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History of Pakistan-USA Relations: A Case Study of Establishing the Special Relationship and Future of Foreign Policy in Middle East

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening strong relationships with regional big players have always remained top priority for Pakistan and entire Muslim world. Since its inception, Pakistan has always made efforts to make a strong bond with Middle East. The United States of America has consistently supported Pakistan in all of these areas and has been a major source of funding and assistance. Although, there have been periods of distrust and suspicion as well, it is evident from examining the whole picture that one of the key aspects of Pakistan's foreign policy has been its relationship with the United States of America. This study evaluates the significance of the partnership as well as the obstacles to collaboration and advancement in the USA-Pakistan relationship. The purpose of this research is to analyze Pakistan's diplomatic role, assess its effectiveness as a mediator, and evaluate how it balances strategic interests while contributing to regional peace. This qualitative study clarified Pakistan's growing strategic role in the Middle East following the PAK-USA relationship. In order to show how Pakistan has become a useful security ally and the preferred mediator in complex crises like the Saudi-Iranian tensions, the paper integrates defense cooperation, economic considerations, diplomatic mediation, and its relationship with regional powers. The new policy of Pakistan in the evolving environment following the Arab countries like neutrality in the USA-Iran conflict, defense relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The conclusion of this study addresses historical background of Pakistan-USA relation, and reflects Pakistan's role as a mediator, as well as elaborates economic relations with Middle East countries, the evolving geo strategic compulsion, impacts of prolong closure of strait of Hormuz, and consequence of US-Iran war against Europe are codified.

Keywords: Pakistan's Mediator Role, Middle East, USA-Iran Conflict, Pakistan-USA Relations, Foreign Policy

Introduction

In 1947, diplomatic ties were established between the United States and Pakistan. Pakistan's participation in the Baghdad Pact/CENTO and SEATO, as well as the United States' commitment to give it financial and military support, improved ties between the two countries. However, there was a general perception in Pakistan that the United States was not a trustworthy friend as a result of the United States' withholding of military aid during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War.

Pakistan was far more negatively impacted by the United States' suspension of military support to both of the warring nations. Following the war in 1971 and the terrible division of Pakistan, the United States lost all credibility with the general public (Javaid, 2014).

U.S. relations with the area, which had witnessed a resurgence of U.S. government interest under the second Clinton Administration, were set back by India's decision to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998 and Pakistan's corresponding response. A presidential visit that was supposed to take place in the first quarter of 1998 was postponed, and sanctions under the Glenn Amendment limited the government's access to loans, credits, military purchases, and financial support. The United States has increased its economic support for Pakistan, offering debt relief and backing for a significant initiative to overhaul education. However, there appears to be ongoing skepticism on both sides, and few people claim that this convenient marriage will survive longer than our earlier courtships.

Following the establishment of the two British Raj dominions in 1947, "Pakistan needed financial support for its infrastructure development and modernization of its armed forces; it is unknown when the government of Pakistan decided to ask for military aid from the United States; Field Marshal Ayub Khan was definitely their living along these lives in August 1951" (Muqem, 1963). Pakistan might give the US a foothold in the region as an ally in the fight against Soviet expansionism in South Asia. From the US point of view, the US was more preoccupied with its containment efforts in South East Asia and the Middle East, as well as the post-war reconstruction in Western Europe and Japan (Mahmud, 1991).

In the early years of Pakistan, the United States had little interest in intervening in the developing South Asian conflicts. "The United States believes that maintaining the independence and integrity of the Middle Eastern countries is essential to both national interests and global peace. In light of this, the United States is ready to use armed forces to support any nation or group of nations that seek assistance against armed aggression from any nation under the control of International Communism if the President deems it necessary (White House Press Release, 1957).

"In the event of aggression against Pakistan, the United States government will take appropriate action, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon and as envisaged in the Joint Resolution to promote peace and stability in the Middle East, in order to assist the Government of Pakistan at its request, in accordance with the circumstances of the United States"(United States Treaties and other International Governments, 1959) "Pakistan had become America's most allied ally in Asia" according to Ayub Khan, the president of Pakistan (Khan, 1967). The two nations' relations improved under the second Eisenhower administration, and Field Marshal Ayub Khan was able to forge close ties with the Americans. "One example is the US surveillance flights from Peshawar Airport over the Soviet Union" (Marchchi, 1975)

Literature Review

Faisal Mehmood's article, "India's Growing Influence in the UAE and its Implications for Pakistan," highlights Pakistan's role in the region by examining the political, security-based, economic, geographical, and military ties that exist between Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have always had excellent connections, which have included manpower transfers, economic assistance, and defense cooperation. However, some situations, such as the Yemeni conflict and the recent Gulf crisis, created confusion because Pakistan chose to remain neutral. Additionally, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, which has a sizable community of Pakistani expatriates, have cordial relations (Mehmood, 2024).

According to the article of Brandon J. Kinne "Defense Cooperation Agreements and the Emergence of a Global Security Network," states are now forming defense agreements under a

brand-new framework known as "Defense Cooperation Agreements." Rather than taking on a mutual defense commitment, these accords place less emphasis on creating a legal structure within which they might cooperate in the field of defense. Countries were forced to use such arrangements due to terrorism and other emerging Cold War dangers. States with weaker defense capabilities would rather sign such accords with their more powerful military allies. The procedure will facilitate the sharing of crucial information and improve state cooperation.

According to Katz's article *A Decade of Change in Middle Eastern Geopolitics*, the upheavals changed the region's power structures, mobilized the populace, and weakened the authoritarian regimes. Although democratization was the original goal of the Arab Spring, it also brought forth instability, sectarianism, and foreign involvement. The paper assesses how the formation of domestic security organizations has been affected by ideological issues like political movements. The study also notes that while social media was useful for planning protests, it eventually evolved into a tool for governmental checks and balances. Among the major shifts in geopolitics are the Israeli-Hamas war, the rivalry between Iran and the area, and the normalization of relations with Israel. Lastly, the paper reveals the intricacy and stability concerns of the contemporary Middle Eastern war (Katz, 2025).

The Arab-Israeli conflict and the larger geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East have historically influenced Arab politics. Academics have studied how Arab states' views toward Israel and the Middle East have been impacted by ideological, strategic, and economic considerations. Arab politics in early literature were primarily characterized by animosity toward Israel and fervent support for the Palestinian cause. Recent research, however, shows that several Arab governments and Israel are gradually moving toward normalization, cooperation, and pragmatism (Mustafa, & Ali, 2023).

Discussion

Pakistan's Role as mediator in Geo-Politics of the Middle East

Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the close of World War I, Britain and France attempted to partition the area in a way that either separated or established nationalities, sects, and languages inside a single state structure. The Saxe-Picot Agreement was one of the most well-known examples of how this border-making promoted weak nations and civil conflict (Khalidi, 2016). Arab nationalism and secular populist movements emerged after the departure of European powers, altering state governments and resolving regional political disputes. Together with other national movements, this trend proved to be symbolic of Egypt's 1952 revolution and affected the regional power dynamics (Panta, 2022).

Demonstrations against economic pressure, employment, and corruption often culminated in armed confrontation and sectarian violence, but the Arab Spring brought about unprecedented popular demands. Due to both secular and religious authority, this has been the cause of protracted civil warfare in certain countries. The region has become a battlefield for proxy wars and blockades due to the long-standing rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the Iranian Revolution has further complicated matters by increasing Shiite influence. The global and national interests have been further impacted by the ensuing response. In the context of global and emerging powers' mediation efforts, the Chinese mediation strategy and New Diplomacy have opened up new avenues for reconciliation.

In light of this broader context, Pakistan's geographical, religious, and historical ties to Central Asia enable them to mediate regional disputes and foster confidence; the Gulf strategic rivalry and the Saudi-Iranian war are also having an impact on regional stability (Albarasneh, 2025). As a result, Pakistan has an obligation to lessen conflicts through peaceful discourse and mediation due to its geographic and diplomatic location, and Pakistan's mediation is unquestionably crucial.

Economic Relations of Pakistan with Middle East Countries

The foundation of Pakistan's economic ties to the Middle East was the massive migration of Pakistanis to the Gulf States. The projects that were started during the oil boom increased the need for labor, which Pakistan met. The workers' remittances allowed the economy to remain stable, helped with foreign payments, and improved the lives of the impoverished. Saudi Arabia's postponed or concessional oil shipments were a major source of anxiety in the energy sector, and Saudi assistance persisted even after the nuclear test. Economic and technical cooperation was formalized by the Islamic Development Bank and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. According to experts, this connection is based on three pillars: institutional collaboration, energy reliance, and labor exports, which led to mutual dependence on both sides. The economy was supported by the record \$38.3 billion in remittances sent by Pakistanis overseas in the fiscal year 2024–2025, according to the most recent data (Dawn, 2025).

The Geo-Strategic Compulsion

Additionally, Pakistan's physical location connects it to four distinct regions: China, Central Asia, South Asia, South West Asia, and the Middle East. As a result, trade, security, politics, and the economy all revolve around Pakistan. Pakistan's location gives it the natural ability to affect the security, trade and commerce, ideology, and social conditions of all four of the surrounding regions. Political-economic turmoil and insecurity spread to its surroundings as the center of an open-ended US proxy war. The US is also acutely aware of this reality.

Pakistan has backed peace initiatives in a number of Middle East disputes. At the UN forum, Pakistan has consistently demanded a negotiated approach and a political settlement in Yemen. Pakistan has consistently supported this approach. In September 2023, it called for negotiations to find a political solution to the Yemeni issue, and it has repeatedly urged the parties to hold peace negotiations and a truce until 2025 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Pakistan, 2023). 3.75 million tons of gas, or around 85% of Pakistan's LNG imports, will be imported under a 15-year long-term LNG import agreement signed between Islamabad and Qatar in 2016 (Khuldune Shahid, 2017). In addition to diversifying Pakistan's energy supplies, the agreement kept the country from feeling cut off from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates during the Qatar issue.

However, Pakistan's ability to mediate was constrained by the existence of third powers and the complexity of the region. Islamabad faces a challenge from the competing interests of the US, Europe, and Russia in the Middle East. However, China's participation may enhance Saudi-Iranian relations in 2023, which might be good news for Pakistan. This event is seen by Pakistan as a major step in the direction of regional peace. Pakistan should strengthen its customary mediation and balancing approach going forward and get involved in regional disputes. Increased training for the parliament and foreign policy organizations, as well as the creation of sophisticated mediation procedures, can strengthen Pakistan's ability to mediate disputes and increase its role in fostering regional peace and stability (Naeem, M.A, 2026).

The New Global Order

Any workable plan for Pakistan's future strategy in regard to the United States of America must take into account the new global order, and its influence, impacts, and future directions for Middle East, the general features of which are listed below:

- ❖ The Bush preemption concept, which permits US intervention abroad with or without international or UN backing.
- ❖ US hegemony in a unipolar world, resulting from her economic and military might.
- ❖ The rise of quasi-global players as well as regional centers of power.

- ❖ Geo-economics is swiftly overtaking OEO -strategy; and the latter is now looked at as a function of the former.

Impacts of Prolong Closure of Strait of Hormuz

Pakistan delivered a peace proposal from the US to Iran to de-escalate the war in the Middle East and Gulf. International community praised the Islamabad's policy for dealing with potential problems facing Pakistan in the context of war. The diplomatic efforts of Pakistan for the promotion of peace in the world are praiseworthy. There are ongoing consultations with friendly countries of both sides to put an end to the illegitimate aggression. Pakistan, along with Egypt and Turkey, has emerged as a crucial intermediary as it has relations with both the US and Iran. Islamabad would be happy to host the parleys subject to the concurrence of the US and Iran. The only way out of the crisis in the Middle East is still diplomacy and dialogue.

The only way to guarantee stability in the region is through cooperation and respect for the will of the nations. Pakistan has consistently joined and supported other members of the UN Security Council in reiterating its strong opposition to the annexation of any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the forcible displacement of the Palestinian people. All of these acts broke international law and prospects for peace. Pakistan was in the limelight on the 24th day of the US-Israel war against Iran, in a synchronized diplomatic push along with Turkey and Egypt, as the trio appeared instrumental in securing a five-day pause of US plans to strike Iranian energy and power infrastructure. Officials said the effort was more than routine crisis management. Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan are doing more than talking. They are walking the talk to close the gulf between Washington and Tehran when many talk a good game.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said that longer term disruption of trade through the Strait of Hormuz caused by a US/Israel attack on Iran could have ripple effects across energy markets, fertilizer supply chains and global agrifood systems, increasing production costs, tightening agricultural supply and raising food prices around the world. Current conflict underscores fragility of interlinked energy and agrifood systems and need for concerted global efforts to stabilize markets keep trade routes open and shield vulnerable populations from growing food insecurity. (FAO, 2026). Such risks require a swift, coordinated policy response to build resilience. In the short term, alternative trade routes, monitoring markets, targeted support for countries vulnerable to import dependence and financial aid for farmers are critical to stabilizing supply chains and protecting populations.

Consequence US-Iran war against Europe

A senior EU official has publicly criticized the US for taking military action against Iran without consulting European allies, labelling Washington a "unpredictable partner" and voicing profound frustration about the impact on Europe's economy, security and potential migration flows (Anadolu Report). European Council President Antonio Costa has addressed Sciences Po in Paris and issued what many diplomats see as the harshest public rebuke so far from Brussels. "For the very first time, the United States started a war in the Middle East, in our backyard, without any prior information to European allies or Nato". The conflict is already hitting Europe's economy hard, Costa warned. "We are paying; we are suffering". He said energy price spikes, trade disruptions and the wider financial impact on European households and governments. Former CIA Director John Brennan, while on MS NOW'S The Weeknight said, he tends to believe Iran more than he does Donald Trump, because the United States president "could not acknowledge the truth even when he is slapped in the face with it repeatedly." Brennan furthered, "Trump is trying to figure out how he is going to get out of this debacle he has created and is making these claims of negotiations."

Recommendations

Pakistan must continue to pursue a neutral and balanced diplomatic approach in the Middle East in order to maintain positive relations with USA, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Iran. Pakistan would be able to gain international recognition and contribute to regional stability by stepping up its mediation efforts. Increasing economic diplomacy is another goal for the administration, particularly with regard to taking use of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and maximizing investment, trade, and energy with the Middle Eastern nations. Furthermore, Pakistan should strengthen its economic ties with other nations in the region to ensure that it is not entirely dependent on one country in order to attain energy security. In order to avoid being involved in regional wars, defense cooperation strategies with friendly states should be strengthened. Finally, in order to strengthen Pakistan's economy, remittances, trade channels, and investment opportunities must be implemented. The Middle East strategy must be linked to the country's internal economic development. Pakistan will be able to solidify its position as a reliable and stabilizing power in Middle Eastern politics through diplomatic ties, economic cooperation, and strategic neutrality. Following measures must be taken into consideration for the consolidating the special relationship/expanding US-Pakistan Cooperation:

- Promising and technologically sound population
- Scientific education
- Western Culture across the country
- Strategic partner of the region
- Geopolitical ally
- The politico-economic goals of democratization and globalization

Conclusion

Pakistan-USA relations have re-established diplomatic, economic, and defense relations with the Middle East countries, and they have taken on a constructive and moderate role in Middle Eastern politics and future foreign policy. Due to nonpartisan diplomacy, defense-related, and economic ties, Pakistan has been able to safeguard its national interests despite tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Yemeni conflict, and the regional power dynamics. Pakistan's growing influence in the area is indicated by the growing geopolitical significance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the long-standing security partnership with Saudi Arabia, and the focus on the energy and economic route with Iran. Pakistan will need to make the most of its role as a Middle East mediator to resolve economic issues and restore its credibility as a major player for the peace of the region.

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