



RESEARCH PAPER

**An Analysis of Pakistan-US Economic Relations during Trump Era
(2017-2021)**

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ABSTRACT

Economic ties between Pakistan and the United States changed dramatically under the Trump administration (2017-2021), owing to geopolitical dynamics, trade policies, and strategic objectives. The purpose of this article is to understand the evolution of Pakistan-US economic ties, with an emphasis on trade patterns, foreign aid, investment flows, and policy decisions that affected bilateral interactions. The US-Pak Relations date back to 1947 when Pakistan got Independence and when Prime Minister Liaqat ali Khan visited the USA for the first time. Ever since, the ties have seen all sorts of ups and downs along with highs and lows through the time. This paper analysis the Pak-US economic relations and help in understanding the facts and realities of it during the President Trump Era. The Trump administration's "America First" agenda, combined with a shift in US aid and regional alliances, reshaped the two countries' economic relationship. While Pakistan saw a decline in US funding and strategic support, trade relations remained constant, with exports to the US continuing to play an important part in Pakistan's economy. There have been ups and downs in the US-Pakistan interaction, with ties deteriorating at first. After Trump asked Pakistan for assistance in Afghanistan, relations strengthened throughout his presidency. Yet, economic progress is hampered by mistrust and reliance on the US. This study uses qualitative analysis to examine the impact of these policy changes on Pakistan's economic outlook and chances for future engagement. With the Application of Realism theory, the research tries to analysis the ties on very basic levels.

Keywords: US-Pakistan Relations, Trump Era, US Aid, Economic Policies

Introduction

Pakistan and the USA have been through many patches in their relations over the time. But Afghanistan problem serves as a lens using which to view U.S.-Pakistan relations especially in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. In order to safely exit Afghanistan under the presidency of Donald Trump, the United States intended to strengthen ties with Islamabad. The administration of Trump employed coercive diplomacy in the early days of its presidency, but it was unsuccessful. Pakistan even promoted the "no more" strategy in response to the US stance of pressuring Pakistan to "Do More" in order to eradicate terrorists from its soil. Following on, though, Donald actively demanded assistance in resolving the Afghan issue in a letter to Imran Khan, the former PM, and their ties strengthened. The current body of literature examines the economic and Afghanistan-related relationships between Pakistan and the United States; however, this study is going to investigate the relationship between the two countries in terms of economic linkages and considerations such as China and India.

Since gaining autonomy, the Pak-US terms have fluctuated, occasionally plunging to an all-time low and other times rising to a historic high. This paper examines the Pak-US ties through the viewpoints of economy during Trump era whose interactions were less transactional and more focused on the interests of one state. The goal of the study is to determine what is causing the stormy relationship between America and Pakistan. There were many highs and lows in the interactions between the USA and Pakistan. The main objective of this research is to identify the primary reason behind the highs and lows in the two countries' ties, particularly during the time Trump in the Oval Office.

Literature Review

Malik & Aquil (2022) elaborated that this This paper uses a neo-classical realism perspective to examine Pak-US ties when Trump was in office. The analysis framework incorporates systemic impacts as well as the importance of cognitive and domestic elements in comprehending the attitudes, actions, and preferences of both parties toward one another. The two sides were unable to overcome their lack of confidence and transcend the conventional strategy of strategic cooperation that relied on Pakistan's benefits for support throughout Mr. Trump's presidency. Considering the two nations had distinct perspectives regarding changing events worldwide, new regional strategic advances, and domestic reconfigurations, Islamabad wasn't an appropriate strategic option for America. Simultaneously the Republicans reinvigorated their negotiation power by taking advantage of the weaknesses of the economy of Pakistan. With its carrot-and-stick strategy, the White House was able to entice Pakistan thanks to this gray area, which also forced Islamabad's policy planners to believe that a solid internal foundation continues to be the foundation of a successful foreign policy.

Hassan & Bukhari (2020) explored that FATF or the Financial Action Task Force has evolved into a contemporary strategic tool that the United States may utilize however it sees fit. Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the US government have reached an agreement on a temporary truce and the departure of forces from Afghanistan as the peace process in Afghanistan led by the USA celebrates the triumph. After enabling the Peace pact between the USA and Talibaan in Doha on February 29, 2020—the largest advancement in the history of South Asia—Pakistani officials are similarly prepared to put an end to the activity despite the obstacles presented by the Financial Action Task Force It was the first instance of continuous combat since the year 2001 the United States encroachment which is regarded as a crucial step in putting an end to the insurgency in the immediate vicinity. The Pentagon ultimately agreed with Islamabad's position that the Afghan crisis cannot be resolved militarily. According to reports, Pakistani officials are assuming control of the Taliban of Pakistani origin, who are allegedly operating out of Afghanistan, through Afghan officials. FATF is being used as a negotiating instrument to put stress on Islamabad to change its role in favor of the United States and Taliban talks after it played a significant role in mediating the aforementioned peace agreement.

Naz, Masood & Wadood (2019) explained that These responses to the questions of why America is pressuring Pakistan to adopt greater measures to combat terrorism towards insurgents and organizations are examined in this qualitative study. The relationship between the United States and Pakistan is influenced by several local and international developments. In addition to expressing discontent with Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and accusing it of giving sanctuary to extremists' organizations operating in Afghanistan, the United States designated India as a strategic ally in Afghanistan. Because each nation has different strategic objectives, their approaches to combating terrorism, especially in Afghanistan, differ. The Trump administration needs to remember that India is Pakistan's longstanding adversary and that any major role that the USA gives India in Afghanistan will endanger Pakistan's stability. The USA must additionally attempt to allay Pakistan's worries in this respect.

Material and Methods

The research follows the norms of social sciences. The data that has been used and applied in this research is secondary and is gathered from secondary sources like books, interviews, articles, new papers, internet blogs along with different websites and other publications. Theory of Realism have been applied to the research in order to gain better understanding of the topic under a certain banner. The researcher was not able to have adequate chances to gather primary-level material through interviews because of time restrictions. Additionally, the researcher investigated this topic using qualitative research approaches, that rely upon qualitative information than on quantitative figures and facts. Details on a range of events impacting the US-Pakistan interaction was obtained by the writer.

Theoretical Framework

The writer used the notion of classical realism to investigate this subject. A mutually exclusive scenario in which one nation must ultimately lose is the foundation of traditional realism, a framework related to the maintenance and expansion of one nation's authority. Furthermore, classical realism maintains that the foundation of a nation's foreign policy is its national interest. Among the many supporters of traditional realistic thinking are Niccolò Machiavelli, Hans Morgenthau, Thucydides, and others.

Nations hold a central place in electoral politics, as stated by classical realists, who disapproved of international organizations because they believe they serve the interests of nations. Similar to this, America has used international organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to put pressure on Pakistan to achieve its goals. Both of these groups were used against Pakistan. The United States utilized the FATF platform to persuade Pakistan to stop funding extremist groups. Pakistan is allegedly providing sanctuary for leaders of terrorist groups, and the United States does everything in its can to exploit this platform support from its friends to place Pakistan on the FATF Grey List. In a comparable manner, America contributes around 17% of the IMF's funding total, making it the largest shareholder. The result of this is that the United States now controls the IMF. Washington warns the IMF not to lend money to Pakistan when it is in dire need of economic assistance and wants to improve its macro-economic health because the latter will use the money to repay its obligations to China.

Historic Context of Pak-US Relations

Pakistan has had close ties to the United States since its founding. On the fifteenth of August in 1947, Washington recognized Pakistan as a sovereign country after it gained its independence. After that, the relationship significantly improved. Following Liaqat Ali Khan's passing, the US led bloc was joined by Pakistan by entering the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), which was primarily opposed to the communist bloc dominated by USSR. The relationship between the two nations also became tangled when the 1965 war broke out between Pakistan and India. Pakistan asked the United States for assistance in fighting India, but the United States refused, claiming that the security treaty they had signed with Pakistan was only to counter the danger from the communist bloc, not from India specifically, which at the time was the primary propagator of the Movement of Non-Aligned Nations. After the open war between Pakistan and India broke out in 1971 and India who was supported by USSR, gained the upper hand, the United States refrained from intervening to save Pakistan during this difficult time, which ultimately led to Pakistan's disintegration. Pakistan was forced to leave economic alliance led by the USA as the consequence.

The USSR invasion of Afghanistan presented Pakistan and America with an intriguing opportunity to rekindle their romantic relationship (Sattar, 2010). The two

nations worked together to develop an effective approach that defeated the USSR's enmity, but they also planted the seeds of extremism and terrorism in the vicinity. The romance between Pakistan and the United States faded when the Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1988. Meanwhile, Pakistan faced the Pressler amendment, which imposed penalties from the United States. In addition, those restrictions were swiftly implemented due to America's global war on extremism.

The terrorist organization Al-Qaeda targeted the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, killing over 3,000 citizens and costing the United States several hundreds of millions of dollars. Washington first overthrew regime of Talibaan in Afghanistan in order to attack the bases of Al-Qaeda there as a result of this occurrence. In the meantime, Islamabad was designated as an ally outside the NATO umbrella and became the USA's "blue-eyed boy" (Amin, 2010). In a similar vein, Islamabad got hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance from the United States to improve its military capabilities and help rebuild its struggling economy.

Relations in-between the United States and Pakistan deteriorated further after Democrats took over the White House and started promoting the "do more" slogan. Nobody is prepared to have faith in their adversaries. They back up that claim by citing the U.S. Abbottabad activity, in which government of Pakistan was left out. Washington had no longer trusted Pakistan, and the United States was threatened by two sided role of Pakistan.

President Donald Trump carried on America's coercive approach when he took over the nation's affairs and started to put pressure on Pakistan to perform more. The ties between both nations had hit an all-time low when Trump said in a tweet on the very initial day of the new year that Pakistan had deserted them and that we had given them billions of dollars to compensate for nothing other than lies and deceit. Additionally, the government of Donald Trump achieved its declared objective by using the FATF to exert pressure on Islamabad. Trump also charged Pakistan of giving leaders of terrorists groups "safe havens." During a press briefing, the United States Department of State Chief John Bolton asserted that the United States is well conscious that Pakistan is escalating hostilities between the two nations by giving militants in Peshawar and Quetta an escape route.

Trump recognized the vital part that Islamabad plays in ensuring a safe American exit from Afghan soil. Trump wrote a message to Imran Khan the then PM of Pakistan asking for Islamabad's help in addressing the Afghan problem and utilized every tool at his fingertips to exert pressure on Pakistan. Pakistan did this by first releasing the Afghan Taliban top negotiator and then forcing the Taliban to sit down to negotiate, which was also welcomed by the United States envoy for a truce with the Taliban—American Zalmay Khalilzad, who had been born in Afghanistan (Afzal, 2020).

The relations between the USA and Pakistan were somewhat impacted by enormous Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project of China in general and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) more specifically (Ahmad 2013). The United States, a strong opponent of China, opposes these projects, calling them a "Chinese debt trap" whereby China first lends massive sums of money to nations that are unable to pay back the financial assistance, thereby compelling countries to cede vital harbors to China. Additionally, former Finance Minister Assad Umar and the Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Alice Wells engaged in a rhetorical sparring match in which they both encouraged other nations to be cautious regarding the loans from China.

The relations between Pakistan and the USA were also impacted by India's engagement in with the USA and in Afghanistan. China is the target of the United States foreign policy toward India (Ahmad 2013). The USA is doing everything feasible to help India, and the two nations have established a number of defense agreements that allow them to share bases and provide India access to the US Global Positioning System (GPS). In order

convey an obvious signal to Pakistan, previous presidents of the USA Donald Trump and Barack Obama both traveled to Delhi rather than Islamabad.

Since its inception, Pakistan and the United States have maintained cordial ties. The United States acknowledged Pakistan's independence on August 15, 1947. The connection had significantly enhanced afterwards. In return for joining the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and SEATO, Pakistan received a plethora of aid packages in the shape of cash and merchandise. Pakistan later withdrew from both CENTO and SEATO in the 1970s as a result of the distrust that grew between the two nations as a result of the struggle between both Pakistan and India. In the meantime, the United States had already imposed sanctions on Pakistan. Since their same objectives opened the door to better cooperation, the USSR's intervention of Afghanistan was actually a boon to Pakistan-US ties. In return, they cooperated to combat the former Soviet Union's aggressiveness. Unexpectedly, the United States began diplomacy based on sanctions in the 1990s Pressler Amendment using the pretext of developing a nuclear weapon after the Soviet Union's collapse broke the close links between Pakistan and the United States of America. In a comparable manner the Pervez regime has supported all of the USA's demands to launch activities targeting Al-Qaeda and Taliban, bridging the rift in friendly relations between the two countries caused by America's war on international terrorism (Amin, 2010).

As time went on, the two nations' lack of trust grew, and they made an effort to turn on each other. The United States started conducting drone attacks targeting particular insurgent groups after Pakistan started selective operations against militants. The connections between the two nations worsened as a result of an absence of credibility, and both administrations started to put stress on each other to accomplish their goals.

When White House was taken over by the Democrats of Obama, reputation of Pakistan in the United States was damaged. Operation in Abbotabad, whereby the United States conducted an assault on Usama Bin Ladin without consulting government of Pakistan, gave credence to the Democrats' suspicion-based perspective of Pakistan since America was not prepared to put its complete confidence in Pakistan given that there was a chance that the strike was going to fail due to the Pakistani government would deceive the USA yet again. The United States also suspended aid from the humanitarian support program and imposed sanctions on Pakistan.

Results and Discussion

Trump Era and the Pak-US Relations

The United States administration put more pressure on Pakistan after Trump had become president. One of his promises and a major factor in his election by the majority of Americans was the country's goal of removing its soldiers from Afghanistan (Kaura, 2017). likewise, the story of the conflict between Washington and Islamabad began, with Pakistan preaching "no more" in return for Washington's "do more" motto (Mirza & Shamil, 2020). The main source of contention between the two nations was the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan denounced the USA for degrading its sacrifices in support of America in Afghanistan, while America accused Pakistan of backing the Afghan Taliban over the United States on Afghan soil. Government of Pakistan claims that the USA is damaging reputation of Pakistan at expense of its war in Afghanistan. On the final evening of 2018, Trump expressed his displeasure by tweeting that the United States had provided Pakistan with US\$33 billion in return. For us, Pakistan has been an incubator of shortcomings and lies. Imran Khan, who serves as the prime minister of Pakistan, responded to Trump's comments by saying that the US shouldn't hold Pakistan accountable for its lack of success on Afghan soil (Afzal, 2020).

Both nations' ties fell to their lowest point ever. The governing bodies of two nations were fighting each other virtually. Trump also charged Pakistan with giving terrorist leaders safe havens. "The United States is fully conscious of Pakistan offering a haven of safety to extremists in Peshawar and Quetta, igniting the fire of animosity between the two countries," the head of the United States State Department said during a press conference. Following a similar guise, the United States blackmailed Pakistan for allowing Washington to leave safely from Afghanistan by placing it on the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) Gray List that is discussed ahead in the paper (Hassan et. al., 2020).

Break of Ice during Trump Era

A major change in the two nations' relationship occurred when President Trump wrote to Prime Minister Imran Khan, requesting Islamabad's assistance in a safe exit from Afghanistan. The United States ultimately concluded that Pakistan's support is necessary for a safe departure from Afghanistan after trying every possible way to convince Pakistan.

Likewise, the then PM, Mr. Imran Khan was also in favor of peaceful conclusion of Afghan matter and its protracted war and a diplomatic solution to Taliban deadlock. Pakistan did the same, first freeing the Mullah Abdul Ghani Brother, a key player in the peace process in Afghanistan. By freeing the leader of the Taliban peace negotiation team, Pakistan showed that it takes the terrible situation in Afghanistan seriously and wants a peaceful solution. In addition, Pakistan made an effort and was successful in putting extra pressure on Talibans of Afghanistan to engage in talks.

The United States later praised Islamabad for its important and beneficial participation. American peace negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad, who was born in Afghanistan, commended Pakistan's stance on the Afghan issue during his visit. President Trump proposed the prime ministers of India and Pakistan arbitration in the Kashmir dispute in response to Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan peace process (Afzal, 2020). With this offer, Pakistan sought to internationalize the Kashmir dispute and refute India's claim of J&K is a "integral part" of its territory. All they wanted was help of Pakistan in a safe withdrawal from Afghanistan, thus Trump's attempts at mediation were a piece of candy to Islamabad.

Pakistan, the USA and the Phenomenon of CPEC

Relationships amongst both countries are also strained in the framework of the CPEC. Washington has often voiced concerns about the Chinese debt trap more specifically and CPEC more broadly (Khan, 2010; Ahmad 2013). The Wall Street Journal, America's mouthpiece, claims that China's Belt and Road Initiative is merely a debt trap. Beijing may lend money to nations in the name of growth in infrastructure and investments, but a deeper look exposes debt-trap strategy of China. China's approach, which involves leasing advantageous spots and other resources to make money off of them, enslaves nations. For instance, China leased Sri Lanka's Hambantota Seaport for a period of 99 years because Sri Lanka was unable to reimburse back loan.

Similarly, China purchased Zimbabwe's airport, and Zimbabwe met the same end as Sri Lanka. These variables led to the American warning Islamabad regarding debts of Beijing and the US's Southeast Asia coordinator strongly criticizing the CPEC in a number of statements. Assad Umar, a former minister of finance in Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaaf administration, responded to Alex by warning America that since America is the biggest borrower of Chinese loans, it should first clean up its own house. He also brought up Pakistan's other external loans, which he claimed were larger than those provided by the IMF along with additional lenders.

Compared to debts from lenders of China, these creditors' loans are more costly. Without any question, loans of China to the USA represent between 5% and 6% of the nation's GDP; however, Pakistan's debts surpass the typical debt-to-GDP proportions, which economists describe as 60% of Economy.

Pak-US Ties and the India Factor

The USA also supports India's anti-BRI position in the region. Government of India claims that Gilgit Baltistan, a region that is contested between both Pakistan and India, is traversed by the BRI. One of the main justifications for India's unwillingness to join the BRI is this as well. The US's position against India is a significant contributing element to the decline of Pakistan-US relations. America's only adversary is China, a nation that threatens the US in almost every area. China has a capacity and potential to replace the United States as the dominant power in the entire globe. China will surpass the United States as the biggest economy in the world within the next ten years, according to a recent report from a UK-based research think-tank. This prediction was made five years earlier than previous projections due to the corona virus. To combat China's increasing hostile intents, the United States desperately needs allies (Kaura, 2017). India is best option for the United States because of its geography and its rivalry with China. The decision taken by the USA to select India as an ally in the region was made possible by the boundary disputes between India and China. However, Pakistan started military exercises with Russia, which was formerly hostile but is now friendly, and laid the foundation for a good relationship. Conversely, at China's request, Russia strengthened ties with Pakistan. Lately, Russia shocked India by merely mentioning a resolution that Pakistan had put forth in reaction to India's actions in illegally occupied Kashmir. Despite its disappointment, India was capable of to walk away from the resolution with the help of the United States and France.

FATF, Pakistan and the USA

The FATF imposed the strictest requirements on Pakistan, and many people think that superpowers like the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France are behind it all. Pakistan has consistently pursued robust strategic partnerships with major powers to offset the threat posed by its fiercest adversary, India. Nonetheless, Pakistan maintained close ties with the USA throughout the Cold War, although these ties have since been characterized by unstable circumstances. Following Washington's recourse to the FATF as a fresh weapon for Islamabad to utilize as an arsenal for sanctions against its economy, this road is still more difficult. However, the United States' goals shifted once the Cold War ended, causing tension in their relationship (Cohen, 2004).

However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, prompted both the USA and Pakistan to re-engage in strategic relations over the global struggle against terrorists in Afghanistan. However, in a short time, disagreements between the two sides arose on the problem of terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan. The Trump administration's 2017 national security plan also said that strategic competition with major powers, particularly China and Russia, would be the primary emphasis of American national security. Additionally, it stated that the United States' national security strategy would prioritize other issues above terrorism. In the present geostrategic context, Pak-US ties are confronted with numerous obstacles. Firstly, the goals of the US in Afghanistan—the slide of Pakistan. Secondly, the Pakistani government claims to have aided the Afghan Taliban. Thirdly, Pakistan and China are expanding their defense collaboration, which includes China's flagship "Pakistan China Economic Corridor" initiative. Lastly, the long-term goal of America's approach is to strengthen strategic ties with India. Turning of objectives of Pakistan and the USA on Afghan soil (Kaura, & Era, 2017).

In Afghanistan, the USA is engaged in the most prolonged conflict in the nation's history (Dalpino, 2017). For Pakistan, the past few years have been extremely busy. A

decade ago, the FATF placed Pakistan on its gray list for the first instance; nevertheless, Islamabad upgraded and pledged political support. However, once more, in 2018, FATF placed Islamabad on its monitoring list. Pakistan has been placed under pressure since June 2018 from the United States or the permanent members of the FATF. nevertheless, within the auspices of the FATF, Pakistan was instrumental in driving the Taliban out of Afghanistan; but, as time went on, Pakistan and the United States diverged on their ultimate objectives in the country. The two parties' primary point of concern was India's growing influence in Afghanistan.

While Pakistan allege that U.S. is giving leverages to India to enhance its role in internal affairs of Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan also emphasized the Pukhtun populations should be given due to power share with the Afghan government. In the current scenario, Pakistan position in Afghanistan is more aligned with the Russia, China and Iran rather than U.S. Currently, Pakistan is playing its role for the final settlement of Afghanistan. However, if Pakistan failed in persuading Afghan Taliban to find end solution of Afghan conflict then such situation would have negative implication for Pakistan security. Moreover, Pakistan foreign policy objective in Afghanistan are to secure Pak friendly regime and to minimize the role of India.

Conclusion

According to the research's findings, there have been many highs and lows in the relationship between Pakistan and the United States over the years. The ties between the United States and the country were at an all-time high when the military-led administration was in charge of the nation's matters. But once the civilian government took over, the two countries' relations declined because of sanctions and the US ceasing to provide aid to Pakistan. When the presidents of both countries got into Twitter arguments, the US-Pakistan relationship, especially during the Trump administration, reached a record low.

But as administration of Trump explained its policy regarding Afghanistan, requested Pakistan's help in a safe withdrawal from Afghanistan, and for the first time in history abandoned the "Do More" narrative, ties between the two countries improved. In contrast to earlier times, Pakistan made very serious moves by forcing the Taliban to attend the discussion table and releasing the head of the Afghan leader, both of which were acknowledged by the United States. The United States employed a number of strategies to exert pressure on Pakistan in the early days of Trump's presidency, but they were ineffective. As a result, former President Trump wrote to Pakistani PM Imran Khan, asking for help of Pakistan in Afghanistan resolution.

Additionally, the USA's growing ties to India threatened the partnership. The USA made numerous military-oriented pacts for this reason, which Pakistan views as a safety risk. Pakistan was likewise disenfranchised from the United States due to its relations with China. It is advised that a lack of trust plagues the US-Pakistan interaction, that both countries should work to close. One of the main causes why faltering economy of Pakistan isn't expanding without US assistance is because of its dependence on it. The Pakistani government has to understand that in order for the country's economy to be self-sufficient and export-oriented, it must be free of foreign aid, including that from the United States.

Recommendations

The ties of Pak-USA during the previous Trump era saw decline of US aid to Pakistan. Now that Trump is back in government, both countries must refrain from giving other states more space to undermine their relationship. For instance, in order to combat Chinese aggressiveness, which Pakistan views as a security threat, the US has granted India more autonomy in the South China Sea and other crucial regions. In a similar vein, Pakistan gave

China more freedom in every area, despite repeated warnings from the US concerning its debt trap of China. Therefore, both nations must understand that repairing their relationships with other nations shouldn't come at the risk of damaging such relationships.

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