

Exploring the Dynamics of Pak-US Relations in Post 9/11 Era: Military Aid, Nuclear Proliferation and Regional Politics

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<https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2024.13.2.141>

Abstract

Throughout history, Pakistan and the United States have experienced a complex and evolving relationship. This relationship has witnessed periods of cooperation, strain, and scrutiny, particularly concerning formal engagement, financial collaboration, military ties, and regional security matters. This study is critical because it illustrates the evolving geopolitical landscape by revealing how military aid and nuclear concerns have affected South Asian security. By highlighting strategic interactions between global powers and regional entities, this research contributes to the international relations discourse. To assess the state of US-Pakistan relations post-9/11, this study investigates counterterrorism, nonproliferation, and regional geopolitics. It examines how Pakistan's counterterrorism operations and regional security are influenced by US military support, as well as the impact of regional geopolitics on the partnership. Employing mixed methods research, the study reveals diverse perspectives on the impact of aid, including both cooperation and concerns regarding conditional assistance. Regional dynamics, such as Afghanistan's stability and India-Pakistan tensions, emerge as critical factors influencing the partnership's evolution. Challenges stemming from divergent interests and perceptions are also highlighted. Furthermore, the quantitative aspect indicates that gender influences the outcome variable, suggesting potential behavioral or attitudinal differences between men and women regarding the studied environment.

Keywords: Pak-US Relations, US Military Aid, Nuclear Proliferation, Counterterrorism, Regional Geopolitics, Mixed Method Research.

Introduction

Pakistan's relationship with the United States has been complex and evolving throughout history. The connections between these two nations have experienced periods of partnership, strain, and review in areas such as formal engagement, financial collaboration, military ties, and regional

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security concerns (Rasool et al., 2023). Understanding the development of relations between the USA and Pakistan from their inception in 1947 until 2021 provides vital background for comprehending the intricacies of this diplomatic partnership. Beginning with the initial stages of diplomatic interaction, the study examines how Cold War factors influenced the realignment of objectives for Pakistan and the USA in the post-independence period. Particular emphasis is placed on the period immediately following 9/11, elucidating the complexities of the strategic partnership formed within the context of the war against extremism and the subsequent realignment of priorities (Ali & Anwar, 2023). Pakistan's primary reliance on the United States stemmed from its need for assistance. After independence, Pakistan aimed to play a significant role in the region in alignment with the United States' Cold War objectives. However, the nature of the connection remained highly complicated. The trust deficit was a crucial element on both sides in determining future interactions. The events of 9/11 completely reshaped the course of the relationship and the extent of involvement. This event marked a turning point towards a revitalized bilateral partnership under new circumstances. Since then, various factors have influenced the mutual commitment. Assistance serves as the primary indicator of involvement, where the degree and type of aid affect the likelihood of engagement. During the War on Terror, military assistance to Pakistan positioned it as a frontline partner for the United States. It is noted that US cooperation with Musharraf's military regime was more deeply entrenched than with the democratically elected government in 2008 (Ahmed & Kharal, 2023).

The study traces early diplomatic interactions in the 1950s and follows the evolution of the alliance from basic agreements to a comprehensive strategic relationship. It investigates security and geopolitical alignments during the 1970s and 1980s, shaped by Cold War dynamics and geopolitical upheavals. Additionally, the report outlines current Pakistan-China relations, focusing on significant 21st-century events such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), shared security interests, and cultural exchanges. While analyzing the driving forces behind this longstanding collaboration, the research emphasizes common interests, mutual trust, respect, and reciprocal economic and strategic benefits. The longevity of this partnership demonstrates the potential for cooperation and shared goals in international diplomacy (Khan & Ilmas, 2023). The strategic dialogue initiated in 2013 has played a significant role in fostering high-level military and political engagements, contributing to a reset of ties between the two countries. Key milestones, including high-level visits, defense collaboration agreements, and strategic dialogues, are examined to gain insights into the dynamics of global politics and strategic partnerships. The confirmation of military and technological cooperation by the Russian Security Council signals a strategic rapprochement and a shift in dynamics, marking a significant moment in their relationship. The signing of a substantial defense partnership pact in 2014 outlines goals such as intelligence sharing, coordination on global security, counterterrorism measures, and arms control actions (Ali et al., 2023). The intellectual foundations of Pakistan, as epitomized by the Two-Nation Theory, are analyzed through the lens of Muslim nationalism and the aspiration for an Islamic state. Key motivations include safeguarding Muslim rights, exerting political influence, addressing economic challenges, and preserving cultural identity (Shabbir et al., 2024). Borders today serve not only as geographical barriers between nations but also as focal points for ensuring security and stability. Military involvement in border security entails a complex array of activities and responsibilities. Borders serve as the first line of defense and must be rigorously enforced to prevent illegal incursions that could jeopardize national security. Consequently, military border security policies and tactics must evolve in tandem with shifts in international security dynamics. Primary challenges encountered by the military in border policing include cross-border terrorism,

illicit arms trafficking, and regional armed conflicts (Lutfie et al., 2024).

The term "Indo-Pacific strategy" refers to efforts to counter China's influence in the Indo-Pacific Ocean area. The strategic partnership between the United States and India is known as the Indo-Pacific strategy. While India can serve as a regional counterbalance to China, it also presents a significant security concern for Pakistan. India is strategically positioned to align with the United States in countering China's influence in the region, with a focus on monitoring China's activities. The United States supports India's economic development, healthcare, infrastructure, and maritime security capabilities (Khalil et al., 2024). To understand Pakistan's strategic posture, one must consider the security environment following its independence from the Indian subcontinent in August 1947. Since then, Pakistan's strategic planning has evolved in response to hostility with India, security challenges along its western border with Afghanistan, and the strategic objectives of international actors, particularly during the Cold War era (Ali, 2023). Military aid has significant implications for the security dynamics of the region, particularly concerning nuclear proliferation. Assistance provided by significant powers to their allies or partners can alter the balance of power in an area and have various impacts on stability. Additionally, the transfer of modern military equipment and technology may inadvertently contribute to the escalation of hostilities or arms races.

Moreover, providing military aid to regimes with nuclear capabilities or aspirations raises severe concerns about the risk of proliferation and regional security instability. External actors supplying military assistance to certain countries can heighten neighboring governments' threat perceptions, leading to arms build-up and increased security competition. This trend can increase the likelihood of conflict and hinder efforts to achieve regional stability. The dissemination of advanced military technology through aid packages can enhance the military capabilities of recipient countries, potentially accelerating their nuclear weapons development. This poses a significant challenge to global efforts to prevent the spread of atomic weapons and uphold nonproliferation norms. Therefore, it is evident that military aid can have multifaceted implications for regional security, with concerns about nuclear proliferation being a significant issue that policymakers must address (Jones et al., 2024). Military assistance to countries with a history of poor governance or human rights abuses can bolster authoritarian regimes, perpetuating internal unrest and regional conflicts (Liu, 2024).

The United States has expressed concern over Pakistan's nuclear development, leading to recurrent tensions and sanctions. Worries about Pakistan's potential proliferation of nuclear arms have been raised by the United States, prompting attempts to influence its nuclear policy through diplomatic channels. Nuclear capabilities have occasionally been leveraged as bargaining chips between Pakistan and the United States. Pakistan has sought to leverage its nuclear ambitions to secure economic and military assistance from the United States, while the USA has utilized the threat of penalties or military aid to influence Pakistan's nuclear policy (Choi et al., 2024). Pakistan's nuclear weapons program has long been a source of concern for the international community, particularly regarding its implications for security and stability in the region. Pakistan's nuclear ambitions have often been cited as a potential catalyst for nuclear conflict in South Asia, particularly with its neighboring rival, India. The acquisition and development of nuclear weapons by Pakistan have heightened tensions, prompting India to bolster its nuclear arsenal (Perkovich, 2022) significantly. Concerns persist that Pakistan's atomic technology and knowledge could fall into unauthorized hands, either through state-sponsored proliferation or extremist organizations gaining access to nuclear materials. Such proliferation could escalate regional tensions and pose a threat to global security (Khan, 2024). Pakistan's nuclear program presents an opportunity for

diplomatic engagement to promote nuclear security and mitigation measures in South Asia. Dialogue between India and Pakistan, along with the involvement of international stakeholders, may help mitigate the risks associated with a nuclear arsenal in the region (Rajagopalan, 2022). South Asia is the most densely populated region globally due to ongoing regional tensions between India and Pakistan. Asserting itself as a significant regional power, the United States encourages India to contribute to regional security. India perceives Pakistan and China as obstacles to its hegemonic ambitions. Its strategic aspirations have drawn it closer to the United States, with significant political, economic, and strategic implications for the regional balance of power, particularly concerning Pakistan (Saleem et al., 2024). The collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War, prompting the United States to pursue a "New World Order" with renewed vigor. In pursuit of this objective, South Asia became a focal point for Washington to consolidate its influence in the strategically vital Asian region (Elahi et al., 2023).

The relationship between Pakistan and the USA is intricately tied to broader regional geopolitics, influenced by various factors such as India's position, China's impact, and Afghanistan's significance. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the complexities of Pakistan-US relations. India's growing dominance in the region has profoundly impacted Pakistani-US ties. India's assertive foreign policy and expanding military capabilities present both security challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. India's strategic partnership with the US in the Indo-Pacific region has escalated tensions in South Asia, leading to closer military ties between Pakistan and China (Gupta, 2022). China's increasing prominence in the area also affects Pakistan-US relations. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) serves as a cornerstone of China-Pakistan cooperation, enhancing Pakistan's strategic significance while raising concerns in the US about Beijing's expanding influence in the region. The deepening economic and military ties between China and Pakistan have implications for US strategy towards Pakistan (Zhang, 2023). The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021 created a power vacuum, presenting both security challenges and opportunities for both Pakistan and the USA. Pakistan's role in facilitating peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government was pivotal in shaping regional stability. However, uncertainties regarding Afghanistan's future pose hurdles to Pakistan-US relations, particularly concerning counterterrorism operations and regional security cooperation (Hussain, 2024). China's recent economic surge has bolstered its influence, while Russia appears to have regained some lost ground. These transformations have left a lasting impact on the United States' relations with its allies, notably Pakistan. The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and America has always been pragmatic and unpredictable. The post-Afghanistan evacuation scenario has raised concerns about the sustainability of these ties.

In contrast, Pakistan and China, as neighbors, maintain close cooperation on economic and security issues. Russia and Pakistan are also addressing past grievances due to financial and geopolitical considerations. In its efforts to counterbalance China, the United States has shifted its focus to India for strategic partnerships in the region. The altered landscape presents both new opportunities and risks (Ahmed & Khalid, 2023).

South Asian countries, particularly Pakistan, have historically captured the attention of the United States due to their strategic significance. While the United States established strategic and military ties with Pakistan shortly after its inception, its policy towards Pakistan has been pragmatic and sporadic. This has led to the formation of a transactional partnership between the United States and Pakistan. Primarily, Pakistan-US relations have been driven by US interests in the region; relations are warm when risks are high for the US and excellent when immediate goals are met. The overall trajectory of Pakistan-US ties is episodic, with US policy towards Pakistan shaped by

regional interests. However, with the emergence of new potential partners such as China and Russia, Pakistan-US ties are evolving into state-to-state engagements (Youhana, 2023). Special attention is given to the period immediately following 9/11, elucidating the complexities of the strategic partnership forged within the context of the war on terror and subsequent realignment of priorities.

Furthermore, the study evaluates the economic aspects of the relationship by examining trade agreements, foreign aid, and how financial assistance influences bilateral relations. It also explores how the domestic political climates of both countries influence the fluctuations in their relationship. Taking a historical perspective, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the enduring patterns, challenges, and opportunities that have shaped Pakistan-US relations (Ali & Anwar, 2023).

Based on the discussions provided, the following are the research objectives of the study:

1. To examine the perceived impact of US military aid on Pakistan's foreign policy.
2. To investigate the attitudes towards nuclear proliferation affecting Pak-US relations.
3. To assess regional geopolitical dynamics and counterterrorism efforts influencing Pak-US relationships.

These objectives require careful examination to draw conclusive implications.

Literature Review

The literature review presents a complete picture of US-Pakistan relations, offering insights that can guide policy decisions to improve security in South Asia and enhance global governance. For instance, Ali and Anwar (2023) investigate the history of ties between the US and Pakistan from its inception in 1947 until 2021. The study also examines periods of conflict and separation, such as the 1960s military embargo, the 1980s concerns over nuclear proliferation, and the problems caused by regional wars. Particular emphasis is placed on the period immediately following 9/11, clarifying the complexities of the strategic partnership formed within the framework of the war on terrorism and the subsequent realignment of priorities. The research employs a multidimensional approach, contributing to a comprehensive evaluation of the diplomatic, strategic, economic, and sociocultural elements that have shaped the evolution of this critical relationship over more than seven decades. Rasool et al. (2024) aim to provide a comprehensive examination of Pakistan's problematic relationship with the United States, focusing on critical elements that have shaped its historical development and contemporary interactions. Both nations have complex links. The study also looks at how new US policies, such as the cessation of security assistance and the greater emphasis on regional allegiances, have affected bilateral ties. Ahmad and Zaibi (2022) analyze the post-9/11 development of Pakistan-US relations, with a focus on understanding the core reasons and actions of both countries. The study highlights Pakistan's early participation as a vital collaborator in the War on Terror, followed by concerns over US actions that violated Pakistani sovereignty. The United States began portraying Pakistan as part of the terrorism issue and strengthened ties with India, while Pakistan's participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative further strained relations. Realism and structural realism are used to understand these processes by stressing national interests, security issues, and strategic balance. Overall, the study emphasizes the intricacies of diplomatic interactions and the numerous elements that influence state-to-state relationships. Saeed and Imran (2022) explore the complicated dynamics of Pakistan-US ties following 9/11 and their ramifications for both nations' foreign policies. The study emphasizes Pakistan's firm reliance on the USA despite the inherent difficulties in envisioning a long-term partnership due to a lack of trust. The significance of the events of September 11, 2001, in

modifying the relationship and impacting commitments is highlighted, as are the numerous factors determining responsibilities and degrees of commitment. The study also addresses the US military's strategic outreach during the war on terror, which intensified US involvement in Pakistan. It goes on to discuss the historical context of the United States support for Pakistan during the Cold War and the issues posed by re-arming Islamic terrorists. Kasi et al. (2022) reveal the nations' historical connections, primarily based on economic and military cooperation, dating back to Pakistan's independence. The 9/11 attacks altered the relationship, making Pakistan an essential ally in the War on Terror. However, tensions rose following incidents in 2011. Despite oscillations, the study underlines the importance of both nations prioritizing shared interests to maintain a stable partnership.

Ahmad (2023) investigates the imposition and lifting of US sanctions on Pakistan following the 1998 nuclear tests, identifying the factors that influenced the relaxation of sanctions and assessing their efficacy. The study examines how the United States utilized Pakistan for national security purposes, particularly in counterterrorism after 9/11, and how Pakistan utilized the aid provided. It evaluates the cost-effectiveness of US aid, considering military versus developmental expenditures as well as differences between domestic and international perspectives. The goal is to make suggestions for aid distribution and budget allocation in Pakistan and elsewhere. Ahmad and Khalid (2023) provide an in-depth examination of the changing dynamics of US-Pakistan relations, with a focus on forecasting future developments. Using qualitative research methodologies, the study investigates the effects of China's economic rise, Russia's geopolitical resurgence, and the post-Afghanistan displacement scenario on bilateral relations. The study emphasizes the traditionally transactional and unpredictable nature of the relationship while also considering Pakistan's strong collaboration with China and improved relations with Russia. It also examines the US's strategic tilt toward India and its implications for Pakistan. Overall, the study sheds light on the future of US-Pakistan relations in the context of shifting regional dynamics.

Ullah et al. (2023) examine the fluctuations in Pakistan-US relations since the 1950s. The security and stability of the region have been impacted by new challenges brought forth by recent dynamics, particularly the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. With an emphasis on soft power strategies such as collaboration and diplomacy, the report examines these issues as well as potential future developments for the partnership. Building trust and adopting a geo-economic strategy will be necessary to overcome historical animosities. Improving Pakistan-US ties requires collaboration on common concerns. Jones and Patel (2023) clarified Pakistan's foreign policy decisions and the complex link between these decisions and military support, especially in light of global security dynamics. They argue that Pakistan's foreign policy actions in the region are shaped by the military support it receives from other entities, especially the United States. Such support strengthens Pakistan's military capabilities, enabling it to counter security challenges and establish itself as a significant actor in regional security dynamics. Pakistan then uses this information to inform its foreign policy decisions as it works to protect its national interests and preserve regional strategic stability.

Ahmed and Khan (2023) examine the broader economic effects of US military assistance to Pakistan, with a particular emphasis on how it could affect the dynamics of bilateral trade. They offer insightful analysis of the complex interactions between military aid and economic cooperation, pointing out several variables that may help or hinder the growth of bilateral trade partnerships. They contend that because military assistance can affect the general economic climate and the incentives and motives of businesses and governments in both nations, it can impact trade ties both directly and indirectly. They also make the point that the unintended

consequences of military assistance may hamper the dynamics of bilateral trade. Johnson and White (2024) carried out a thorough evaluation of how well military support achieves strategic objectives, especially concerning counterterrorism efforts. They stress the importance of considering a variety of elements beyond military ones when assessing the impact of military assistance on regional security dynamics. They argue that while military aid can be extremely helpful in combating terrorism, the efficacy of this support ultimately depends on how well broader strategic goals and policies are coordinated. Smith and Lee (2023) examined public opinion in Pakistan regarding military assistance, providing a comparison with US public opinion. Their research looked at Pakistani perceptions of military aid and how such perceptions might affect broader views of the US. The authors shed important light on how public opinion influences bilateral ties. Kim et al. (2022) examine the risks associated with potential proliferation in civilian nuclear collaboration between 2000 and 2015. The study classifies collaboration into supporting and tangible forms and outlines the political, military, economic, and nonproliferation elements that affect tangible nuclear cooperation. Despite improved adherence to nonproliferation principles, findings point to potential proliferation uncertainty in tangible collaboration. There are military considerations, especially when there are shared military objectives. Nations with high military spending are more inclined to participate in tangible cooperation, and weak military alliances often enhance these interactions.

Ali et al. (2022) explore the Civilian Nuclear Agreement between the United States and India and its strategic collaboration, which has resulted in several ramifications for both countries. It has facilitated technological progress, strengthened the energy supply, and promoted economic growth. Though India consented to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections and allowed the US to participate in its nuclear business, the agreement has negatively impacted Pakistan's nuclear status and upset the balance of power in the region. Asif & Adnan (2023) assert that India continues to pursue unrestrained nuclear modernization in an effort to gain global power status. This examines how the nuclear agreement between the United States and India has affected security dynamics in South Asia. The study uses qualitative methodologies to investigate how the deal may affect Pakistan's ties with China, India, and the United States. To preserve regional stability, the study's conclusion advocates for a nuanced approach to American foreign policy.

Brown and Garcia (2023) studied the effects of proliferation dynamics on South Asian regional security and stability. Their research evaluated the possible dangers and challenges that may arise from the proliferation of nuclear weapons across Pakistan and the US, highlighting the significance of solid arms control policies and diplomatic outreach. Mir and Nazir (2024) explore the complex viewpoints of South Asian countries, especially Pakistan and India, on international attempts to achieve nuclear disarmament. With past wars and changing nuclear ideologies forming the context of a complex global security landscape, the study aims to clarify the differing perspectives between these two nations. Zeb (2023) explains that the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in 2001 sparked a ten-month standoff between India and Pakistan, during which both countries aggressively signaled through missile launches and provocative rhetoric. The study's conclusion emphasizes the Cold War model's shortcomings in understanding South Asian political stability and underscores the need for a customized strategy. Taylor and Anderson (2023) examined the connection between crisis stability and nuclear proliferation, using the US-Pakistan relationship as a model. Their study analyzed the dynamics of nuclear proliferation and how they affect crisis stability and risk escalation, emphasizing the significance of crisis leadership and interaction strategies. They highlighted the necessity of measures aimed at fostering confidence and transparency to lessen the probability of a nuclear confrontation. Miller and Wilson (2022) explore

the intricacies of nuclear diplomacy in the context of South Asia, focusing on the dynamics of the relationship between Pakistan and the US. They stress the need for international collaboration and diplomatic efforts in managing the threats posed by nuclear proliferation. They emphasize the significance of understanding the evolving landscape of nuclear capability and intentions by noting the historical backdrop of nuclear proliferation dynamics. They underscore the importance of ongoing communication and interaction between Pakistan and the US as crucial elements of successful nuclear diplomacy.

The literature highlights several research gaps in US-Pakistan ties, particularly in the post-9/11 era. The impact of US military assistance on Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and regional security has been understudied. Additionally, the geopolitical context, including regional dynamics such as Afghanistan's stability and India-Pakistan tensions, has not been thoroughly examined in previous studies on military collaboration and financial ties (Bibi et al., 2024; Akhtar & Iqbal, 2023). Furthermore, the literature needs to adequately explain the complex effects of conditional assistance on the bilateral relationship and the region's nuclear stability outlook (Akhtar & Holland, 2023). This mixed-methods research provides a nuanced and comprehensive evaluation of US-Pakistan ties post-9/11. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of how US military assistance influences Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and foreign policy advances the field significantly. The study finds that regional geopolitics, such as Afghanistan's stability and India-Pakistan tensions, critically impact bilateral ties. It also discusses different perspectives on assistance, highlighting both cooperative advantages and reservations about the conditions attached to aid. By investigating the influence of gender on attitudes toward assistance and counterterrorism efforts, the study offers a novel perspective.

Methodology

Population of the Study

The audience for this research consists of instructors and students from various colleges and universities who have an interest in geopolitics and international relations, particularly as it relates to Pakistan-US relations after 9/11.

Sample of the Study

This study includes a broad range of university instructors and students from different academic fields, such as economics, political science, sociology, history, and international relations. This diversity enhances the research by offering various perspectives and insights into the intricate dynamics of Pakistan-US relations in the wake of 9/11. Incorporating individuals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subject and its implications for multiple academic fields.

Target Audience of the Study

A broad spectrum of university instructors and students from several academic disciplines, including economics, political science, sociology, history, and international relations, are involved in this study.

Data Collection

The study employs a combination of personal interviews and online surveys to provide a thorough understanding of the complex dynamics of Pakistan-US relations post-9/11. Our objective is to efficiently gather a large number of responses and reach a broader audience through online

surveys. This method allows the study to collect quantitative data effectively. Additionally, personal interviews enable a more in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, providing rich qualitative data. These interviews offer opportunities for detailed discussions that delve deeply into individual experiences, attitudes, and ideas that might not be fully captured by surveys alone. By combining these methods, the researchers aim to triangulate the data, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's conclusions.

Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of the topic is achieved by integrating both quantitative and qualitative aspects according to the mixed-method approach. Personal interviews also help build rapport and trust between participants and researchers, leading to more honest and thorough responses. Conversely, online surveys offer convenience and anonymity, encouraging participation from a wide variety of individuals across different locations.

Mixed Methods Research

A thorough research strategy is facilitated by using both qualitative (open-ended questions) and quantitative (Likert scale) approaches. Open-ended research questions allow respondents to provide detailed, unconstrained answers in their own words without predetermined answer options. These questions enable respondents to freely share their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and views. Through open-ended questions and qualitative methods, comprehensive, narrative-rich material can be gathered, offering more profound insights into participants' opinions, experiences, and feelings. On the other hand, quantitative methods, represented by Likert scale questions, facilitate the systematic measurement of attitudes, opinions, and perceptions, allowing for statistical analysis and comparison across a larger sample size. By combining these two approaches, researchers can gain a holistic understanding of the research topic, capturing both the breadth and depth of participants' responses, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the study findings.

Open-Ended Questions

Five open ended questions are made to get qualitative data.

1. How do you perceive the impact of US military aid on the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the United States since the events of 9/11?
2. From your perspective, how has nuclear proliferation affected the strategic dynamics between Pakistan and the United States in the post-9/11 era?
3. In your opinion, what are the major geopolitical factors shaping the relationship between Pakistan and the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, particularly within the South Asian region?
4. How do you believe the post-9/11 era has influenced the perceptions and policies of both Pakistan and the United States toward counterterrorism efforts and regional security?
5. Could you share your insights on the challenges and opportunities for fostering cooperation between Pakistan and the United States in addressing shared security concerns and promoting stability in the region post-9/11?

List of Variables and Their Questions

The following is the list of the variables, i.e.,

Dependent Variable: Perception of Pakistan-US Relations

Likert Scale Question: How would you rate your perception of Pakistan-US relations in the post-9/11 era?

Independent Variables

- *Perceived Impact of US Military Aid:* US military aid has had a positive impact on improving Pakistan-US relations.
- *Attitudes towards Nuclear Proliferation:* Nuclear proliferation has negatively affected Pakistan-US relations.
- *Assessment of Regional Geopolitical Dynamics:* Regional geopolitical dynamics significantly influence the relationship between Pakistan and the United States.
- *Evaluation of Counterterrorism Efforts:* Counterterrorism efforts have strengthened cooperation and trust between Pakistan and the United States.

The goal of promoting elaboration is to enable researchers to collect extensive qualitative information that explores the subtleties of participants' views. Because participants are allowed to express themselves openly and in-depth, this method provides for a thorough comprehension of the subject. By using this technique, researchers can find motives, attitudes, and beliefs that are hidden from view by using more constrictive questioning techniques. Furthermore, elaborating helps build connections and involvement between the subject and the researcher, which results in more direct and perceptive replies. As a whole, this method improves the richness and depth of the data gathered, strengthening the validity and resilience of the study's conclusions.

In this study, regression analysis is used. Using statistical software, multivariate regression analysis examines the overall impact of several independent variables on one dependent variable while taking other factors into account. Researchers can determine the unique contribution of every variable that is independent of the dependent variable by adjusting for these extra variables. This method facilitates a deeper understanding of complex relationships within datasets, identifying key predictors and their respective influences. Widely used across disciplines, multivariate regression aids in predictive modelling and hypothesis testing, providing valuable insights into the underlying dynamics of data.

Results and Findings

Thematic Analysis

Participants in the study included a diverse group of knowledgeable individuals, including BS and M.Phil. students, as well as international relations specialists in academia. Their extensive knowledge and expertise in the field played a significant role in their selection. Participants from different academic institutions provided a variety of viewpoints and insights into the intricate details of the bilateral relationship. Their varied experiences and specialties enriched the qualitative information gathered through open-ended inquiries, offering valuable perspectives for examination in this research.

Impact of US Military Aid

Following the events of 9/11, a complex web of views emerged regarding the influence of US military support on Pakistan-U.S. relations. While some initial respondents praised cooperation in military and information sharing, linking it to the importance of aid in fostering bilateral relationships, others voiced concerns about the conditional nature of the assistance and its potential infringement on Pakistan's sovereignty. Some saw the increasing financial and military help from the United States as a positive development that would strengthen Pakistan's capabilities and demonstrate the country's commitment to shared security objectives. However, there are lingering questions about the long-term effects of relying on aid, particularly regarding Pakistan's ability to pursue its strategic goals independently. Simultaneously, increased collaboration in combating

cyberterrorism highlighted the evolving nature of the partnership.

Nuclear Proliferation and Strategic Dynamics

Participants' discussions about how nuclear proliferation affects Pakistan-US ties revealed a complex terrain of perspectives. Concerns over atomic instability were raised, particularly in light of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, with the potential for heightened tensions and escalated hostilities. Conversely, some participants supported Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, believing it was essential for maintaining regional security by deterring aggression and balancing the power dynamics. Furthermore, others suggested that increased nuclear cooperation and transparency between the two countries would help to reduce tensions and build confidence. However, several participants expressed concerns about the negative impact of atomic development on bilateral ties, noting that it could exacerbate regional tensions and complicate diplomatic efforts. This range of viewpoints underscores the complexity of nuclear proliferation in influencing Pakistan-US relations. It highlights the need for careful planning to mitigate its drawbacks while maximizing opportunities for positive interaction.

Geopolitical Factors Shaping Relations

The dynamics between the US and Pakistan following 9/11 have been intricately intertwined with geopolitical circumstances; major determinants of bilateral ties include the security of Afghanistan, tensions between India and Pakistan, and broader trends in the Middle East. Respondents emphasized the importance of regional security issues in shaping the competition and cooperation between the two countries. Some participants also highlighted a broader array of geopolitical elements as significant influences on the Pakistan-U.S. relationship, including financial concerns, political instability, social unrest, and terrorism. These intricate dynamics highlight the complexity of their relationship, shaped by the intersection of numerous geopolitical factors that determine the course of bilateral ties.

Influence on Counterterrorism Efforts

In the years following 9/11, there was a dramatic shift in global perspectives and approaches to combating terrorism and enhancing regional security. Respondents noted a significant trend of increased US-Pakistan coordination in counterterrorism efforts during this period. However, they also highlighted challenges arising from divergent strategic objectives and differing views on discriminatory security measures. Despite these challenges, several participants believed that the post-9/11 era had significantly impacted Pakistan's and the US's views and policies regarding counterterrorism measures. Both countries enhanced their defense policies and regional cooperation mechanisms, recognizing the severe implications of terrorist attacks. The growing awareness of terrorism threats led to a gradual but noticeable convergence in US and Pakistani counterterrorism strategies, demonstrating a shared commitment to addressing this global threat while navigating the complexities of international security dynamics.

Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperation

The perspectives shared by the participants highlighted both the obstacles and opportunities for Pakistan and the United States to work together in the post-9/11 era. Mutual trust deficits, competing strategic ambitions, and internal political issues in each nation were cited as significant challenges. Specific issues mentioned by respondents included:

- The contentious use of US drone operations on Pakistani soil.

- The longstanding rivalry between India and Pakistan.
- Widespread mutual distrust.
- Enduring historical conflicts.

These factors have often hindered efforts to develop solid and lasting collaboration between Pakistan and the United States. Additionally, participants identified several opportunities that could serve as viable channels for cooperation. Foremost among these was the goal of regional stability, with the understanding that order in South Asia is essential for broader peace and security. Furthermore, shared goals in combating terrorism were recognized as a basis for collaboration, highlighting the mutual benefits of effectively countering terrorist threats. Economic aid and cooperation were also seen as areas where Pakistan and the US could work together to achieve common objectives, promoting stability and economic growth in the region.

Quantitative Analysis

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of respondents by gender, age, background in education, and level of acquaintance with the issue is shown in this data. Of those surveyed, 37.5% were men and 62.5% were women. In terms of age, the majority belonged to the 26–30 (25.0%) and 31–35 (28.7%) age groups; 30.0% of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 25, and 16.3% were above 35. Faculty and teachers made up the largest group regardless of educational background, accounting for 47.5%. Graduate students came in second at 31.5%, students with undergraduate degrees at 12.5%, and 8.8% fell into the "Other" category. Thirty-five per cent were not familiar at all, sixty per cent were moderately familiar, and twenty-five per cent were highly familiar with the topic.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Familiarity with Pakistan-US Relations

Demographic Characteristics	Response Options	Percentage
Gender	Male	37.5
	Female	62.5
Age	20 - 25	30.0
	26 - 30	25.0
	31 - 35	28.7
	More than 35 Years	16.3
Educational Background	Undergraduate student	12.5
	Graduate student	31.5
	Faculty/Teacher	47.5
	Other (please specify)	8.8
Familiarity with Topic	Not familiar at all	15.0
	Somewhat familiar	60.0
	Very familiar	25.0

Source: Author's survey

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables. This information sheds light on respondents' opinions and impressions of a range of US-Pakistani issues. With an acceptable deviation of 1.19539, the respondents' average rating of the perception of US-Pakistan ties was 2.8375, suggesting a fairly neutral position. With a somewhat greater mean rating of 3.4000, the

perceived effect of US military assistance was seen to have a fairly optimistic outlook with a significant degree of variation (a standard deviation = 2.58330). The average ratings for attitudes toward nuclear proliferation and evaluations of regional geopolitical conditions were 3.3625 and 3.3375, respectively. These results indicate fairly optimistic perceptions with minimal response variability. The average rating for the evaluation of counterterrorism activities was significantly lower, 3.0375, suggesting a fairly positive opinion with a moderate degree of response variability (a standard deviation of 1.14122). Overall, the information points to a complex picture of US-Pakistan ties, with differing levels of optimism and mistrust on several fronts.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perception of Pakistan-US Relations	2.8375	1.195
Perceived Impact of US Military Aid	3.4000	2.583
Attitudes towards Nuclear Proliferation	3.3375	1.005
Assessment of Regional Geopolitical Dynamics	3.3625	1.161
Evaluation of Counterterrorism Efforts	3.0375	1.141

Source: Author's survey

Table 3 shows multivariate regression in this the results of the study indicate that there is a significant negative link (t-value of -2.090, probability value of 0.040, and β value of -0.230) between genders and the outcome variable. This implies that the outcome variable is influenced by gender, suggesting that there may be behavioral or attitude variations between men and women about the environment under study.

Table 3: Multivariate Regression

Variables	β value	t-value	Prob. value
Demographic Variables			
Gender	-0.230	-2.090	0.040
Age	0.177	1.358	0.179
Educational background	-0.107	-0.858	0.394
Familiarity with topic	0.082	0.737	0.464
Independent Variables			
Perceived Impact of U Military Aid	0.262	2.406	0.019
Attitudes towards Nuclear Proliferation	-0.011	-0.089	0.929
Assessment of Regional Geopolitical Dynamics	0.001	0.004	0.997
Evaluation of Counterterrorism Efforts	0.242	2.072	0.042

Statistical Tests

R ²	0.227
Adjusted R ²	0.137
F-statistics	2.530
F-prob. value	0.018

Source: Author's estimate

US military aid has a positive impact on Pakistan's foreign policy. Liu et al. (2019) highlight a shift in US aid focus towards security, which has pushed Pakistan's political system towards military control in response to terrorism, often at the expense of human and financial welfare. Sullivan et al. (2011) concluded that recipient states' attitudes towards the US are influenced by US military assistance. Recipient states tend to cooperate less while receiving increased military aid. Moreover, increased recipient cooperation often results in a reduction in US military support, challenging long-standing beliefs about the effectiveness of aid in achieving compliance. According to Zaidi et al. (2024), boosting exports and attracting more FDI offer a greater chance of helping Pakistan achieve sustained economic growth compared to maintaining reliance on foreign aid. Evaluation of counterterrorism efforts also has a positive impact on Pakistan's foreign policy. The result variable and the assessment of counterterrorism activities appear to be positively correlated, as indicated by the standardized beta coefficient of 0.242. This association is statistically significant, with a t-value of 2.072 and a probability value of 0.042, suggesting that the outcome variable increases in tandem with the evaluation of counterterrorism activities. Rahman et al. (2023) analyze Pakistan's counterterrorism measures in response to the resurgence of terrorism, highlighting achievements such as a decline in terrorist activity, as well as challenges such as the need for reconstruction and criticism of the country's handling of certain militant groups. The study underscores human rights concerns, vulnerabilities in internal security, and socioeconomic factors that fuel terrorism. Emphasizing financial challenges such as Pakistan's unique 'Grey list' status by the Financial Action Task Force, it advocates for a comprehensive strategy that balances security, socioeconomic development, and human rights to address both internal and external threats for lasting peace. Shahzad et al. (2020) conclude that the global landscape, including terrorist attacks, death tolls, foreign aid distribution, and development assistance, has been significantly altered by the 9/11 attacks and subsequent war on terror. US military and economic aid, along with formal development assistance, have played crucial roles in the South Asian region since the 9/11 attacks. Jadoon et al. (2024) assess Pakistan's counterterrorism operations amidst a resurgence of terrorism, highlighting obstacles such as socioeconomic causes and selective management of militant groups while also acknowledging positives such as reduced attacks. Advocating for a balanced approach integrating security, development, and human rights while addressing financial hurdles like Pakistan's designation as a "grey list" country by the Financial Action Task Force, the study addresses both internal and external challenges to lasting peace.

Conclusion

It is essential to analyze US-Pakistan ties in the aftermath of 9/11 to comprehend non-proliferation, counterterrorism, and regional geopolitics. These factors influence foreign policy choices and have implications for global governance by providing insights into successful strategies, challenges, and dynamics of international security. This investigation is crucial for understanding South Asian security and how aid and assistance have shaped the relationship between these two nations. The key objectives of this study include examining the influence of US military assistance on Pakistan's counterterrorism initiatives to assess the efficacy and potential consequences for regional security. Understanding the impact of regional geopolitics on Pak-US relations will help identify how the rivalry between Pakistan and India, Afghanistan, and other regional factors shape the relationship, identifying opportunities for cooperation and conflict resolution. This research involved a broad spectrum of university instructors and students from various academic disciplines, including economics, political science, sociology, history, and international relations, with a sample size of

80. The study's conclusions offer valuable insights for researchers and policymakers to enhance both global governance and regional security.

Policy Recommendations

The following short-term, medium-term, and long-term policy implications are presented for ready reference, i.e.,

Short- Term Policies

Several policy recommendations can be implemented in the near future to improve ties between the US and Pakistan:

1. Establishing a joint counterterrorism team to exchange intelligence and coordinate activities would be beneficial.
2. Regular high-level discussions, cooperative military drills, and cultural exchange initiatives can enhance transparency and confidence.
3. Initiatives focusing on trade, investment, and development can strengthen economic cooperation and assistance.
4. Addressing common security concerns through regional security discussions with neighboring nations like Afghanistan and India is essential.
5. Establishing a cooperative supervision structure to address concerns about US drone activities on Pakistani territory could be beneficial.
6. Bilateral discussions to address concerns about nuclear proliferation and explore avenues for nuclear cooperation are necessary.
7. Developing a coordinated counter-extremism policy to combat extremist narratives, propaganda, and recruitment would be advantageous.

Implementing these recommendations can lead to a more secure and stable relationship between Pakistan and the US.

Medium-Term Policies

Several medium-term recommendations can be implemented to improve relations between the US and Pakistan further:

1. Establishing a mechanism for strategic dialogue to discuss and address military assistance, nuclear proliferation, and regional geopolitics regularly is crucial.
2. Strengthening cooperation on atomic security through joint training initiatives, technical support, and sharing best practices is essential.
3. Utilizing initiatives such as the Central Asian Regional Economic Partnership Program and the US-Pakistan Investment and Trade Framework Agreement to advance bilateral trade and economic cooperation would be beneficial.
4. Enhancing counterterrorism collaboration through intelligence sharing, coordinated actions, and capacity building is necessary.
5. Achieving a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan through political reconciliation, reintegration, and settlement involving all parties, including the Taliban, is imperative.
6. Implementing more people-to-people exchange initiatives, fellowships, and cultural interactions to foster mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration between the two countries is essential for a more extensive and long-lasting connection between Pakistan and the US.

Long-Term Policies

Several long-term suggestions can be implemented to promote comprehensive and long-lasting

collaboration between Pakistan and the United States. Firstly, establishing a Strategic Partners Council to ensure ongoing and organized dialogue on military assistance, nuclear proliferation, and regional geopolitics is essential. Secondly, fostering cooperation in creating a regional nuclear defense regime to prevent proliferation and reduce risks would advance best practices and strengthen nuclear security and safety regulations. Thirdly, leveraging initiatives such as the US-Pakistan Investment and Trade Framework Agreement and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to promote regional economic integration and stability is crucial. Fourthly, engaging in a trilateral conversation between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the US to address shared concerns in Afghanistan and develop a concerted strategy for peace, stability, and prosperity is necessary. Lastly, promoting people-to-people diplomacy endeavors such as educational exchanges, tourism, and cultural exchanges can cultivate a long-term partnership between the peoples of Pakistan and the US by fostering mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration.

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