

**Pakistan and United States Relation: Post 9/11 Challenges**

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[DOI:https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i1.495](https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i1.495)

**Abstract**

The United States and Pakistan have maintained an inconsistent diplomatic relationship since their first contacts occurred. The political alliance between the United States and Pakistan has gone through periods of agreement and disagreement regarding their important national objectives since their first interactions. After the September 11 attacks both nations enhanced their relationship which led to the elimination of both nuclear and democratic related sanctions against Pakistan. During the times when U.S. forces depended heavily on Pakistan to access Afghanistan the country succeeded in its objective of exiting global isolation to develop its economy. This made Pakistan a fundamental ally for the United States while American leaders appreciated its advantageous geography. The partnership between the countries did not result in enduring mutual commitment. Various book materials together with academic papers and newspaper reports serve as the foundation for this research which identifies post-9/11 U.S.-Pakistan relationship obstacles. The study investigates six critical issues pertaining to drone warfare in addition to studying the Kerry-Lugar bill and insurgency matters while evaluating the Raymond Davis incident and death of Osama bin Laden and nuclear risks. This paper focuses on explaining the key obstacles that appeared after 9/11 in the U.S.-Pakistan relations. The United States enacted increasingly demanding policies against Pakistan after war affected the nation which triggered an escalating blame game and increasing mistrust between the two countries. Multiple strategic proposals by the research aim to improve the bilateral connection while building a win-win relationship to sustain long-term cooperation between both nations.

**Keywords:** US, Pakistan, Afghanistan, 9/11 incident, India, challenges

**Introduction**

Over time the partnership between the United States and Pakistan has shown consistent changes that alternated between friendly collaboration and strained conflict. The United States became the world's only superpower after Cold War ended and Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and this shift required an evaluation of political relations especially with Pakistani alliance that remained vital during the Cold War era. The changing geopolitical dynamics created new challenges for Pakistan since this international shuffle left it alone and unable to fit into the new map. International geopolitics shifted its focus towards Pakistan when the 9/11 attacks occurred thus transforming the country into a critical force in global affairs. After these events Pakistan established itself as a supporting partner of the United

States in their anti-terrorism coalition. The strategic relationship strengthened between Pakistan and the United States through Pakistan's geographic advantages while creating problems about drone operations and counterterrorism operations and distrust between the two nations. U.S. political officials primarily evaluate Pakistan from security analysis instead of understanding Pakistani concerns regarding U.S. trustworthiness because of American favoritism toward India and increasing Chinese influence. Through its post-9/11 partnership Pakistan managed to eliminate its international isolation to trigger substantial benefits during the next few decades. The prolonged period of strategic collaboration between the U.S. and Pakistan proved difficult after American military left Afghanistan. Although closely related by geopolitical factors the countries still maintain opposite positions regarding world and regional policies. Historically the United States followed policies orientated towards India while Pakistan centers its primary attention on protecting its security from potential threats by India. The joint objectives of stability and aid creation failed to produce a lasting mutual trust between the parties involved. The research examines primary obstacles and disputes between United States and Pakistan since 9/11. The analysis examines the origin of disagreements between both nations while they collaborated on counter-terrorism efforts by suggesting ways to enhance upcoming bilateral relations. Secondary data from books and scholarly journals and dissertations and newspapers and websites and videos constitute the research foundation covering U.S.-Pakistan foreign policy and their existing diplomatic relations. The analysis uses document evaluation to check and interpret collected data for factual fact-based conclusions. The examination utilizes analytical and qualitative analysis to reveal permanent obstacles in U.S.-Pakistan diplomatic ties following the 9/11 attacks.

### **Key Challenges Post 9/11**

The 9/11 events shifted Pakistan to become a key strategic partner that forced America to restructure its foreign policy in relation to Pakistan. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan brought Pakistan three major challenges which included the side effects of the Afghan jihad struggle and the implementation of Pressler Amendment nuclear import restrictions (Nadim, 2017). At this moment relation between America and Pakistan faced major difficulties because the United States wanted Pakistan to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Post-9/11 attacks caused a shift in how the United States perceived Pakistan because it recognized Pakistani cooperation as an essential component in its efforts to establish alliances. The United States obtained Pakistani cooperation in fighting terrorism by giving Pakistan conditional support to deal with sanctions and to preserve its Kashmir assets and atone for terrorist group accusations. The United States saw Pakistan as essential for its Middle Eastern operations because of its border position and its fighting links with Afghanistan regarding terrorism. A negative mistrust between the nations made it difficult to achieve anti-terrorism goals through joint efforts which intensified mutual accusations over time and drove both countries further apart.

### **1. The Drone War**

Pakistani-American diplomatic relations entered a problematic phase when the United States conducted its inaugural drone attack in South Waziristan on June 19, 2004 thus crossing into Pakistani national territory. The covert conflict that began with this strike lasted many years until drone strikes killed between 3,700 people in roughly 414 operations while losing 245 to 303 civilians and 211 to 328 unidentified individuals besides 1,910 to 3,071 militants. Last analysis indicated that 3.1% of casualties were militant leaders whereas 97% fell within the category of non-combatants (Bergen et al., 2018). Drone operations in Pakistan's tribal areas were deployed by the US exclusively to safeguard American citizens and thwart similar terrorist events like 9/11 by targeting Taliban and Al-Qaeda bases in Pakistani territory. The killing of innocent people and continuous violations of Pakistan's sovereignty produced anti-American sentiments which pushed angry youth from FATA to join terrorist organizations because they wanted to fight back against their country's betrayal. TTP militants used the hostility toward both

the Pakistani authorities and Americans to gain angry followers as per Shah (2009). The Pakistani people strongly opposed the drone attacks which were widely rejected throughout the nation. John Brennan who served as an advisor to the White House made a statement defending CIA drone operations by calling them legitimate and moral and rational according to Hussain (2012). According to Hussain (2012) the use of unmanned aircraft by nations fits within international law if domestic forces fail to enforce the threat. North Waziristan served as a fundamental disagreement between Pakistan and the United States following evidence that the Haqqani network operated from there (Roggio, 2011). The United States believed Pakistan delayed taking action against militant groups such as the Haqqani network so it launched military strikes straight into North Waziristan. The secret military operation resulted in extensive unintended harm to world affairs as well as severe political complications. News records show that during the period from 2006 to 2009 the strikes killed more than 700 civilians but only succeeded in targeting fourteen leaders of Al-Qaeda. A Brookings Institute analysis showed that the loss of ten civilians occurred for each dead insurgent (Hussain, 2010). The media named President Obama as the most warlike American president during modern times. The drone strike frequency decreased substantially under President Trump's presidential term. Gul noted that Trump abstained from drone strikes because FATA province integration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa altered the area status to absolute Pakistani territorial violation and due to US-Taliban negotiations managed through Pakistan (Yousaf, Rashid & Gul, 2018). Experts predict that the United States will execute drone operations as needed given the right circumstances after ceasing drone operations.

## **2. Kerry Lugar Bill**

The Kerry-Lugar Bill represented a \$7.5 billion five-year grant to Pakistan which Obama signed but included various disputed provisions when he approved it. During 2009 the Enhanced Partnership Act received approval as a major policy transformation in U.S.-Pakistan civilian government relations. Through this legislation both civilian and military entities received oversight roles over promotions and budgets so the U.S. Secretary of State needed to conduct six-month evaluations to confirm civilian control within the military (Dawn, 2009). The objective behind this decision was to enforce military responsiveness to civilian control. The bill enforced Pakistani security forces to strike against Taliban militants as well as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants. The U.S. government expressed doubts about Pakistani intelligence agency involvement with militant groups thus doubting their ability to tackle these security threats. The military officials reacted with such intense opposition that it led to significant demonstrations across Pakistan (Hippel & Shahid, 2009). The U.S. provided non-military assistance to advance democratic institution building through democratic reforms yet Pakistani military officials reacted with anger since they felt this undermined their political independence. The civilian government accepted this opportunity to boost democratic institutions while seeking to reduce military influence on national governance. Multiple factions fought persistently against each other because of this development which magnified current political conflicts. At a meeting between Pakistan military commanders and U.S. officials at GHQ these officials stated that the bill's terms were offensive and intolerable because national security implications from American aid were substantial. The military command requested another parliamentary submission of the bill to build national agreement but this action weakened governmental power (Dawn, 2009). By passing the Kerry-Lugar bill Pakistanian officials perceived it as insulting which deepened the power struggle between state forces and politicians and depleted Zardari's collapsing authority. Rising military pressure alongside public opinion strengthened yet also challenged the fate of the bill before parliament made its approval decision which fundamentally changed Pak-U.S. relations. The transformation of military alliances towards civilian development initiatives produced a split between forces which led to severe mistrust between the military and the other institutions. The opposite directions in which the United States aimed its foreign

aid money produced long-lasting effects that harmed diplomatic ties as well as funding negotiations throughout following years.

### **3. Insurgency**

Terrorism led to the creation of insurgency which expanded its reach across both Afghanistan and Pakistan during the counterterrorism operations. Joint forces of Al-Qaeda militants and tribal Pakistani elements supported the conflict within Pakistan's tribal border regions with Afghanistan. The Afghan war disturbed Pakistani territory where terrorists targeted Islamabad and caused the Pakistani military to engage in counter-insurgent operations. Thousands of suicide bombings started after a mosque attack in the tribal area during Friday prayers claimed the lives of 50 innocent people. During subsequent years Pakistan solidified its status as ground where Al-Qaeda together with its associated militant organizations conducted operations. Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) served as the name adopted by Pakistani Taliban who established a coalition which instituted a strict interpretation of Islamic law across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas. The Swat Valley experienced growing Taliban control under which they eliminated public female education through school closures and killed multiple representatives of the security forces and government (Hussain, 2010). The US government requested Pakistan to increase military action within its Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along with North Waziristan during 2011 (Imtiaz & Yousaf, 2011). According to President Zardari the balancing act of Pakistan's relationship with India appeared unsatisfactory to him (Young & Witte, 2009). The intensified attacks on Pakistani security forces executed by Baitullah Mehsud took control of more areas along the border with Afghanistan as TTP leader. The political crisis grew worse when terrorist bombings hit Lahore and Islamabad and then the Rawalpindi Army headquarters. The Pakistan military moved troops from the eastern frontier to assist in defending the western areas following promises from American officials about tensions on the Indian border (Hussain 2010). The military deployed heavy weapons together with helicopter gunships to fight in Pakistan's tribal sector with intense violence. According to Hussain (2010) thousands of people ended up trapped by militants who used these people as shields and millions of other people needed to find refuge in additional districts. Militant groups accused the Pakistan army of waging war on behalf of the United States while disregarding the well-being of its national population. Military operations were launched against TTP positions in South Waziristan after the attack against GHQ. The operation had a critical importance to US forces because it sought to secure the entire Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone. The Pakistan-based connections between Al-Qaeda and TTP and their protected Pakistani bases proved difficult problems for the United States to resolve. The United States provided larger sums of money and demanded urgent action against Taliban fighters and Afghan rebels from Pakistan. US national security and regional balance in Pakistan suffered greatly from insurgency by Taliban groups together with other militant organizations. Multiple events triggered US involvement which resulted in both direct and indirect military or diplomatic presence. The killing of Osama bin Laden by US forces within Pakistani territory caused a short-term deterioration in bilateral relations between America and Pakistan. The occurrence of this event intensified critical concerns regarding Pakistan's capability to monitor its regions. Pakistan experienced heightened international pressure to actively combat insurgents on its territory leading to more drone attacks along with decreased aid throughout the subsequent years. Pakistan made tremendous efforts to fight insurgents which cost numerous military personnel and civilians yet received ongoing demands to demonstrate stronger anti-insurgency action.

### **4. Raymond Davis Saga**

The United States convinced Pakistan to embrace open visa guidelines for U.S. diplomats and aid staff in 2010 in order to support Kerry-Lugar bill financial transfers (Rodriguez & Dilanian, 2011). The policy resulted in the grant of multiple visas to Americans even though the ISI failed to conduct proper

background checks. Raymond Davis secured entry into Pakistan by utilizing his diplomatic passport because of the new visa policy adopted by the country. CIA contractor Raymond Davis worked for Blackwater while maintaining unofficial status as a diplomat since the ISI did not acknowledge him. When he entered Islamabad he first stayed in Peshawar until his move to Lahore led to a specific incident. His main responsibility involved observing multiple militant organizations in Pakistan with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) being one of them (Mazzeti, 2013). Records show Davis conducted his fatal public shooting of two men in Lahore during early 2011 (BBC, 2011). The incident stirred up intense anti-American sentiments nationwide that led Islamic parties and political groups to organize executions protests turning this situation into a pivotal political matter. Radical tensions developed during this situation considering Zardari faced American diplomatic pressure to free Davis alongside public opposition that made any release challenging. Washington along with the Central Intelligence Agency denied Davis had any agency ties by using his diplomatic passport to claim immunities under Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (Mazzeti, 2013). The situation worsened after a Lahore court decided to prosecute Davis for murder (Hussain, 2021). The diplomatic standoff between civil and military authorities of Pakistan became evident during this crisis. An exceptional level of U.S. intervention took place when the President took personal action to guard a spy facing murder charges. As part of its concerns about Davis's secret activities Pakistan made it clear it would disassemble all U.S. spy networks operating inside its territory before it could cooperate with America. The Pakistani authorities directed hundreds of Americans working for the military and CIA to evacuate their country (Perlez & Khan, 2011). President Obama ordered an immediate release for Davis while he rejected any judicial process to solve the matter. The Obama administration settled the case outside of court by making an official apology while transferring blood money (diyat) to the families of victims for releasing Davis. This event exposed American political tactics and exposed Pakistan's hidden spy activities before it completely affected diplomatic ties with the United States and regional public attitudes. This incident sparked multiple national security concerns among Pakistani citizens because their government seemed incapable of making independent choices while surrendering to American strategic goals against its own sovereignty. This incident damaged Pakistan's diplomatic ties with America while making Pakistan distrustful of international agents which decreased their cooperation in counterterrorism efforts and grew the existing trust gap.

### **5. Operation Neptune Spear**

The relations between the U.S. and Pakistan declined remarkably in 2011 after the U.S. Navy commandos pursued Osama bin Laden to Abbottabad during the period when the Davis kidnapping case was being handled. The American Navy SEAL team completed their entry into Pakistani airspace through helicopters during nighttime as they conducted a quick 40-minute assault. An Al-Qaeda compound served as the objective during a military strike which took place in a garrison city at a distance of 40 miles from the capital. According to Hussain (2021) the United States had difficulty believing that bin Laden could stay in that critical location without Pakistani backing. The CIA director Leon Panetta affirmed to reporters that cooperation with Pakistan did not occur before the operation because the CIA feared insurgents being alerted (Al Jazeera, 2011). During the initial phase of intelligence discovery American officials experienced shame due to their inability to identify the world's number one terrorist who stayed hidden near a military academy for six years while ignoring Pakistan's sovereign boundaries. Once the revulsion from the U.S. operation subsided Pakistani military forces developed stubborn resentment toward the United States. The United States' accomplishment in killing Osama bin Laden imposed substantial damage on Pakistan's military prestige as it severed ties between the two countries. The operation created hostility towards American forces while concerning observers about military surveillance capabilities when bin Laden hid within their operating vicinity. Various inquiries started into how U.S. forces penetrated deep into Pakistan without detection while searching for responsible

parties who failed to protect Pakistan's borders. This episode created renewed discussions about the limits of civil authority to command the Pakistani military. The developing crisis made Pakistan's military-civilian struggle even more difficult. The civilian government received criticism for its weak performance in handling military actions and needed to defend itself throughout talks with the military to maintain stability. The Pakistani military which traditionally sought dominance in politics felt humiliated because of the raid thus creating escalating disagreements with both the United States and among its leadership. General Kiyani conveyed to a retired general that American intervention generated a negative environment in the country according to Hussain (2021) while inflicting critical damage to bilateral relations with the United States. The airspace infringement induced deep betrayal from Pakistan thus generating intense pressure on both military and government forces to cut their CIA relations. General Kiyani announced that Pakistan would decrease military cooperation with the United States through U.S. military support and foreign training for its troops while imposing greater oversight of American intelligence operations throughout Pakistan (Dawn, 2011). Military personnel from the United States left Pakistan and the country organized an investigative commission to find answers about the Abbottabad raid.

## **6. Salala Incident**

The Salala incident took place on November 26 2011 as a second tragic event that sharply deteriorated US-Pakistan diplomatic relations. The deadly mistake occurred when NATO forces initiated their fire via multiple rounds along with heavy gunfire from the heights which targeted a Pakistani security check post situated close to the border that separates Pakistan from Afghanistan. The US released a statement that its high commanders had no knowledge about the check posts' location even though they were inside Pakistani borders while admitting its military forces had launched numerous prior helicopter attacks against the same area. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani denounced the killings as a breach of Pakistani sovereignty through his statement that Pakistan would protect its sovereignty and unity (Momand, 2011). The NATO troop raid against Salala military bases was considered offensive when they killed 24 Pakistani soldiers along with wounding 13 others. The incident caused the Pakistani citizens to express deep rage nationwide while exposing actual security vulnerabilities. All government leaders and military figures showed complete agreement on their response after which Gillani summoned an urgent Cabinet gathering. Army Chief General Kayani mobilized senior officers to develop a powerful reaction against the incident which he declared unacceptable. The US investigation report about the Salala incident was released on December 22nd showing Pakistani forces as the first group that fired shots so NATO and Pakistan mistook the events ultimately leading to this tragic event. The Pakistani government issued a 25-page detailed report on January 23 that opposed each US justification and declared the report did not reflect actual facts because it stemmed from deep mistrust toward the Pakistani military. Pakistan expressed significant concerns about transparency because the United States released its assessment of the incident as unintended before completing the probe. The initial position taken by Washington led analysts to believe the report contained biased conclusions (Javaid & Butt, 2011). According to US investigators self-defense along with force proportionality became their defense strategy yet Pakistan considered these factors incompatible with what actually transpired thus validating NATO aggression. Following the Salala incident, the Pakistani parliament has voted to close down NATO supply routes to Afghanistan, stating the supply routes will only be resumed once the US officially apologizes for the casualties. In addition, Pakistan has requested the US to leave the Shamsi airbase in Baluchistan within 15 days. This base was also utilized by the US for drone flights and emergency landings in Pakistan's tribal regions (Geo News, 2011). Pakistan also decided to boycott the Bonn Conference, which would decide Afghanistan's fate, and refused to be part of the investigation alongside the US. The inquiry was finished in December 2011, and the American military general stated that "the U.S. troops essentially acted in self-defense and didn't purposely attack the Pakistani armed

forces on Pakistani soil" (Kronstadt, 2012). This claim was refused by Pakistan. Several negotiations were held to restore relations, yet relations were still strained, mainly because of the US's initial reluctance to issue an apology. The matter was only settled when an official apology was offered by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in July 2012. Pak-US relations saw a new chapter of cooperation after the Salala incident. US policy post-9/11 has been branded as unilateral and forceful, especially against Pakistan, which has suffered more losses and tribulations as a frontline ally in the war on terror than what was lost in the 9/11 tragedy itself.

### **7. Pakistan Nuclear Arsenal**

Pakistan, being a relatively larger and more developed nuclear-armed state, occupies a status that is comparable to that of some other nations, such as India and China. Nevertheless, this status was not attained without effort. During the 1990s, Pakistan pursued its nuclear program despite strong opposition and coercive measures by the United States, such as sanctions and a total suspension of assistance. Besides, the shipment of 28 F-16 fighter aircraft was halted, thereby exposing senior officials—like the president, prime minister, and military chief—to perpetual risk (Markey, 2013). India and Israel did not experience the same scenarios. This prompted Pakistan to accuse the United States of hypocrisy, arguing that it treats them as a throwaway ally, utilized solely for American strategic purposes and then abandoned like nothing (Kux, 2001). The incumbent President of the United States, Joe Biden, stated that Pakistan can pose a significantly unstable threat that, if not properly managed, can result in catastrophic outcomes (Kalb, 2021). Since the initial nuclear test by Pakistan in May 1998, the United States government has been worried about the possible abuse of such weapons. Pakistan's nuclear capabilities are considered a great danger and have emerged as one of the foremost security issues of the United States due to Pakistan's unstable history and unclear future in this regard. Pakistan's nuclear weapons have contributed to making United States foreign policy more complex, as can be seen from the case of France's denial of a uranium reprocessing plant (Cronin, Kronstadt, & Squassoni, 2005). Notwithstanding the nuclear sanctions imposed on them before the 9/11 attacks, these were lifted quite promptly as the U.S. chose to prioritize its regional security interests with Pakistan. Much as after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan's status altered from being troublesome to that of a valuable regional partner post-9/11. America revised its nuclear non-proliferation strategy to prioritize near-term objectives, which were to include the formation of a stable, cooperative government in Pakistan to assist in countering Al-Qaeda, while simultaneously attempting to ensure that terrorists did not gain access to its nuclear technology. America backed Musharraf's regime and demanded that it be reformed into a modern, moderate Islamic state. While the possession of nuclear weapons does not in itself mean that a country is a threat to the U.S.—examples being Britain and France—other countries like Iran and North Korea are viewed differently because they are seen as ready to use them. However, there is a perception that the likelihood of Pakistan's nuclear weapons being irresponsibly handled is slight (Goldberg & Ambinder, 2011). However, the existence of nuclear weapons continues to be a controversial aspect of U.S.-Pakistan relations.

### **8. Special Treatment of India and China Factor**

Pakistan's regional agenda has been directly linked to Afghanistan for decades, and this has led the United States to view Pakistan more as a gateway to Afghanistan rather than as a friend. In the post-9/11 scenario, particularly in 2011 and 2012, there was growing mutual distrust for a number of reasons; one of the key reasons was Afghanistan. Pakistan felt that the U.S. was disregarding its concerns regarding Afghanistan. During Hamid Karzai's leadership, Afghanistan used the ethnic Pashtun factor against Pakistan. Kabul also favored India's enhanced presence in the region (Tellis, 2011). Both countries have attempted to repair and redefine their problematic relationship since 2001 following the Cold War. America relied on Pakistan for terrorism containment but, meanwhile, recognized China as

a rising regional power. As a response to China's growing power, the United States followed a two-pronged approach, envisioning great potential in India as a viable counterbalance to China's dominance. Condoleezza Rice, who was President Bush's advisor at the time, emphasized the necessity of it being understood that India was a force for stability in the region, and that it could develop into a great power (Rice, 2000). Thus, the U.S. also helped India to emerge as a regional economic and military power. After 9/11, Pakistan was declared a frontline state in the war against terror, and the U.S. realized that Pakistan was a better ally against Al-Qaeda compared to India. Yet, the U.S. continued to push for an alliance with India, which created further suspicion in U.S.-Pakistan ties. Feeling singled out, Pakistan saw the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal of 2008 as a adverse twist of fate, since it transformed India into a strategic ally of the United States. The deal drastically impacted the security calculus of Pakistan. The U.S. policy of de-hyphenation meant that Pakistan was not granted the same nuclear concessions, which prompted the country to seek Chinese help in meeting its energy demands, although China also had concerns about international criticism (Kessler, 2010). China became a cause for concern for the United States and India. In response to the rise of China, the U.S. not only waived some Nuclear Suppliers Group and International Atomic Energy Agency obligations for India but also dramatically expanded bilateral trade with India, which grew from \$1 billion to \$15 billion since 2008, and from \$43 billion to \$74 billion through the end of 2017 (Noor, 2018). The U.S. had opportunities to act as an impartial facilitator between the two states but always acted in favor of India. As it is populous and has a market, India became increasingly attractive to the U.S., which, along with shifting U.S. interests in Afghanistan, created Pakistan's fear of being sidelined and India being viewed as a more reliable ally. India's potential to fill the vacuum in Afghanistan following the U.S. troop withdrawal is of particular concern to Pakistan, whose Indian consulates have been accused of seeking destabilizing activities in Baluchistan. A case in point is that of Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was arrested for financing Baloch militants against Pakistani civilians (Hussain, 2012). President Donald Trump in a speech outlining his strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia commended India's move while chastising Pakistan for sheltering terrorists, urging it to "do more" (Yousufzai, 2017). This tension intensified in 2018 when Trump blamed Pakistan for "lies and deceit" (Afzal, 2018), claiming that U.S. aid to Pakistan was not producing any positive outcomes. In this regard, \$1.3 billion U.S. security assistance was withheld. In contrast, the United States designated India as a "Major Defense Partner" in 2016, resulting in three India-U.S. defense cooperation agreements. The U.S. is now India's fourth-largest defense supplier and leading trading partner, with bilateral trade amounting to \$142 billion in 2018 (Levesques & Solanki, 2020). The backing of the U.S. for India, along with the acknowledgment that terrorism is originating from Pakistan, has significantly influenced the global status of Pakistan. This seeming preferential treatment of India has disturbed the equilibrium in the region, and Pakistan has turned to China to further firm up relations and increase military and strategic ties with Russia..

### **Recommendations**

1. Ongoing joint counterterrorism initiatives are essential to tackle regional terrorism threats through the sharing of intelligence and resources.
2. The economic partnership should be enhanced, with negotiations for bilateral trade agreements focused on agriculture, technology, and energy sectors. The U.S. can assist Pakistan in its economic development through aid and investment.
3. Cooperation on energy initiatives is necessary to address Pakistan's energy crisis.
4. Programs promoting educational and cultural exchanges should be encouraged.
5. Collaborative health projects can be implemented to fight diseases and improve healthcare infrastructure in Pakistan, alongside joint research and training efforts.
6. Regular strategic discussions should take place to address mutual issues and facilitate coordination on both regional and global challenges.



## Conclusion

The dynamics of the relationship between Pakistan and the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks have been marked by a complex interplay of counterterrorism strategies, conflicting strategic interests, and the imperative for regional stability. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. identified Pakistan as an essential ally, primarily due to its strategic geographical location, which borders Afghanistan, and its historical connections with the Taliban. These factors made Pakistan a critical player in the U.S. efforts to dismantle terrorist networks and prevent future attacks. However, as time progressed, significant tensions emerged between the two nations. Divergent priorities, such as Pakistan's focus on its sovereignty and regional influence, clashed with the U.S. objectives aimed at achieving stability and curbing terrorism in the region. Issues arose regarding Pakistan's military and intelligence support for various groups that the U.S. viewed as threats, leading to a complicated and sometimes adversarial relationship. Yet, despite these ongoing challenges and disagreements, both countries still recognize the importance of one another in addressing mutual concerns regarding security and stability in South Asia. The potential for the U.S. and Pakistan to rejuvenate their partnership exists, provided there is a commitment to foster mutual understanding, address grievances, and align their strategic interests more closely for the benefit of both nations and the broader region. The future of this relationship hinges on the ability of both sides to engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration.

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