



Original Article

Rethinking of Pak-US Relations: Prospects of their Bilateral Relations Post August 2021 to Joe Biden Administration

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Pak-US relations following the departure of US forces from Afghanistan. The central question of this study is if there is a potential for US-Pak reproachment given that the US's priorities have drastically changed since the withdrawal of its forces. The paper finds that despite being friends, Pakistan and the United States have had decades-long, complicated relations with contrasting perspectives on a diverse issue. In the light of the neoclassical perspective, the paper argues that the significance the United States attaches to Pakistan in the current geostrategic context—amidst the escalating US-China hostilities—is limited to Afghanistan and tainted by its close ties to China and the strategic significance of India. The US's reliance on Pakistan is likely to increase even after the departure of troops from Afghanistan because of the anti-regional framework created by Iran, China, and Russia.

Keywords: *Bilateral relations, Joe Biden administration, Pak-US relations, Post August 2021*

INTRODUCTION

There has been a complex yet interesting connection between Pakistan and the US. It would be correct to call the two opponents “frenemies.” From the beginning the two states have participated in a number of transactional alliances, but there hasn't been made any perceptible attempts to forge long-lasting, strategic connections (Cheema, 2021). Strategic concerns and sporadic upheavals have mostly shaped the bilateral relationship between Washington and Islamabad, forcing the two sides to communicate on issues of relevance and collective interests. The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 and the ensuing collapse of the Soviet Union manifested the termination of the golden years of Pakistan-United States relations necessitated by cold war contention. A decade of comparative inactivity in Pakistan-U.S. ties followed, during which China's global status and India's rise as a new world power at loggerheads with Beijing, gained significance in the U.S. policy (Ebrahimkhani, 2021).

When the US began fighting terrorism in the early 2000s, Pakistan assisted in the eradication of terrorist organisations and non-state actors that had been proscribed by the UN. In this regard the nation did receive billions of dollars in military and humanitarian aid (Cheema, 2021). As the conflict endured, disagreements with the Obama administration over the claimed assistance and providing sanctuaries to the Taliban and the presence of al-Qaeda officials in Pakistan surfaced, resulting in a slumping of ties, particularly presence of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad compound and subsequent operation of the US to kill him (Ebrahimkhani, 2021). This impression diminished Pakistan's contributions to the War on Terror in the eyes of the US.

The emergence of a new civilian government in Pakistan led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif resulted

in improved civil-military relations. General Raheel Sharif, who was appointed Chief of army Staff in the last half of 2013, was eager to set up negotiations between the US and Afghan Taliban. The agreement was straightforward: Pakistan would invite the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table, and Afghanistan would wage a fierce campaign against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commanders who were hiding inside Afghanistan and inflicting depredation in Pakistan from there. For that reason, the discussions were planned in 2015. The US and Pakistan's converging interests have once again increased their proximity to one another. The Afghan Taliban launched a string of blitz in Kabul on August 7, 2015, resulting in about 50 fatalities and hundreds of injuries, hence the negotiations remained nugatory.

The destructive effects of the war have cost the nation thousands of people, thousands of law enforcement officers, and billions of money over the past two decades (Cheema, 2021). Even while focusing on the US-Pakistan relationship solely from a security perspective, it appears to be unworkable, since the future is still unclear given the larger backdrop of the withdrawal from Afghanistan and great power competition. Though it may not be possible to reach the highs of the 1980s or 2000s, there is a willingness on both sides to avoid the lows of the 1990s. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend how the existing status of both countries' divergent and convergent interests interact in order to better understand how a partnership that is “rightsized” might be structured (Khan, 2019).

The present study is an attempt to analyze the Pak-US relations after withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. The paper also tries to analyze the nature of relations before the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan particularly focusing Trump's administration policy towards Pakistan.

National-Standardized Connection & Neoclassical Realism

In this paper, the relationship between the US and Pakistan is explained using the neoclassical realism theory of international relations. As a response to the US, Pakistan has used a variety of strategies. Neo-classical realism considers both the domestic level intervening elements that affect how states behave in international politics as well as how states interact with one another in a systemic way. Leadership insight, strategic culture, state-society links, and national organisations are only a few of the influencing factors. Foreign policy decisions and the decision-making process are influenced by domestic interceding factors. As a result of domestic pressure, the US invaded Afghanistan in reaction to the Twin Towers attacks (Booth et al., 2002). The US decision to invade Afghanistan was largely influenced by public beliefs and opinion, which gave the move legitimacy. Similar to this, institutional strength and national assets contributed to the US government's decision to attack Afghanistan.

Since then, a lot has happened for the US both domestically and within the system. Less emphasis is being placed on escalating the conflict in Afghanistan and more on bringing down the number of troops there. In the Neo-classical Realist Theory, which focuses especially on the national factors in the formulation of foreign policy decisions, this change in behaviour has numerous structured and domestic explanations. Pakistan has pursued its aims, albeit cautiously, much as the US has, as a big power with its own unique style of pursuing its interests (Mearsheimer, 2018). The policy planners, or proponents of the idea states that interest groups have a stake in and a voice in foreign policy, they hold that a state's understanding and determination of its place in the international system is the most crucial component prior to making a foreign policy choice (Rose, 1998). The domestic policy options are defined and constrained by one's position in the system. Neo-classical realists believe that policy planners, on the other hand, may more clearly explain the foreign policy decisions made in the face of serious external threats (Ripsman et al., 2016).

Both parties recognized the value of their mutual support in achieving the security and foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan, making the relationship crucial. A lasting gap on the approach of solving the Afghan problem does, however, was seen in this collaboration (Qazi, 2018). Siddiqi (2014) examines how narratives are used to further the foreign policy objectives of a big power-cum-hegemon like the US and

a little one like Pakistan. In this partnership, narratives have additionally been utilized to negotiate. In light of the offensive statements made by both the US and Pakistan, this paper charts the prospects of Pak-US reproachment after the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan.

Reconsidering Pak-US Relations

In a unipolar world where the United States was the dominant power, the grounds for collaboration between the United States and Pakistan were laid. However, as the globe swings away from this unipolarity, the new period is characterised by international strategic vying between the United States and China, joined by Russia (Nawaz, 2022). While the United States has positioned India as its primary partner in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia to counter China, whereas Pakistan is typically seen as belonging to the Chinese camp. Additionally, the girdling approach Pakistan has in Afghanistan caused the US angered and on the other hand, Pakistani policy planners worry that the US won't support them in their efforts to address a number of economic and security issues that will arise after the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The prospects of the US-Pakistan relationship are seriously threatened by these perceptions, which calls for a reevaluation.

In contrast to the Cold War era, the US-China great power rivalry is more interdependent economically and involves major global concerns that have an impact on both nations. In turn, this opens up opportunities for rivalry and collaboration (Blinken, 2022a), with the world community cautious of squabble or a beginning of the new Cold War. Similar to this, even in Pakistan, there is a rising understanding that the nation must resist pressure to support either power instead acting as a traverse state, repeating the same exercise of 1960s, between the United States and China, enhancing cooperation and cutting down any negative outcomes (Ali, 2020). Furthermore, maintaining peace and security in South Asia is crucial to the US's regional strategic goals. With regard to contention and collaboration, these convergences present a chance to reorient US-Pakistan relations.

In the near future, any relationship between the United States and Pakistan will still be heavily reliant on security and counterterrorism due to qualms about the resurgence and growth of terrorist organisations in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal regions. A more human-centric approach to security would need to form the foundation of any long-term alliance, along with deeper people-to-people and cultural links and greater economic collaboration. With senior leaders on both

sides showing interest in extending the scope of interaction, there are signs that cooperation in these areas may one day become the foundation of US-Pakistan relations (Zubairi, 2022). To determine whether scaling up relationships within these areas is even feasible, it is crucial to be more explicit about what specific initiatives might look like within these broad boundaries.

Misconception of Pakistan Supporting Terrorism

The brittleness of relations between the US and Pakistan was once again made clear by the US retreat from Afghanistan in August 2021. Growing worries are being voiced in the US regarding the nature of its relations with Islamabad due to Pakistan's purportedly questionable role in its dedication to the War on Terror. Despite the fact that some US officials still believe Pakistan has fulfilled its obligation and that Washington must keep cooperating with it, other officials urge Washington to reevaluate the parameters of its interactions with Islamabad. In light of this, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had to reassure Congress when questioned by legislators if it was time for Washington to review its ties with Pakistan. "This is one of the things we're going to be looking at in the days, and weeks ahead – the role that Pakistan has played over the last 20 years but also the role we would want to see it play in the coming years and what it will take for it to do that (Mir, 2021, p.n.d.)"

Pakistan has played a key role in the war against terrorism since 2001. After the US and NATO attacked Afghanistan, five million Afghans fled to Pakistan; some have come home, but 2.2 million are still there. Along with fostering extremism and terrorism, the inflow of Afghan refugees has brought a culture of guns and drugs. According to some estimates, Pakistan has lost about 80,000 civilian and security personnel lives over the past 20 years, as well as \$150 billion (\$203.04 billion) in economic output (Rehman et al., 2025). Pakistan has endured the most damage from this conflict after Afghanistan. Despite these costs and the assistance provided to the United States and NATO in Afghanistan, Pakistan is nevertheless criticized for not been up to the mark.

Many misconceptions about Pakistan contributed to the deterioration of bilateral relations with the US, including the ideas that it is a right-wing nation where the army rules the state, that it is dangerous to travel to and invest in, and that it harbors Taliban leadership and provides them with safe havens. The fact that the US has been in touch with the Taliban and has negotiated a peace agreement with help of Pakistan is an explanation

for dispelling these concerns. This contact dates back at least to 2010, according to recorded evidence (Saghafi-Ameri, 2011).

Since the Taliban first appeared in Pakistan in 1994, their early training and recruitment practices may be true. But the Taliban enjoyed complete indemnity and controlling between 30 and 48 percent of the country's rural areas while the US and NATO were present in Afghanistan. In light of the risks involved, why would they need a foreign country? For the same reasons, its leadership has remained in Afghanistan to maintain control over other organizations and shield them from US drone attacks. The 2,640-kilometer-long, porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border, however, makes it impossible to rule out the possibility that some leaders may have moved or even lived within Pakistan for indeterminate periods of time.

Another significant aspect is that Pakistan has been providing medical and humanitarian aid to Afghan refugees since 1979; among them, it is practically impossible to find terrorists. Even with access to satellite photography, the US was unable to identify Osama bin Laden, who lived only a few miles from its forces (Revisited, 2009), or the fact that Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), while being outlawed by the US, had its whole leadership and bases in Afghanistan. The US had the option of using drone strikes if there were any Taliban safe havens in Pakistan.

There may be some validity to the claim that Pakistan is a victim of extremism, but this may also apply to many other nations, including the US, where "White Extremism" is listed as the most significant threat (Jones et al., 2020), and the resurgence of the three times-banned Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in India (Joshi, 2014). In Pakistan, religious parties have only ever been able to win a small number of seats in parliament and have never been able to establish a government. Since the termination of Pakistan's most recent military coup in 2008, regular elections and the operation of democratic institutions have taken place.

Pakistan is one of the most lucrative places for foreign investment right now. US business owners like those at PepsiCo, McDonald's, and Coca-Cola are making huge profits with no limits on the transfer of equity. The fact that Pakistan has to deal with two of the most influential groups in the US—the Jewish and Indian lobbies—is an explicable explanation for the continued criticism of that country. The other factors include the absence of consistent diplomatic and political initiatives as well as the failure to reach out to all strata of American society via communications.

President Donald Trump's Administration Policy Towards Pakistan

2017 got off to an expectedly rough start for the US to Pakistan (Reuters, 2017). The Obama administration was already deeply ingrained with the misconceptions. At first, the Trump administration considered sticking with Pakistani foreign policy precedents that already existed in Washington. Initially, American officials were quoted in the media as saying that the US will take a harder line towards Pakistan so that to get triumph in Afghanistan. Additionally, it was stated that Pakistan was concerned that the US might increase its drone strikes there. Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson, Nafees Zakaria, was cited as affirming that the drone operations breach Pakistan's sovereignty and that Pakistan values its association with the US (Juss & Juss, 2024). Although Pakistan seeks cordial ties with the US, the pronouncement was Pakistan's subtle way of conveying that the drone strikes would not be accepted.

According to a White House press release titled, "US & India: Prosperity through partnership" the leadership urged on Pakistan to make sure that its soil is not utilized to carry out strikes on other states. They also demanded that Pakistan swiftly extradite the criminals responsible for the 26/11 terrorist strikes in Mumbai, Pathankot, and other border crossings carried out by organizations having hide outs in Pakistan (U.S. Mission India, 2017). The comment, according to the Pakistani officials, undesirably affects the hitherto stressed relations (Raza & Syed, 2017). Khan is arguably the first Pakistani prime minister to use social media, particularly twitter, to converse the statement being portrayed by the head of a superpower. Before, the US was in control and 'framed' Pakistan in words and on social media anyway it pleased. The leadership of Pakistan used talk shows and interviews in the electronic media as a means of retaliation.

When visiting Afghanistan in July 2017, Senator John McCain of the United States affirmed to the conclave that Pakistan must improve its attitude or the US as a whole will change how it treats Pakistan (AFP, 2017). Pakistan took the views expressed by prominent Senator McCain with earnestness. The claim that the Taliban and the Haqqani network were based in Afghanistan was met with great distress by Pakistan's Foreign Office (Siddiqi, 2017).

When Commander of Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and Commander of US Forces in Afghanistan Gen. John W. Nicholson met with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Qamar Javed Bajwa, in July 2017, it was the first substantial sign of the imminent

change between Pakistan and the US (ISPR, 2017). The criticism Pakistan was facing from American think tanks and the Trump administration prompted Pakistan to express its worry. As seen by the records, the Pakistani side's statements were well considered, measured, yet candid (ISPR, 2017). General Nicholson and General Bajwa met and statements were made in response. The US Congress, which favored Trump adopting a more aggressive attitude towards Pakistan, continued to make the odd critical declarations and remarks in the meantime (Iqbal, 2017).

However, when former U.S. President Donald Trump reduced security assistance to Pakistan in 2018, bilateral ties reached a low. The 2019 encounter between Trump and Khan at the White House, however, result in some upgrading in the relationship. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan through the 2020 Doha Agreement was made possible as a result of Pakistan's pivotal involvement, enabling talks between Washington and the Taliban in Qatar (Lodhi et al., 2022).

President Joe Biden Administration & Pak-US Relations

It is clear that the scope of bilateral relations is relatively limited and security-centric given the U.S.'s intention to forge positive connections with the new Pakistani government while simultaneously pressuring them to utilise their influence with the Taliban to fulfil the demands of the international community. The Pak-US relations begin to crumble instantly, when Biden didn't call Khan after assuming office, exasperating the prime minister and becoming a cause of contention. In August 2021, the U.S. departed from Afghanistan, making Pakistan pertinent to its foreign policy objectives once more, albeit this time primarily through the prism of counterterrorism and border security, which is still the case even today. The Biden administration kept Pakistan, which has economic links to China, at a distance by increasing its focus on strategic competition with China in Asia after their withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Khan also accused the U.S. blatantly of forcing Pakistan into its alleged War on Terror, which cost over 80,000 lives and caused economic losses of almost \$123 billion USD. When Khan lost the vote of no confidence, the United States served as a handy scapegoat due to the growing hostility between the Biden administration and the then-Prime Minister Khan (Lodhi et al., 2022). Over the past two years, the U.S.-Pakistan alliance has endured a number of setbacks, most notably the effects of the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover. The Biden government has

now decided on a bureaucratic division of labour in its approach towards Pakistan: a lack of engagement from the White House; vigorous, well-defined rendezvous from the State Department; and a persistence of enduring military and security contacts. The current symmetry differs from earlier ones in the following ways: President Joe Biden hasn't interacted with a Pakistani premier in current reminiscence (neither Khan nor Sharif). Additionally, the two countries are making an attempt to diversify their relationship, which is notable because it is no longer centred primarily on American interests in Afghanistan as it was before August 2021 (Afzal, 2023).

As Sharif's PML-N has actually had positive relations with President Biden and will probably continue to use these contacts in Washington, D.C., to mend the frayed relationship. Such initiatives will also enjoy the blessing and cooperation of Pakistan's strong military establishment, which aims to strike a balance between relations with China and the United States. At the Islamabad Security Dialogue in April 2023, Pakistan's Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, in direct contrast to Khan's anti-American eloquence, emphasised Pakistan's significant and long-standing strategic relations with the U.S. The military establishment was not pleased with Khan's foreign policy stance, according to Bajwa's remarks (Lodhi et al., 2022).

Prospects of Pak-US Relations Post August 2021

Following are the key areas which makes Pakistan relevant for American foreign policy even after the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Peace & Security

The key tenets of American foreign policy towards Pakistan continue to be based on 'relevance' and 'implied' reasons. Pakistan is still important when discussing Afghanistan even after US soldiers have left the country. The two suggested aspects are India's strategic significance and Pakistan's geostrategic cooperation with China in the aftermath of its growing hostility against the US. Pakistan has been instrumental in the negotiations for the Doha Peace Agreement between the US and the Taliban by exerting pressure on them (Gul, 2020). Pakistan or other regional parties had no input into the final documents of the deal, which were the sole domain of US and Taliban representatives. In exchange for the American force pullout in fourteen months and an intra-Afghan negotiation, the Taliban agreed to make guarantees that no group or individual would use Afghan territory to harm the safety of the US

and its associates.

The pact clearly shows that Afghanistan's stability and democratic system received little more than a passing nod. The regional actors like Pakistan, Iran, China, and Russia should have been a part of a smart strategy for a lasting peace in Afghanistan. In light of the time frame for the withdrawal of US troops, Biden chose to support the Doha Accord after having his first doubts. In hindsight, it is simple to see that US policy planners, military, and intelligence miscalculated the capability and means of the 300,000-strong Afghan National Army (ANA) they have been preparing for years, as well as the Taliban's capacity for armed conflict (Shea, 2021). In less than a month, the Taliban have taken over control of Kabul. Notwithstanding, as indicated by Biden, US expending US\$1 trillion (S\$1.34 trillion) on uplifting and training them as well as relentlessly giving them logistics, air support, and recompence, ANA, the backbone of the ostracized Ashraf Ghani administration, capitulated at all official residencies even not putting up a fight (Macias, 2021).

The largest foreign policy conundrum facing Pakistan is the Afghan crisis! It may be effortlessly transferred to Pakistan as Taliban supporters if the US and its nation's sentiments perceive the retreat of troops from Afghanistan as a US downfall, leading to friction with the Biden administration. Contrary to popular assumption in the West, Pakistan does not have the same influence over the Taliban that it did in the past. This influence is also steadily eroding as a result of the withdrawal of American forces and the surrender of virtually all of Afghanistan.

May not it has tried to break the ties between the Taliban and TTP if it had that much power? After approximately US\$2 trillion (S\$2.73 trillion) of financial losses and 2,480 American fatalities over a 20-year period, it is in Pakistan's concern, as well as the US's, to demonstrate some impression of US victory in Afghanistan (Shea, 2021). The disgrace of a US failure, on the other hand, would continue to plague relations between Pakistan and the US. The development of Pakistan's frail economy, the management of internal terrorism, and its efforts to encourage regional trade are all dependent on Afghan-driven peace. Although Americans have short memories, Biden's acknowledgment, which blames the Afghan National Army (ANA) for failing to resist the Taliban and avoids blaming Pakistan, bodes well for settling any prospective disputes (Macias, 2021). Though they pursue separate approaches, the US and Pakistan typically have similar opinions on Afghanistan. By maintaining a constant interaction at the political and military levels, this

mistrust can be overcome.

The perception in Pakistan that Pakistan's importance to Washington will be both lessened and tinted is a result of American foreign policy essentials that demand that Pakistan be viewed by keeping in mind its relations with China and India. Due to the US's renunciation of the periphery following the Soviet Union's departure from Afghanistan and the subsequent implementation of sanctions upon Pakistan, along with an antagonistic Eastern neighbour, Pakistan had no choice but to lean towards China. Pakistan's main overseas patron, weaponry supplier, and source of foreign direct investment has continued to be the country's "all weather friend."

US Response over the Current Turmoil in Pakistan

While the US appears to be improving its relations with Pakistan, it will continue to be cautious not to barricade too much with China in order to make compromise due to the country's rising political instability and widespread public support for Imran Khan. The US has exhibited hesitation to react to the political unrest in Pakistan, particularly in light of the Pakistan Army's clampdown on the party of the country's former prime minister Imran Khan. Except for initial statements from the State Department and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, the founding member and chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus in the US House, Washington has so far refrained from voicing serious apprehensions about the continued upheaval in Pakistan. The Biden administration's hush suggests that the US has made a deliberate choice to evade any possible upshot with the Pakistani Army. Washington is also aware that Pakistan's strong military establishment rules the nation rather than its civilian governments. As a result, the US is more comfortable cooperating with the Pakistani army on issues like counterterrorism collaboration, advances in Afghanistan, and other issues connected with defence (Mishra & Sharma, 2023).

Bilateral Security Ties

Before the August 2021 U.S. military and diplomatic retreat from Afghanistan, the breadth of U.S.-Pakistan security cooperation was already dwindling. Limited bilateral collaboration persists with a primary focus on counterterrorism and regional security (Blinken, 2022b). High-level military interactions have included the Commander of the U.S. Central Command's two trips to Pakistan in 2022, the U.S. Secretary of Defense's reception for Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff

at the Pentagon in October 2022, a meeting of the U.S.-Pakistan Counterterrorism Negotiation in March 2023. Since their reinstatement in 2021, money for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement has been Pakistan's only source of security-related assistance, (averaging around \$26 million annually over the previous five years, primarily for border security).

Al Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahri was assassinated in Kabul, Afghanistan, in July 2022 in a U.S. drone strike. Immediately after the operation, Afghan Taliban leaders charged Pakistan with providing airbase for it. Although the Islamabad leadership vehemently denied having any involvement, many observers think Pakistan must have known of and presumably approved of the strike before it could have happened (Fazl-e-Haider, 2022).

The Biden Administration declared in September 2022 that it would offer Pakistan's F-16 combat aircraft fleet a sustenance package at a possible rate of up to \$450 million (ISPR, 2017). India's government vigorously opposed the declaration, prompting the U.S. Secretary of State to publicly claim that "These are not new planes, new systems, or new weapons," and argue that the United States has a responsibility to maintain the military hardware it exports, adding that this effort would improve Pakistan's aptitude to deal with fanatic pressures stemming from Pakistan or from the region (Parashar, 2022).

China Factor

According to a database created by the "Stockholm International Peace Research Institute," Pakistan imported weapons worth more than \$750 million from China in 2021. The Pakistani air force unveiled its first set of J-10C fighter planes in the first week of March 2022. Islamabad hasn't specified how many planes were bought in the agreement, but Pakistani officials had previously mentioned up to 25 jets in news reports. The Pakistani army has remained a reliable customer of Chinese weapons. Although it used to buy from the United States as well. Long-time regional allies Pakistan and China have recently boosted their economic, trade, and investment ties. At the inaugural ceremony of Beijing Olympics Pakistani premier Khan was also in the capital to sign a collaboration in a number of sectors, including planetary, digitization, technical aid, and ethos.

Michele Kugelman expert on South Asian affairs analysed Sino-Pak relations: Pakistan's relationship with China is on a more upward trend than its relationship with the United States, which is at best

shaky (Dawi, 2022). Moeed Yousuf special advisor to prime minister, in an interview with Wilson Centre said we want to start by discussing investment relationships. The discussion regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is not always pleasant in Washington. What if American businesses came, made investments, reprocessed goods for export, and then shipped them wherever they pleased. Why not pursue economic endeavours where Pakistan, the US, and China may collaborate on investments. One of the most crucial elements in the warming of relations between Washington and Islamabad is Pakistan's tight ties to China. The US's decision to authorise the F-16 purchase was influenced by Pakistan's growing reliance on China for both its economic and defence needs (Tasci, 2022).

Both in New Delhi and Washington, some commentators believe that China is collaborating with Pakistan to limit India's influence, and China has offered diplomatic backing to Pakistan's Kashmir stance and foreign policy (Younus, 2023). Biden, a staunch opponent of China, is of the opinion that the US and China will continue to contest and that they should entice India to join them in strategic alliances. That in no way implies that the US has abandoned Pakistan. The US has allocated potentially tens of millions of dollars in the new budget for Pakistani assistance, the majority of which will be allotted to the health and education sectors. Pakistan will also benefit from the US\$13.8 million (\$18.55 million) designated for regional International Military Education and Training. Nevertheless, in the recent past we have seen that both Pakistan and the U.S. have made offensive statements, but neither nation seems to be wanting a permanent breakup. In this regard Kugelman opined, "It would be wrong to suggest that Pakistan's deepening alliance with China and growing partnerships with other U.S. rivals signals the end of U.S.-Pakistan relations. There's still an appetite in Islamabad for some degree of partnership" (Dawi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

It is obvious over the past 20 years that Pakistan-US ties are largely influenced by the security requirements of the US. Pakistan must consider alternatives to this security strategy in order to extensively engage with the US. The military might of Pakistan is something that America is aware of. To engage in substantive dialogue with American institutions and leadership, the civilian leadership must take the initiative. Pakistan's options in terms of foreign policy are limited by political insatiability, the incompetency of political elite. Nevertheless, in current circumstances Pakistan

demand economic collaboration rather than aid because it wanted to be considered as an equal partner. The US indicated that it would be willing to allow Pakistan more access to American markets. Already, US markets are the prime destination for Pakistani exported commodities. Regarding Pakistan's ability to engage in commercial activity with the US, there are significant problems. Although few of its items are competitive, it requests access to the market. Challenges with productivity and costs are still impeding the two countries' ability to cooperate economically.

The Pakistan policy of the Trump administration was divided into two discrete periods: tense bilateral ties during the initial two years that resulted in the deferral of security assistance of US\$1.3 billion, and a phlegmatic relationship during the next two years that underscored the coordination on counterterrorism initiatives and the advancement of the Afghan peace process, which, slightly, strengthened other aspects of the relationship. Pakistan continues to be a valuable friend for the US on a larger scale as it works to transpose itself in a transformed West Asian area. Biden's Pakistan strategy has been forced to remain silent due to a number of factors, including the accelerated withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, a frosty relationship with Saudi Arabia, an unfriendly Iran, and a host of regional nations, including the UAE, hedging their bets between Beijing and Washington. At some point, the Biden administration might not need to do much more than keep an appropriate silence regarding the domestic affairs of the Pakistan and disburse some financial aid.

There exists scepticism between the US and Pakistan that will probably widen since the Taliban take political control of Afghanistan. Shifting to geo-economics is the direction the partners should go to develop their bilateral ties in the changing circumstances. Pakistan is currently governed by incorporeal factors in its bilateral relations after decades of intimacy in its relationship with the US. According to historical evidences, relations between the US and Pakistan will probably deteriorate before getting close under the Biden administration.

Competing Interest

The authors had no competing interests.

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