porous western border with Afghanistan. Relations with the US are strained due to allegations of supporting militant groups and controversy over US drone strikes. The

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2011 US operation that killed Osama bin Laden further escalated tensions, with Pakistan viewing it as a breach of its sovereignty (Loidolt, 2022). The partnership's trajectory was shaped by key developments in Afghanistan, including leadership changes and competing regional interests. Pakistan's growing ties with China introduced a new dynamic, complicating its relationship with the US. The 2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan raised critical questions about regional stability and the roles various countries might play in shaping Afghanistan's future (Kaura, 2021).

Pak-US partnership in War on Terror was marked by a complex mix of cooperation, challenges, and competing geopolitical interests. While the alliance yielded some successes in countering terrorism, it was also shaped by ongoing tensions and shifting regional dynamics. To define the future of their relationship, both countries will need to balance their shared interests with their differing objectives in the post-US withdrawal era (Hussain T. , 2005). The dynamics of this relationship became particularly pronounced after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, which led to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and the launch of the War on Terror. As a neighboring country, Pakistan played a critical role in the conflict, simultaneously supporting various factions while also influencing the trajectory of US objectives in the region (Mustafa, Junaid, Khan, & Wakil, 2020).

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan marked a new chapter in Pakistan-US relations, with Pakistan prioritizing economic interests over security concerns. The Taliban's victory reshaped Central and South Asia's geopolitical landscape. Pakistan took satisfaction in the Taliban's success, having supported them since before their 2001 ousting. Pakistan's leaders navigated a new dynamic with Washington, where resentment grew over Pakistan's perceived role in the US's longest war. A potentially more cohesive and resolute government in Kabul complicated Pakistan's regional position. Islamabad devised a new

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strategy for its relationships with Washington and Kabul. The US-Pakistan relationship was redefined, with economic interests taking center stage. Pakistan's support for the Taliban was a point of contention with Washington. The country's regional position depended on its ability to navigate the new geopolitical landscape and build strong relationships with its neighbors and the US. Pakistan's leaders balanced economic interests with security concerns and navigated complex regional relationships. The legacy of the US's longest war influenced the dynamics between the two countries (Loidolt, 2022).

Pak-US Relations in Cold-War

Since the United States recognized Pakistan on August 15, 1947, the two nations have maintained a complex yet often close relationship. Pakistan has historically aligned itself with American foreign policy initiatives, particularly during pivotal moments such as the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the US diplomatic rapprochement with China. The United States has actively sought to mitigate tensions between India and Pakistan, providing Pakistan with significant financial assistance through loans and debt relief. Additionally, the US has been a major supplier of military hardware to Pakistan. However, despite these efforts, the relationship remains nuanced, with ongoing tensions over regional issues and Pakistan's nuclear program (Ali & Anwar, 2023).

The complexity in Pakistan-US relations was a longstanding dynamic that dated back to the inception of their ties. Despite the cordial exchange of greetings between President Truman and Jinnah in the early days of Pakistan's establishment, the bilateral relations between the two countries were lukewarm in the initial years. This was due to several factors, including the US's global priorities and foreign policy objectives, which prioritized containing communism during the Cold War, relegating South Asia to a relatively low priority. Pakistan, meanwhile, sought to cultivate brotherly relations with Muslim countries and adopted a non-aligned stance, announcing it would not be party to any conflict.

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Furthermore, Pakistan faced numerous domestic challenges, including a massive refugee influx, economic difficulties, and security concerns. US policymakers also assumed Britain would maintain its dominant role in the region, diminishing Pakistan's significance in US foreign policy calculations. These factors collectively contributed to the lukewarm relations between Pakistan and the US in the early years (Kux, 2001).

Pakistan confronted a multitude of pressing challenges in its formative years, including the loss of economic and military assets, an ongoing conflict with India over Kashmir, a massive influx of refugees, and the geographical divide of 1,000 miles of hostile Indian territory between East and West Pakistan. Furthermore, the disputed Durand Line posed security concerns along the North West Frontier, while a scarcity of funds strained government resources. Given these imperatives, Pakistan's priorities were understandably focused on addressing internal and regional issues rather than engaging with global conflicts involving superpowers. Consequently, Pakistan's foreign policy was shaped by these domestic and regional dynamics, with a pragmatic approach aimed at navigating its immediate challenges (Burke, 1973).

Pakistan urgently required economic and military aid to address its precarious security situation. It therefore sought 2 billion dollar in military and economic assistance from the US. However, the US response was tepid, offering a paltry 10 million dollar from its relief fund. Moreover, instead of providing military aid, the US imposed restrictions on exports of military hardware on March 11, 1948, citing the ongoing tensions over Kashmir (Kux, 2001). Pakistan aligned itself with the US led Western Block, while the Soviet Union led the opposing Eastern Block. The US supported Pakistan's entry into the World Bank and the United Nations, and provided significant military and economic aid from 1947 to 1953. This assistance enabled Pakistan to strengthen its infrastructure and armed forces. However, the alliance was marked by mutual wariness: Pakistan was cautious about India's close ties with the US, while the US

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had concerns about Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union. Despite these complexities, the US continued to provide aid, and diplomatic relations between the two countries remained intact (Larson, 1994).

Pak-US Partnership 1979-1989

The decade, 1979 to 1989, was crucial in Pak-US relationship, as both countries forged strategic alliance in response to Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. This partnership was driven by shared geopolitical objectives during Cold War, as both sought to counter Soviet expansion. Pakistan, under leadership of General Zia, emerged as crucial partner for United States in region. Alliance had important implications for regional and global politics, shaping trajectory of Cold War and beyond. US provided substantial financial and military aid to Pakistan, enabled country to support Afghan *mujahideen* in fight against Soviet Union. CIA oversaw delivery of aid, which included funding, training, and advanced weaponry such as Stinger missile. This support played crucial role in strengthening *mujahideen* and ultimately contributing to Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989. The Stinger missile, in particular, proved to be game-changer in conflict, allowing *mujahideen* to effectively counter Soviet air power. Alliance between Pakistan and the US during this period had significant consequences for both. For Pakistan, it marked as period of significant economic and military growth and increased international influence. For US, it provided strategic foothold in region and helped to counter Soviet influence. However, legacy of this alliance was complex and multifaceted, with some critics arguing that US support for *mujahideen* contributed to rise of extremist groups in region. Soviet-Afghan War marked turning point in Cold War, and Pak-US alliance played important role in shaping its outcome. War weakened Soviet Union, ultimately contributing to collapse in 1991. Alliance also highlighted importance of Pakistani strategic location and its role as key player in regional geopolitics. Despite intricacies and challenges that arose from this partnership, it remained significant chapter in history of

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Pak-US relations (Petrov-Yoo, 2019).

Pak-US alliance, twisted to expel Soviet Union from Afghan areas, had lasting consequences. The aftermath saw massive influx of Afghan refugees, proliferation of weapons and militancy, and radicalization of certain segments of society. These factors have profoundly shaped Pakistan's internal dynamics and security landscape, with enduring implications for the country's stability and development (Mir, 2021).

Pak-US alliance during this period was marked with significant intricacies. Pakistani alignment with US strained relationship with Soviet Union and India, while posing persistent challenges in managing regional dynamics and coordinating disparate factions within Afghan resistance (Kronstadt, 2023). Pak-US alliance during Soviet-Afghan War reshaped South Asian geopolitical landscape. While achieving its immediate objectives, it had enduring consequences, including proliferation of extremist groups and entrenched instability in Afghanistan. The legacy continues to shape regional power structures and security paradigms, influencing both countries' strategic calculus (Lafrai, 2012). Pak-US alliance during Soviet-Afghan War had profound implications for both countries, yielding short-term successes but long-term deficits. Understanding this complex history is crucial for fostering more resilient and forward-looking partnership between two countries.

Complex Web of Pak-US Relations Prior to 9/11

Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 was significant turning point of region's geopolitical scenario. Soon after US left Pakistan alone and did not back the Afghanistan. It created power vacuum that led to regional instability and rise of Taliban. Pakistan faced numerous challenges, including refugees' crisis, internal instability, and spread of extremism. The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 forced Pakistan to reassess its strategic priorities and adapt new global landscape. Pakistan sought to maintain its relationship with US while pursuing partnerships with other countries, including China. It adopted policy to deal with

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internal security concern, but its efforts were hindered by intricate regional dynamics and legacy of Afghan conflict. During 1990 to 2001, Pakistan traversed post-Cold War and protected its national interests through delicate balancing act. The 9/11 attack in 2001 significantly impacted Pakistan's relationship with US and international community. Pakistan's decision to support US-led War on Terror had far-reaching consequences, including increased instability and violence.

The era, 1990 to 2001, was balanced, as Pakistan sought to steer convolutions of post-Cold War. Country faced significant defies in balancing its relationship with several international powers, addressing internal security concern, and protecting national interest. Despite these challenges, Pakistan's foreign policy efforts during this period laid groundwork for country's continued engagement with international community and its pursuit of strategic partnerships. Legacy of this era continues to shape Pakistan's foreign policy and strategic priorities, as country navigated intricacies of modern global landscape (Nguyen, 2020).

Pakistan confronted significant internal challenges, including political uncertainty and monetary chaos, which might aggravated by Afghan conflict's spillover effects, enormous refugee inflow, and extensive arm proliferation. Governance issues and economic restraints further complicated country's difficulties. Longstanding Kashmir dispute remained core issue in Pakistani foreign policy, with bilateral talks and confidence-building measures failing to produce lasting solution. Pakistan's complex and often tense relationship with India, coupled with periodic regional conflicts, added to its strategic challenges (Ejaz, 2016). In response to the shifting global landscape following the Cold War, Pakistan undertook a strategic reassessment. As the United States reoriented its priorities away from the region after the Afghan conflict, Pakistan sought to diversify its international relationships. Pakistan actively pursued diplomatic and strategic partnerships with countries such as China and other Muslim nations, aiming to reduce its dependence

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on traditional alliances and navigate the new geopolitical reality (Memon, 1994).

Pakistan's nuclear program faced international scrutiny in the 1990s, with concerns about proliferation risks. Despite diplomatic pressures, Pakistan balanced its strategic objectives with non-proliferation norms. The rise of extremism and militancy posed significant domestic security challenges, with militant groups carrying out attacks and targeting civilians and infrastructure. Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict, following the Soviet withdrawal, had implications for regional stability. The country's role in the global war on terror, post-9/11, was shaped by its geographic location and relationships with militant groups. Pakistan steered intricate geopolitical situations and balanced security interests with international expectations. Diplomatic efforts remained focused on sustaining sovereignty and security interests while addressing international concerns about terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Pakistani experiences were marked by noteworthy challenges and opportunities, shaping its relationships with other countries and influencing regional security landscape. The diplomatic efforts played critical role in circumnavigating these intricacies.

Pak-US Post-9/11 Partnership

In response to September 11, 2001 attacks, Pakistan and US formed strategic partnership to contest terrorism. Pakistan provided precarious support to US-led War on Terror, including military, intelligence, and logistical cooperation. In exchange, US offered substantial economic and military aid. This partnership enabled US to conduct military operations in Afghanistan, utilizing Pakistani territory and airspace to target Al-Qaeda and Taliban. Pakistan's cooperation was instrumental in disrupting terrorist networks and containing extremism in region. However, partnership also presented challenges for Pakistan, including heightened militant activity and security threats along its Afghan border. Pakistani leaders had to navigate domestic security concerns, public

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opinion, and their cooperation with US. Pak-US partnership post-9/11 was complex relationship with significant repercussions for regional and international security, both cooperation and challenges (Bergen, 2023).

Pak-US alliance was characterized by convolution and multilayered dynamics, shaped by range of strategic, geopolitical, and domestic factors. Pakistan's strategic location at nexus of Middle East and South Asia rendered it vital partner in US-led counter-terrorism initiatives. Country's geography, bordering Afghanistan, positioned it as crucial player in regional stability and security. The alliance was influenced by multitude of factors, including geopolitical consideration, strategic interest, and domestic imperative. Pakistan's strategic location made it an indispensable partner in counter-terrorism efforts. Although cooperation was substantial, trust issues and divergent priorities gave rise to tensions. US provided significant economic and military aid, while Pakistan supported US counter-terrorism endeavors. Alliance played pivotal role in maintaining regional stability, with both countries collaborating to address shared security challenges. Relationship underwent significant evolution over time, shaped by regional dynamics, US foreign policy, and Pakistan's internal politics (Ali & Sultan, 2023).

Pak-US cooperation, during 2001 to 2021, was complex relationship characterized by both support and challenges. Pakistan's strategic location and historical ties to Afghanistan made it crucial ally in global war against terrorism. Both the countries collaborated on military, intelligence, and diplomatic efforts, with US providing financial and military aid to support Pakistan's counter-terrorism capabilities. Despite tensions over trust, militant safe havens, and differing goals, partnership yielded significant progress in combating terrorism and promoting regional stability. This complex dynamic defined relationship, with cooperation and challenges coexisting (Hussain T. , 2005).

Pak-US partnership during War on Terror was complex and multifaceted relationship. On one hand, both countries cooperated

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closely on counter-terrorism efforts, with Pakistan providing critical support to US military operations in Afghanistan. On other hand, both have concerns on each other (Ali & Sultan, 2023). This cooperation was driven by shared interests in combating extremist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and Taliban. However, despite this cooperation, relationship was also marked by significant tensions and trust issues. One major point of contention was the 2011 US operation that killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan. Operation raised concerns about transparency and trust, as Pakistan felt its sovereignty had been violated. Pakistan had expected to be informed about operation, and fact that US had carried out operation without its knowledge or consent led to widespread outrage and criticism. This incident highlighted trust deficit between two countries and strained relationship (Mir, 2021).

Pakistan and US maintained cooperative relationship on military and diplomatic fronts, despite existing challenges. US provided substantial economic and military aid, and both countries collaborated on counter-terrorism initiatives. Economic relationship between two countries was significant, with US being Pakistan's largest trading partner and major source of development funding (Ali & Sultan, 2023). This economic cooperation strengthened Pakistani economy and fostered development. However, partnership's stability was susceptible to fluctuations in regional geopolitics, particularly intricate dynamics of India-Pakistan relations and Afghan conflict. Pak-US relationship was frequently influenced by US-India relationship, and Pakistan's apprehensions about India's growing regional influence. Afghan conflict also played pivotal role in shaping US-Pak partnership, with Pakistan's concerns about Taliban and other militant groups driving cooperation with US on counter-terrorism efforts.

Pak-US alliance was complex and dynamic relation that evolved over the years. Despite facing numerous challenges and intricacies, both the countries continued to cooperate on various fronts, including security,

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economics, and regional stability. Alliance was driven by shared interests, such as combating terrorism and promoting regional security, but was also marked by divergent priorities and perspectives. US and Pakistan had differing views on issues like Afghanistan, India, and extremism, which created tensions and challenges in relationship. However, both countries recognized importance of cooperation and collaboration in addressing common challenges and promoting regional stability (Mir, 2021). The history of relationship between both the countries served as prime example of intricate dynamics of international partnerships, highlighting need for flexibility, adaptability, and deep understanding of each other's perspectives and priorities. As geopolitical landscape continued to evolve, US-Pakistan alliance faced new challenges and opportunities, requiring both countries to navigate complexities and find common grounds. In this context, US-Pakistan relationship was not just bilateral partnership but also critical component of regional security and stability. Both countries had vested interest in promoting peace and stability in region, which helped to address common challenges and create opportunities for economic growth and development (US, 2023).

The complexities in US-Pakistan alliance were multifaceted. Porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan was significant challenge, as it allowed militants to move freely between two countries. This made it difficult for both countries to track and apprehend terrorists, and it also enabled militant groups to regroup and reorganize. US drone strikes in Pakistani tribal regions added tensions. While strikes were aimed at high-value targets, they often resulted in civilian casualties, which sparked widespread outrage in Pakistan. Pakistani government faced criticism for allegedly allowing US to conduct these strikes, which many saw as violation of Pakistan's sovereignty (Akhtar, 2011). Allegations of Pakistan's support for militant groups further strained relationship. US believed that elements within Pakistan's security establishment were providing support to groups like Taliban and

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Haqqani Network, which were responsible for attacks on US and Afghan forces in Afghanistan. This led to questions about Pakistan's commitment to counter-terrorism and its reliability as partner. These issues highlighted differing priorities and perspectives of two countries. US was focused on defeating terrorist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while Pakistan was concerned about its own security and potential for instability in region. Both countries also had differing views on how to achieve stability in Afghanistan, with US pushing for more military-focused approach and Pakistan advocating for more diplomatic approach (US, 2023) . Despite these challenges, US-Pakistan alliance remained important for both countries. US needed Pakistan's cooperation to supply its military forces in Afghanistan, while Pakistan benefited from US economic and military aid. However, relationship was often tense and unpredictable, with both countries struggling to find common ground on key issues (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021).

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's takeover of Kabul usher in a new era in US-Pakistan relations, marked by shifting priorities and interests. Pakistan's civilian leaders are keen to focus on economic and commercial cooperation with the US, rather than security concerns. Meanwhile, if the US remains engaged in the region, its efforts will likely center on counter-terrorism, rather than economic investment or political support for Pakistan. The Taliban's victory has significantly altered the geopolitical landscape of Central and South Asia, following the US military's departure after a two-decade presence. Although the August 2021 developments in Afghanistan strained Islamabad's relationship with Washington, Pakistan may derive some satisfaction from the Taliban's success, given its historical ties to the group dating back to before their ousting from Kabul in 2001 (Kronstadt, 2023).

The transactional nature of US-Pakistan relations was likely to continue, with both countries focusing on areas of mutual interest. The Afghan peace process was one such area, where the US and Pakistan

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could cooperate to promote regional stability. However, the reduced reliance of the US on Pakistan for counter-terrorism efforts, following the withdrawal of US coalition forces from Afghanistan, led to a shift in the dynamics of the relationship (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021). The US prioritized its interests in the region, such as preventing the resurgence of terrorist groups, over building a strong partnership with Pakistan. This resulted in a more pragmatic and utilitarian approach to the relationship, with both countries seeking to advance their respective interests. In this context, Pakistan needed to adapt its foreign policy and diplomatic efforts to navigate the changing landscape of its relationship with the US. This involved diversifying its international partnerships, strengthening its economic fundamentals, and addressing its internal security challenges to improve its bargaining position (Hussain Z. , 2021). As of December 2024, a multitude of challenges was being confronted by Pakistan, including energy and climate-related issues, severe political instability, a balance of payments crisis, increased domestic security threats and terrorism, diminished diplomatic influence, and other pressing concerns. This complex situation had been described by some analysts as a 'poly-crisis'. Given landscape, Pak-US relationship was anticipated to endure largely transactional, with cooperation being fixated on areas of bilateral interests, such as Afghan peace process. According to former US officials, Washington's reliance on Islamabad for counter-terrorism efforts had been reduced by withdrawal of US coalition forces from Afghanistan, and dynamics of Pak-US relationship had potentially been reshaped.

Conclusion

Pak-US relation was characterized by complex dynamic of cooperation and tensions, particularly in context of Afghan conflict. Pakistan's strategic location, bordering Afghanistan, rendered it crucial player in regional dynamics. US sought Pakistan's cooperation in various domains, including counter-terrorism, logistics, and military operations. Pakistan

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provided intelligence and logistical support to US in its efforts to combat terrorist organizations, and its military conducted operations against militant groups within its borders. However, relationship was also marked by trust deficits and divergent priorities. US expressed concerns about Pakistan's commitment to counter-terrorism, while Pakistan felt that US did not fully appreciate its security concerns. Pakistan's focus on its own security and stability sometimes led to differing perspectives with US on how to address regional challenges. US drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal regions were contentious issue, with Pakistan perceiving them as infringement upon its sovereignty.

War in Afghanistan had significant implications for Pakistan. Influx of Afghan refugees put pressure on Pakistan's resources, and porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan allowed militant groups to operate in region. War also had substantial economic costs for Pakistan, including damage to its economy and infrastructure. Despite the challenges, Pakistan continued to play crucial role in regional dynamics, and its relationship with US remained important for both countries. As the US withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, relationship between Pakistan and US continued to evolve. Both countries explored opportunities for increasing trade and investment and worked together to promote stability in region, particularly in Afghanistan. Cooperation on counter-terrorism efforts remained key aspect of relationship, and both countries recognized importance of addressing complex security challenges in region.

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