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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Redefining Pakistan-US Relations in Post-Afghanistan Withdrawal Phase**

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**ABSTRACT**

Pak-US relationship has mostly been marred due to broken promises, disastrous misunderstandings, lack of trust, and exaggerated expectations from each other's policies. Pak-US engagement has always been absorberly framed either to achieve short-term security-related goals or around the compulsions to meet common challenges, especially the US needs & interest in the broader regional environment. Concerning the geo-strategic environment, the relevance that the US accorded to Pakistan has always been restricted to Afghanistan, whether it was during the cold war, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, or the post 9/ 11 US war on terror. The future of Pak-US relations in the post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan is full of uncertainty and the nature of US interest towards Pakistan has changed. The paper analyzes the historical transactional patterns of the relationship and compulsive factors, circumstances behind the US decision to alienate, abandon and impose economic and military sanctions on Pakistan, post-withdrawal complexities.

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**Keywords**

Pakistan-United States Relations, Post-Afghanistan, War on Terror, Sanctions, Afghanistan War

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**Introduction**

The emergence of Pakistan in 1947, on the world political map, coincided with the beginning of the Cold War. The end of World War II (WWII) ushered in the beginning of the American Era elevating it from the position of mid-level global power to positioning it along with the Soviet Union, as one of the two leading global powers. (Burton, 2020). The strong prevalent conviction that the unrestrained spread of communism can pose an unprecedented challenge and threats to the US interest provided a base for containing the spread of communism that dominated the hearts and minds of the policy-making circles during the mid-50s in the twentieth century. Thus, the growing need on part of the policymakers in the US to compete with and contain the spread of communism in the third world unfolded the significance of the South Asian region's strategic poisoning in the world's geographical map (McGarr, 2013). To refrain from becoming a part of any of the hostile camps led by the two super powers of the Cold War era India rebuffed the alliance politics by maintaining a nonaligned posture. Indian Prime minister Jawaher Lal Nehru's ardent admiration for the soviet socialist reconstruction program in soviet Russia along with India's close geographical proximity with the China and Soviet Union deterred it to become an alliance partner with the US against communism (Harshe, 1990). Thereby, India steered itself clearly from becoming part of a cold war alliance system. To survive, engage and negotiate with the outside world without getting trapped in the Cold War politics and rivalry between the US and Soviet Russia, India adopted and

maintained non-alignment as a strategy. In that case scenario, in that particular environment to policymakers in the US, Pakistan was seen as a potentially valuable strategic asset in the region to keep an eye on the spread of communism and to prevent Soviet Russia from getting access to the Warm Waters (Sunawar and Coutto, 2015). Counterbalancing the Indian threat on part of Pakistan and containing the Soviet influence drove both countries closer. Therefore, Pakistan's security consideration vis a vis India compelled it to become the hostage of Cold War politics offering itself as a strategic asset by joining the US-led camp aiming at containment of Soviet Russia. The relationship between the two was motivated by ad hoc respective security concerns, lacking real shared economic and strategic interest ultimately, turning it into a lopsided engagement between the two unequal ( Mir, 2021). During the 1980s the US needed Pakistan's support in defeating Soviet Russia to ensure its defense against communism while the urge to eliminate and defeat AL Qaeda's threat post 9/11 again brought it closer to Pakistan. These developments through unwelcoming for Pakistan provided it with an opportunity to make its regional significant felt and recognized and to monetize it by offering help to the US (Waheed, 2017). Unfortunately, both times the alliance could not prove a long and stable one because of its inherent fundamental flaws in it. Pakistan allying with the US was to fulfill its regional security concerns vis-a-vis India, on the other hand, the key US goal of containing communism was global. Resultantly, for both the partners the alliance could not prove satisfactory as there was no convergence of interest between both. So, the structural incongruity checkered with the patterns of divergence and convergence depicts the absence of any cemented factor that can keep the allies united. All these factors together hindered the relationship to develop into a stable and long-lasting partnership.

### **High and lows in a bilateral relationship from the establishment of diplomatic relations to 1979**

The political division of the sub-continent into Pakistan and India did not substantially transform the geopolitics of the region and the significant and compelling role that the geopolitical factors can hinge upon a country's foreign policy cannot be ignored altogether. Pakistan is no exception. So, Pakistan's geo-political compulsions since the very beginning of its creation swayed the formulation of the country's foreign policy (Hussain, 1979). Ensuring the economic and physical survival of the country by countering the regional power of its arch-rival India provided a substantive basis for Pakistan to become an ally of the US (Husain 1987).

From the cold war to the present, strategic calculations at the global level have generally played a very significant role in shaping US policies towards Pakistan. The US military assistance to Pakistan and Pakistan's support to the US against the spread of communism are the main aspect of Pakistan -US relations during the first decade of the independence of Pakistan. The mutual defense assistance agreement (MDAA) in May 1954, and the secret aide memoir in October 1954 between the two provided the formal basis for a substantive military assistance program (Afroz, 1994). The period of association they entered into after signing the historic MDAA was chanted with the slogans of 'special partnership'. Furthermore, the cooperation between the two was strengthened and corroborated by Pakistan's joining the South East Asia treaty Organization (SEATO) and central Asia treaty organization (CENTO) in 1954 and 1955 respectively (Khan, 1964). In the decade following the signing of the defense pact, Pakistan received about seven hundred million militaries and approximately two and a half billion dollars in economic assistance from the US (Wright, 2011).

### **Sanctions and their effect on bilateral ties**

The pendulum of 'special partnership' moved from one extreme to the other when the tensions arose between the two partners in 1959 and accelerated particularly after the Sino-Indian war of 1962. The relations between newly allied partners got worsened to such an extent during the mid-60s' that a list of grievances was published by the department of defense in 1965. It was comprised of the US allegations of Pakistan's lack of concrete support for the US Cold War policies (Kleiner, 2013). Following the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 and then the subsequent construction of a uranium enrichment facility in 1979, economic and military aid to Pakistan was suspended (CAP, 2008). The chanted slogan of an era of association was derailed to the phase of estrangement (Soherwordi, 2010).

Henceforth, the alliance between Pakistan and the US was marred even during the heydays of the friendship between the both due to inherently conflicting interests. Pakistan, despite its continuous and consistent support to the US throughout the cold war including the U-2 incident that took the Cold War to Pakistan's doorstep, has remained under severe criticism from the unappreciated US. Pakistan's military alliance with the US brought the former under mortal danger as the country was threatened by the soviet leaders with severe consequences if such an incident reoccurs (leake, 2017). The legacy of the alliance afflicted Pakistan internationally as its close ties and alliance with the West kept it aloof not only from the developing nations of the Non-Aligned movement but also from the Soviet Union, who in reaction developed cordial relations with India and backed her on Kashmir issue against Pakistan (Hess, 1987).

Apart from the suspension of US military aid to Pakistan and India during 1965 and 1971 wars, which bewildered the bilateral relations, another cause that contributed to the ailment was Pakistan's desire to seek its nuclear capability weapons in response to India's underground nuclear test in 1974 (Kronstadt, 2003). Pakistan's request for military assistance against Indian aggression in the wake of the existing military alliance between Pakistan and the US was altogether ignored by the US, clearly manifesting the strains in the bilateral relationship. The US refusal to help and further cutting off of the military and economic assistance to the country proved as adding insult to the injury because it caused Pakistan to lose its main military assistance provision and half of its economic aid (Kleiner, 2013). Some of the aid was resumed soon when during Nixon's administration, in October 1970, Pakistan was granted a one-time exception concerning arms sanctions according to which sales of the limited number of arms and equipment to Pakistan were allowed. But \$15 million value of the sale was less significant when compared with the giant total arms transfer worth \$370 million to India from Moscow since the 1965 war (Snyder, 1994). It was only after 10 years of the 1965 Pakistan -India war that the military embargo was lifted from Pakistan. However, to keep the criticism from the congress and Indian reaction at a minimum, the embargo was kept limited to cash sales only and the concessional sales or military assistance that has remained a chief source of the country's arms aid during the decades of the '50s and 60's was ruled out altogether. In return for the lifting of the armed embargo, it was expected Pakistan that it will abandon its desire to develop its nuclear capability (Mehmood, 2003).

During the mid-70 the US got overwhelmedness caused it to suspect that Pakistan wants to acquire nuclear weapons, with this the fractional period of cooperation and consent eventually ended up in clashes and disagreements.

Concerned about Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, in April 1979, the US cut off all military assistance to Pakistan under the Symington amendment (Shah, 2019).

### **Assessment of highs and lows from 1979 to 2001**

However, the equation of bilateral relations changed altogether in the backdrop of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Prompted by its containment policy, the US to materialize its strategic objective of opposing Soviet efforts to reach out to the Persian Gulf's warm waters needed Pakistan's support. Similarly, Afghanistan's takeover by the Soviet Union meant that it would provide strategic leverage to India there which was not favorable and acceptable for Pakistan. So, this synchronization of mutual interest brought another swing in the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the US, compelling Americans to put a blind eye to Pakistan's quest for having its nuclear capability (Farooq, 2016).

But in 1990 soon after the disintegration of the USSR, under Pressler Amendment, all the military aid to Pakistan by the US was cut off putting the credibility and reliability of the latter as a reliable supporter and ally in doldrums (Asmatullah & Khalil, 2021). The blind eye and reluctant policy that the US adopted in its approach towards Pakistan during the last decade of the Cold War, was altered altogether. The US, after materializing its dream of becoming the world hegemon after defeating the USSR in Afghanistan, lost interest in its Cold War ally Pakistan. In 1998, in the wake of the Indian Nuclear tests Pakistan in order to maintain the balance of power followed the suit (Medalia. J & Rennack. D, 1998). In response to that Pakistan faced another eye-opener sanctions under the Glenn amendment were imposed on Pakistan putting a halt on the sale of Military hardware and restricting the provision of loans (Mahmoud, T. 1999).

### **Assessment of highs and lows in Post 9/11 Scenario**

The weakened ties between Pakistan and the US during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an upswing in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the enlistment of Pakistan as a front-line state in the US-led war on terror in the backdrop of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on world trade center and pentagon. The already dwarfed Pakistan-US relations were about to reach the point of non-existence from minuscule. The US administration under George W. Bush administration despite having discontent over India's nuclear tests was on the verge of recognizing it as a special partner and making it an important lynchpin of US policy towards the South Asian region. But, the incident of 9/11 changed the dynamics of Pakistan-US relations altogether and the US policymakers were compelled to envision a new role for its old and abandoned ally in order to fight against the global war on terrorism (Nayak. P, 2005). Once again, the US under its obsessive compulsion to fight the global war on terror needed the physical and intelligence support of Pakistan. Consequently, it abandoned its policy of containment towards Pakistan that it adopted during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the demise of the bipolar world system. With the triumph of Capitalists' world economy, the US dream of defeating communism was materialized ultimately leading to a gradual decrease in its interest in its cold war ally Pakistan. With the onset of the incident of 9/11, the strategy of containment towards Pakistan was altered with one of the re-engagement. The real tragedy in the Pakistan-US alliance whether it was during the cold war or post 9/11 was that during both eras it remained narrowly anchored to the containment of communism and counterterrorism respectively. Rather than

broadening and diversifying the basis of their relationship both the states preferred to maintain it on an ad-hoc transactional basis.

Despite having two decades-long cooperation in the war on terror, the historical patterns of lack of trust and clash of narratives have not been addressed in the bilateral relations of Pakistan and the US. Even both sides interpret different matters and issues differently. The difference in the interpretations regarding different issues and subsequent clashes during War on Terror has marred their bilateral relations. Even Pakistan's joining hands with the US in the war on terror in Afghanistan was not by choice rather it was a coalition of not-so-willing on both sides (Mir, 2021).

The US policy choices towards Pakistan have always remained complex and imperfect even during the most crucial time when the US was in need of Pakistan's support during its global war on terror in Afghanistan. Resultantly, the efficacy of cooperation between the two allies has been jeopardized. Despite Pakistan's compliance to the US demands in the form of withdrawing its diplomatic recognition towards Taliban, provision of necessary intelligence information and military/naval basis to the US for the launch of military strikes against Taliban.

### **Sanctions and their impacts on bilateral ties**

The process of Pak-US cooperation has been impacted by various events, while the worst impact was noted when the US withheld an \$800 million reimbursement for Pakistan in 2011. Several events were responsible for initiating the disagreements. This cooperation is strongly dependent on US interest in the region, while the relations may remain smooth until the US interests are met. It cannot be denied that Pak-US engagement has always been viewed from the lens of financial aid from the US to Pakistan. After 9/11, the US increased its aid multiple times and all sanctions were removed. The US extended aid for Pakistan to boost its economic & military capacity to fight the war on terror as a front-line state. US' continuous demand to "do more" was associated with assistance in capacity building in eliminating safe havens for terrorists in Pakistan. The convergence of interest was witnessed after 9/11, while the financial aid was reduced in the Benazir Bhutto's era, and US assistance continued assistance in economic & military assistance (Yaqoob and Sattar, 2021).

Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan under the Geneva Accord and US disagreement on Pakistan's nuclear program compelled the US to sanctions. Resultantly, in 1990 US sanctions on Pakistan caused a serious impact in terms of aid cutoff and non-delivery of F-16 aircraft, agreed upon in 1989. Nevertheless, during sanctions, Pakistan tried to diversify economic donors in Europe and Japan to continue the nuclear program. Resultantly, US Congress agreed that US sanction was counterproductive. Later in 1996, Clinton signed a Congress bill relaxing the restrictions upon economic cooperation for Pakistan permitting the one-time release of \$368 million for a military cooperation (Hussain, 2005)

The relationship between Pakistan and the US has always been a big policy challenge for the foreign policies of both countries. It is important to note that Pakistan mainly depends on the US due to the need for financial aid. The US being the largest aid provider for Pakistan benefits from this dependence for its interests concerning the cold war. The nature of the relationship faces a trust deficit, while the 9/11 incident has immensely impacted the level of engagement between the two. It

has revitalized Pak-US bilateral relationship due to the altered US interest, while the financial aid has been the fundamental signal regarding cooperation, which determines the outcomes of engagement. The war on terror caused an extension to military aid for Pakistan since the US chose Pakistan as its frontline ally; however, various irritants have been eroding this cooperation, while the US foreign policy considers these aspects for its national interest (Ahmed & Kharal, 2015).

Before 9/11, Pakistan had supported the Taliban and recognized the Taliban government, however, Pakistan's disappointment was raised due to the social culture issue created by them when they demolished pre-Islamic Buddha sculptures. Resultantly, religious activism and sectarianism were enhanced in Afghanistan and the extremists got involved in terrorism. Also, US diplomatic pressure on Pakistan, especially regarding the handover of Osama Bin Laden created tensions. Resultantly, Musharraf decided that India can seek benefit from weakening cooperation between Pakistan and the US. Therefore, Pakistan should improve its relations with the US. Resultantly, Pakistan partnered with the US-led global war on terrorism due to its geographical position around the Afghanistan border. Renewal of Pakistan's military & diplomatic relations with the US enhanced US reliance on Pakistan for eliminating the Taliban, who were suspected to be operating on the Pak-Afghan border (Chandio and Khuhro, 2020, Muzaffar, Nawab & Yasee 2021).

Concerning Pakistan's nuclear program, Bhutto visited the USA to seek an embargo lift, while India had already conducted an underground test, which alarmed Pakistan for security concerns. Resultantly, Pakistan also had no option but to seek nuclear power to balance the Indian threat, which created concerns for global policymakers. Considering the regional security concerns, Pakistan bought a nuclear processing plant to counter-balance the Indian threat. The US warned Pakistan regarding the horrible consequences of violating non-proliferation for nuclear weapons. It is understandable that states protect their security, even though it is hard to ignore the threats of other States. Although Pakistan and US had a strong working relationship, however, US's increasing influence in domestic matters was a great hindrance. Consequently, the US did not show concerns regarding Pakistan's security although the Indian threat was visible. However, Pakistan ignored US threats and enhanced its nuclear capability in counterbalancing efforts (Tabassum, 2018)

### **Sanctions and subsequent frictions in the bilateral ties**

After the 9/11 incident, religious militancy in Pakistan and Afghanistan threatened global security, resultantly, the war against terror became the fundamental driver of rejuvenation of Pak-US relations. This new collaboration could raise a negative impact as the security risk for Pakistan was even higher than the US. President Musharraf considered various security threats from different aspects including external protection, economic revival, safeguarding nuclear possession, and the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan had limited options including its cooperation with the US since the US needed support from Pakistan for the elimination of Al-Qaeda. Moreover, it is also a fact, that Pakistan & US are dependent on each other. To comprehend the developing security instrument between the US and Pakistan, it may be vital to be familiar with the Pak-US history of security relations (Bashir & Mustafa, 2014)

Multiple other frictions were involved with Pak-US relations, but the US allegation of smuggling nuclear material by Pakistan's scientist was a serious concern

between the two. President Musharraf took action against doctor A Q Khan by removing him from the atomic program, while he had to apologize on National TV. This was evidence of safeguarding Pak-US relations by all means. However, even with this level of cooperation, the US still demands Pakistan roll back its nuclear program. Responding to this demand, Pakistan shows an intention for minimum deterrence and agreement signing, if India rolls back before Pakistan. Since there may be no expectation from India in this regard, therefore, Pakistan will not agree to such initiatives. Nevertheless, the security of Pakistan's nuclear program is a great concern. While it is understandable that both of them will not make a mutual agreement on rollback; therefore, it is not expected shortly (Khan, Ahmad, and Dadda, 2017)

At the time of inception, Pakistan had to choose between the two superpowers, as it was required because of the cold war. At that time, Pakistan opted for the US, which established positive relations to economic support and cooperation. Currently, China is also being anticipated as an emerging superpower, while both Pakistan and the US deter communism in the region. However, after 9/11 the US got against the Taliban in Afghanistan while Pakistan was aligned with the US in this stance. However, it is unfortunate that the US does not acknowledge Pakistan's sacrifices, which include significant life losses and economic suffering. Due to the US mistrust of Pakistan, it is showing an enhanced tilt toward China considering its enduring relations (Khan, 2020)

### **Appraisal of Post US withdrawal from Afghanistan: how to avoid the past mistakes**

The Pak-US relationship is a distinct experience concerning foreign policy; however, the historic bilateral relations are strongly connected with foreign aid & economic sanctions. There may be some mutual grievances, which may motivate bilateral relations and intentions for collaboration. There have been several concerns on both sides, firstly in connection with the cold war, and secondly in association with post-9/11 concerns. Although bilateral relations have seen several ups and downs, however, their interdependency is also an unavoidable fact. There are various complexities associated with Pakistan's foreign policy and economic security. Mainly, foreign interests between Pakistan and the US are associated with mutual expectations, especially related to Afghanistan's future, Sino-US rivalry, and Indo-US partnership. Most importantly, the role of Pakistan regarding the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is highly significant for the region (Akhtar, 2022).

US withdrawal from Afghanistan had several implications for Pakistan, which shares a long border with Afghanistan due to which, Pakistan has several concerns. Due to instability and the US presence in Afghanistan, there were several implications. At the same time, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan also led to multiple implications for Pakistan. Several internal and external challenges are involved with US withdrawal, however, there may be several opportunities as well. The most important implications including strategic, security, political, and economic implications require wise strategic plans (Muzaffar, Yaseen, and Afzal, 2021). Also, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan created debate over the declining role of the US in the region. In this reference, Pakistan's role is highly important, especially in the context of its relations with the Taliban (Stepanova, 2022).

### **Future outlook of the relationship**

The incident on 9/11 changed the dimensions of global politics and the security environment, however, it was a vital testing point for Pakistan. It had to become the US Ally in War on terror while confronting diverging security interests. The US targeted Afghanistan and the Taliban since Al-Qaeda terrorists were hiding in Afghanistan after attacking the US. Pakistan has to act as a focal point in that scenario due to its ideological, geographical, political, cultural, and security interests, as well as its relations with Afghanistan. Under this scenario, Pakistan had no option but to quit supporting the Taliban because of the US pressure. Pakistan also had its security reasons to protect itself from India while General Musharraf viewed the scenario as an opportunity for Pakistan to improve its economy. The future of Pak-US relations is under pressure since Pakistan has been compelled for finding convenience in alliance with the US to support the war on terrorism (Khan, Khattak, & Marwat, 2014).

The nature of the Pak US relationship demonstrates numerous fluctuations due to various reasons and driving factors. The time period after 9/11 is quite significant in this regard, as it has immensely influenced Pak-US engagement concerning cooperation. The revitalization of this relationship was determined through huge aid from the US. Under this approach, the Enhanced Partnership Act 2008 was established with the commitment of 5 years. Several other factors also hindered the process of mutual agreement between Pakistan and the US. Various other events have dented their mutual relations such as increased perception regarding extremism & militancy, Osama Bin Laden's killing, the Salala check-post attack, and Raymond Davis's arrest are a few of the incidents, which acted as significant irritants concerning the bilateral relationship between the two (Akhtar, 2012).

War on terror seemed to strengthen the engagement between Pakistan and the US, however, this engagement was multifaceted including economic support and military assistance. At that time, the Bush administration was aligned with then President Musharraf, who was a military dictator. It was a clear denial of the US rhetoric that previously favored democracy in Pakistan. Conversely, the nature of the relationship was dependent on the US interest, while various fluctuations were associated with different events that occurred in the context of the war on terror. The insistence by the US government on taking action against the Taliban, and excluding the possibilities of a haven for them was the main reason which always created issues. Resultantly, the US started drone strikes on suspected areas of Taliban presence, which promoted anger among Pakistan's public due to the loss of innocent lives as well. This was another significant factor that contributed to the weakening of Pak-US relations. (Ahmad, 2016)

For maintaining the impetus in the upcoming circumstances, Pakistan needs to show a stronger ability to generate cooperation regarding various issues, which may hold substantial interest to the US. In this reference, the error in 1990 involved a critical connection between the strategic disengagement of the US with Afghanistan. These indications emerged after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989 before the 9/11 incident when the US initiated re-engagement with Pakistan concerning the region. It may be noted that Pak-US bilateral relations were strongly vulnerable to significant misperceptions. For instance, the notion regarding Pakistan's perceive sponsorship of terrorism and harboring the leadership of the Taliban was a serious source of such misconceptions. Also, Pakistan was perceived as a rightist state that was run by the army, therefore they believed that it was difficult and risky to travel and invest in the country.



**Focus on geo-economic oriented policies**

While emphasizing geo-economic orientation, the US and Pakistan want to change the pattern of interest between the two. Currently, the US military mission has been concluded whereas the US administration wants to change the dimension of Pak-US relations. Under this intention, it has been anticipated that the Pak-US relationship should be developed beyond Afghanistan and the interest related to counter terrorism, these two dimensions have been the top priority in the past. On the contrary, Pakistan is currently considered one of the significant partners with the US from various dimensions. While this may be the case, another dimension is highly crucial while evaluating the Pak-US relationship in the current decade. It may be noted that the Taliban's victory has become a serious test for Pakistan's long-term relationship with the two countries. It has been found that Pak-US relations are perceived to be associated with the US need regarding the Afghanistan war. In this scenario, an unpredicted end to the war is considered to be ignominious for the US because of the Taliban takeover.

The outlook of the current scenario does not seem positive as this situation has created unpredictable circumstances for both of these countries. Considering the circumstances Pakistan and the US need to prioritize genuine cooperation areas by rehashing the conventional relations, which have always been associated with blame. Therefore, the narratives between Pakistan and the US are clashing regarding the issue which may lead to a troublesome situation for Pak-US relations.

The historical pattern of Pak-US relations has witnessed several ups & downs, as there has been a multiplicity of antagonism & assurance. Every attraction remains depicted by inspiring the US resonance of Pakistan's key implication. The US has been investing in Pakistan due to its major contribution to creating conflicting situations in Pakistan. Most of the time Pak-US relations have been positive, since inception. The US has been helping Pakistan in the two domains, where the US was securing its national interest. However, Pakistan has always been disappointed in its times of need when it required significant support from the US. While collaborating in the war on terror Pakistan and US operated in multiple areas to be successful against the terrorists and militants. However, their interests were not common and the desired outcomes were affected due to a lack of trust, as well as non-cooperation. In this reference, China is also an important factor, which is building bilateral relations with Pakistan through CPEC. In this scenario, Pakistan and the US must understand that continuous engagement may be required in sensitive cases such as the Kashmir issue and the US withdrawal from Pakistan (Marwat, 2021, Muzaffar, Khan & Yaseen, 2019).

**Conclusion**

The analysis of various circumstances between Pakistan and the US indicates that relations have shown frequent fluctuations during the last few decades. Considering various mistakes on both sides, committed regarding the strengthening of bilateral relations, it may be suggested that serious attempts from both sides were direly required. Prudence may dictate that after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pak-US relations could not be kept on the right track. There could have been several measures in this regard, which could help in the resolution of the matters in a better way. However, both need to focus on the remedial measures for supporting a new start, with an aim, not to repeat the same mistakes in the past. The US administration needs to understand that sanctions and power tools cannot be a

good strategy in all circumstances. Therefore, the US should quit relying solely on these strategies, since these tools play a major role in deteriorating the relationship between Pakistan and the US. In this reference, the US needs to avoid the lens related to geo-security, and adopt some economic & developmental approaches regarding mutual interest.

It may be noted that Pak-US ties have always been vulnerable to straining, even when the bilateral relationship between the two was perceived to be at the highest level of cooperation. Considering this aspect, the decision makers on both sides need to evaluate their ways of dealing with the subject and identify the room for correcting practices. It is an unavoidable fact that the US policy choices in critical matters towards Pakistan should be integrated with wider regional policies. Moreover, South Asia has also shifted its approaches, along with the premise of US relations within the region. The waves related to change have been spreading due to post-cold war circumstances, as well as globalization. Also, gestation has occurred due to the war on terrorism, which has led to confusion in varying directions.

Although there have been several efforts between the two countries to improve bilateral relations for mutual interest; however, the circumstances have shown a significant shift from the past. On one hand, the US tilt towards various actors in the region seems to change, while on the other hand, Pakistan is also against the concept of unipolarity. However, Pakistan has always been showing positive intentions toward Pak-US relations. Consequently, there may be no denial of the fact that Pakistan aims to sustain positive geopolitical and geoeconomic relations with the US. Although there have been positive gestures from both sides to show commitment toward healthy bilateral relations. However, the lack of concrete measures has always been felt. Notwithstanding, the actual economic, geo-strategic, and social welfare compulsions, the US policymakers have always been following time-based policies, which could only serve the particular long-term and short-term US interests.

Although the US has always shown a positive gesture regarding collaboration with Pakistan, in return it has always sought support from Pakistan as a compulsion. US gestures have always focused on attracting Pakistan to several advantages for being on its side. However, it has only offered some economic aid and political support with significant friction. Under this approach for the alliance, the US administration has always given the top priority to its interest, whenever a contrast related to the interest of Pakistan and the US has occurred. Hence, it cannot be denied that the relationship between Pakistan and the US is not equal and balanced, but is tilted towards the US interest. It can be noted that Pakistan has always claimed that it has never received due appreciation regarding its role in US employed war on terror. In this reference, it is a significant reality that Pakistan has paid a very high cost for participating in this war, while the losses were gigantic and irreparable. Therefore, Pakistan's expectations for acknowledgment and balanced relations should not be ignored, as Pakistan must have its due status among the global actors.

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