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# Re-evaluation of Alliance Politics: Relations between US and Pakistan in Military Eras



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Abstract: This paper is a re-evaluation of interest factors on the relationship between the United States and Pakistan in the times of military rule in Pakistan. Ayub Khan (1958 to 1969) and Zia-ul-Haq (1978 to 1988) authoritarian roles are two military eras that are focused on and studied in detail. In the historical overview, in this paper we examine the elements that shaped the US-Pakistan relationships including geopolitical considerations, economic interests, geo-strategic and ideological factors. Furthermore, we examine how US assistance to Pakistan during the Cold War boosted its economy and reduced security tension. However, our research suggests that the US-Pakistan relationship during the Cold War especially in two military eras were marked by a complex interplay of power dynamics and strategic goals that had both favorable and unfavorable effects on bilateral relationships. Overall, this study offers a historical perspective on the ties between the US and Pakistan that throws light on the significant events that occurred during that time and their long-lasting effects on Pakistan's internal security.

**Keywords:** Cold War, USA-Pakistan, Military Eras.

#### Introduction

The Cold War is considered to be a significant period in world history, characterized by events that reshaped international politics and the struggles of nations to safeguard their interests. In this article, I have examined the impact of the Cold War on US-Pakistan relations, focusing on the periods of two military dictators: Ayub Khan (1958–1969) and Zia-ul-Haq (1978–1988) in Pakistan. Pakistan emerged as a new country following the partition of India when the Cold War was just beginning. Given its strategic geographic location, both the United States, representing the liberal bloc, and the Soviet

Union, representing the communist bloc, sought to gain influence in the region. However, Pakistan leaned ideologically toward the United States and became its ally. The primary objective for the United States was to counter Soviet ideology in the region, and Pakistan became its ally out of its own self-interest, with survival being the foremost concern.

To offer a thorough comprehension of the variables affecting US-Pakistan relations. The study starts with a succinct historical synopsis of the US-Pakistan relationship throughout the Cold War, emphasizing key occasions and factors that influenced the two nations' bilateral

relations. The discussion then turns to analyzing the rationale for the US-Pakistan relationship under the tenure of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq, taking into consideration elements like ideological dimensions, economic objectives, and geopolitical considerations.

The United States' military assistance to Pakistan is an instance of inquiry. This assistance, designated for the Pakistani armed forces, included the provision of weapons, instruction, and further requirements. ( Botah & Kipo-Sunyehzi, 2023). The United States momentarily suspended military support during the 1965 conflict between India and Pakistan, but it subsequently resumed. But when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, things drastically changed. As a result, Pakistan became a vital front-line state in the conflict with the Soviet Union, and the US boosted its development. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's intelligence organization, and the country's military both actively supported the mujahideen battling the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. Even though Pakistan's military was not the official recipient of the aid, there is evidence that some military personnel in Pakistan participated in the diversion of funds to Afghan forces. (Kundi, 2009). The study also looks at how US aid to Pakistan throughout the Cold War helped to resolve security issues, boost economic expansion, and solidify military rule and authoritarianism in Pakistan. Pakistan ended up becoming a client state of the US as a result. By 1964, aid and assistance to Pakistan had totaled almost 5 percent of its GDP, one of the greatest amounts in the nation's history. Pakistan's industrialization and progress throughout the early 1960s are attributed to this significant quantity of aid, with GDP growth rates reaching 6% to 7% annually (Ahmed, 2019).

A complex combination of power dynamics and strategic aims that had both positive and negative effects on bilateral ties defined the US-Pakistan relationship during the Cold War. Nonetheless, the post-Cold War era unquestionably brought with it a terrible security challenge in Pakistan, especially in light of the rise of religious groups that later turned into

terrorist attacks against the nation. These developments undoubtedly strengthened Pakistan's military and economic capabilities during the Cold War (Mahmood, 2023).

## Ayub khan era and Pakistan-USA Alignment:

Pakistan actively engaged in CENTO and SEATO and forged strong connections with the Western bloc under Ayub Khan's presidency (1958–1969). Ayub Khan looked to the Western Bloc, especially the United States, for support since he thought that Pakistan's progress depended on finding a solution to the Kashmir dispute (Bhushan, 2020). The main issues during this time were the unresolved Kashmir dispute and the feared security threat from India. The goal of US policy toward Pakistan was to protect its independence in a communistthreatened area. Pakistan, which was already a part of CENTO and SEATO, strengthened its ties to the US, in order the received military assistance to keep the USSR eliminated of South Asia. (Lerski, 2012). However, the bilateral relations faced challenges throughout Ayub Khan's presidency due to the one-sided interests of the United States. Pakistan never refused the USA's requests for support in the region, as it sought aid in return for its assistance (Sinha, 2009).

Pakistan and the United States signed a defense cooperation agreement on March 5, 1959, during the early years of Ayub Khan's reign. The United States pledged in this agreement to take care of Pakistan's defense requirements and security concerns. In keeping with its own national interests, the United States sought to preserve peace as well as Pakistan's independence and territorial integrity. The United States' commitment to advancing peace and thwarting communist inroads in Pakistan and the Middle East was also underscored by the pact. While the United States made it plain that any attack on Pakistan would be seen as an attack on the United States, Pakistan stated its willingness to cooperate in accordance with that declaration. (Sunawar & Coutto, 2015).

Hasan Askari Rizvi contends, the downfall in relations between two countries which

subsequently followed\_ he has defined USA in this way:

"Beyond just siding with Pakistan, the United States had other goals in mind. As the United States pursued its global security agenda, destroying the Soviet Union remained a top goal. The US and Pakistan created an alliance in order to do this. But Pakistan was also worried about the security situation in the region, especially given the Soviet Union's position and India, a longtime rival. Pakistan did not give the fight against communism the same priority as other matters. Tension arose in the relationship between the US and Pakistan after they formed an alliance because of their divergent goals and points of view. Pakistan began to doubt the validity of American promises as early as 1956. But neither party made a deliberate attempt to work things out or clear up miscommunications that came up during their exchanges. They played down their differences and carried on working together to achieve different goals". (Askari, 1993).

Later military ruler Ayub khan wrote a political biography, "Friends Not Master" in which he writes:

"People in developing countries get economic assistance, but it is based on equal respect among countries; they want to have friends, not masters" (S & Qureshi,, 2021).

#### Alliance and geo-strategic security

Early in the 1960s, there were serious security concerns as a result of this alliance based on mutual interests between Pakistan and the United States. There was a significant international incident that may have sparked a third global war between the US and the USSR, the two ideological foes. While an American U-2 surveillance plane was conducting espionage within Soviet territory, it was shot down by the Soviet Union. Pakistan was particularly alarmed by this incident because, according to reports, the airliner had fled from Pakistan afterwards the tragedy took place; Soviet officials corroborated this information and gave it to American and Pakistani authorities (Hussain, 2015). This incident was covered by a number of newspapers, including "The York Dispatch,"

which ran a story titled "Reds shoot down U.S. aircraft; Khrushchev threatens with rockets." The plane that went missing after taking off from Turkey has been verified by the Pentagon. Nikita S. Khrushchev verified the aircraft's identification as US military property during a combative speech to the Soviet parliament. He threatened to take revenge in the same address in the event that US planes ventured back into Soviet territory. (Amin, 2021).

The downed plane's pilot, Francis Gary Powers, safely paratrooped and was brought into custody in Moscow, the USSR officially declared on May 7. Plane had taken off from Peshawar, Pakistan, with the goal of gathering intelligence while flying across the Soviet Union, the Aral Sea, and landing at the Bod military airstrip in Norway, according to investigations. Powers said he was employed by the US Central Intelligence Agency. In the context of Cold War history and international relations, the U2 Incident represents a pivotal moment. The Indian High Commissioner in Karachi, Rajeshwar Dayal, noted that Pakistan had a rude awakening as a result of the U-2 aircraft incident. It made the Pakistani people realize the life-threatening danger they faced as a result of their military partnership with the United States. (Smith, 2007).

Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, the president of Pakistan, denied any knowledge of American military aircraft taking out from Pakistani airfields amid reports of possible Soviet retribution. He informed the people that Pakistan had friends who would help them if the Soviet Union launched rocket strikes. But Ayub Khan's public declaration betrayed a lack of knowledge of Soviet might, as he was oblivious to the possible repercussions. He cautioned that Russia would run the risk of starting a global war if it took such a step (Stein, 2008). The Eisenhower administration made an effort to defuse tensions between the two superpowers in spite of this sensitive situation. The episode sparked fears that the Soviet Union would attack the US or its allies, particularly Pakistan, with missiles or nuclear bombs in retaliation. Upon realizing the abrupt turn of events in world politics, Ayub Khan, who had previously

downplayed the gravity of the situation, sent his foreign minister, Aziz, to keep an eye on and oversee the current developments (Khan, Ullah, & Mahsud, 2019).

Pakistan's strategic position and religious identity are the reasons behind its partnership with the United States. Pakistan's topography includes a variety of environments, including plains and agricultural areas in Sindh, Punjab, and KPK; deserts in Baluchistan and Sindh; mountains in Gilgit and KPK; and rivers and coastal regions. Its eastern boundary, the "Redcliffe line," is shared with India, while its northern neighbor, China, is with it in close proximity. Through the "Gold Smith Line" and the "Durand Line," the western border is connected to Iran and Afghanistan, and the Arabian Sea creates a significant coastal belt to the south (Abiden & Bo., 2019).

Pakistan provides access to Russia and Europe and acts as a gateway to Central Asian nations via the Wakhan corridor in Afghanistan. In addition, it is strategically located to meet East Asia's energy needs at the crossroads of Asia and the Middle East. It also serves as a link to the larger Muslim world and a bridge between Asia and the oil-rich Gulf states (Zaidi, 2009). Pakistan has encountered difficulties owing to unresolved borders with neighboring nations and a turbulent relationship with India over territorial issues since its establishment, even with these geographical advantages. Its regional relationships and international prestige have also been negatively damaged by inadequate infrastructure and undeveloped democratic institutions. (Ahmad, 1979).

The Soviet Union (USSR) desired to increase its power in South Asia in order to acquire geographic favor. Pakistan's policy thinker believed that since the USSR had already developed strong connections with India in the area, Pakistan was already feeling uneasy and that this development could make matters worse. These turned into security and ideology, which led her to sign the SEATO and CENTO agreements with the United States and, presumably, join the American Camp. As previously said, religious ideology had a greater influence on siding with the United States than

the Soviet Union (Fair C. C., 2015).

### Indo-Pak war: The US politics and USSR Role

There was a bloody armed battle in 1965 between India and Pakistan, which was also known as the second Indo-Pak war or the second war on Kashmir. Pakistan prepared an attack on Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir in April 1965 in retaliation for India's invasion of the Ran of Kach region. The Tashkent conversation, which resulted in the famous Tashkent accord being signed in September 1965, marked the end of the war. The US and USSR mediated the agreement, which forced the competitors to hold bilateral talks in order to explore potential alternatives (McGarr, 2013). Pakistan, an ally of the United States' Western Bloc, wanted the United States to mediate a settlement. But the US's position as an envoy supporting UN resolutions and Pakistan's call for a vote gradually diminished. The Johnson administration's declassified documents, which The Economic Times released in August 2015, showed that Washington agreed with Delhi's objection to having elections in Kashmir. (Ali, 2022).

As the United States' responsibilities grew during the Vietnam War, the former Soviet Union assumed mediation duties between Pakistan and India. Over time, when the US realized how little it could do to help resolve the Kashmir dispute, its influence as a mediator waned. It appeared like the US was playing a strategic game when it took a dual stance, supporting both Pakistan and India. As long as the Soviet Union remained a major player in South Asia, Pakistan was a more valuable ally (Fair & Ganguly, 2015). On the other hand, India's growing proximity to China following the Sino-Indian War and its market potential also contributed. In international politics, realism emphasizes the importance of state interests, especially those related to power and security. In this situation, friendships and rivalries can change over time, and current allies may turn into future foes. Over the US's armament of India during the Sino-Indian War, a wedge developed between Pakistan and the United States. However, Pakistan's relations

with the US were reestablished during President Richard Nixon's new administration, partly because of Nixon's symbolic backing (Singh & Yadav).

Compared to the US, the USSR-facilitated Tashkent Declaration was more effective in promoting peace between India and Pakistan. It is globally significant and represents a major turning point in their bilateral relations. Interstate relations in Asia and even worldwide relations will be significantly shaped by the Tashkent Declaration's implementation and the degree to which the "spirit of Tashkent" influences Indo-Pakistani ties. The Soviet Union assumed responsibility for bringing about peace in the region despite their adversarial relationship, realizing its significance for both the US and the Soviet Union as superpowers (Ashraf, 2015).

# **Zia Era: The Second Phase of Alliance, and its Implications**

General Ayub Khan was succeeded by General Zia Ul Haq in terms of long-time bridling power, who ruled Pakistan as a dictator for more than a decade. During a pivotal phase of the Cold War, August 12, 1977, to August 17, 1988, was the period of his rule. During Zia's presidency, proxy hostilities between the USSR and the USA escalated. Pakistan's relationship with the United States first suffered as a result of the US's efforts to obstruct Pakistan's clandestine nuclear program. Zia responded by deciding in the middle of 1979 to remove Pakistan from the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The two nations' long-standing alliance was broken by this decision. But in order to stop communism from spreading and avoid any unintended consequences, the US felt that it was necessary to fortify its ties with Pakistan after the USSR invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. By placing troops in Afghanistan, the USSR, on the other hand, sought to spread communist doctrine throughout the region. (Dennis., 2001).

This time frame is referred to as the "USSR invasion" of Afghanistan, which the USA, NATO allies, and Pakistan actively opposed. While Afghan religious groups referred to it as the "Afghan Jihad," signifying their struggle

against the Communist Soviet soldiers, the US called it the Soviet Invasion. The Arabic word "jihad" denotes a religious conflict or battle for God (Basit, 2017).

General Zia-ul-Haq, the dictator of Pakistan, sought to impose Shariah, or the Islamic system, on the nation during the Afghan Jihad period. He was financially supported by the United States of America as well as other countries including Saudi Arabia, Germany, and NATO members, all of which were motivated by his extreme ideology and religious views. With the help of this money, religious organizations were created and trained in Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union. General Zia inflamed the fighters' ardour for religion by denouncing the Red Army as enemies of Islam and God. The United States of America (USA) used Islamist religious radicals and allied Muslim nations to strategically use the "Afghan Jihad" as a way to resist communist growth. These groups received financial assistance, armament support, and arms training. This cooperation was greatly aided by the Pakistani military and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which served as a go-between for the USA and the Afghan Mujahideen, setting up meetings and financial support (Ziring, 2010).

The Soviet presence in Afghanistan enhanced Pakistan's geostrategic significance, leading to a re-consolidation of the alliance with the United States during the second dictatorship. Since he had the interests, was receiving financial support, and was safeguarding security, General Haq fought alongside the United States against the Soviet Union. From the beginning of the Afghan War until 2021, the United States gave Pakistan military and civilian assistance worth more than \$32.5 billion, according to the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan. (Yusuf & Smith, 2015).

During the Afghanistan War, Pakistan and the United States formed a difficult and intricate cooperation. The Pakistani military followed American policies to target anti-American elements in Pakistan and carry out operations in Afghanistan, even though they worked closely with their American counterparts and endured heavy casualties. But Pakistan has been charged with engaging in a "double game" in South Asia

from a Western standpoint. They ignored militant organizations that constituted a direct threat to Western soldiers in Afghanistan in favor of targeting only specific militant groups. Western pundits have questioned why Pakistan did not completely support the US stance in light of this. As attitudes changed over time, the organizations that the US had previously trained turned into adversaries, prompting the US to use military force against them in the fight against terrorism (Rehman, Faiz, & Ahmad, 2019). Financial support played a role in Pakistan's alignment with the US, but security concerns and ideological differences—particularly the desire to drive the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan—were the main drivers of the alliance (Akhtar, 2011).

In response to the needs of Afghan refugees, a vast network of religious schools, or madrassas, was built during the conflict in Afghanistan. These madrassas disseminated the philosophy of Wahhabism and were heavily subsidized by Saudi Arabia, a Wahhabi Islamic nation. These madrassas' students took an active part in a number of jihads and conflicts in Afghanistan (Mahendrarajah, 2015). Pakistan's support for the Afghan Taliban and the country's fragile political climate contributed to their emergence and eventual expansion into Pakistan. According to reports, as early as 1998–1999, the Taliban may have influenced and spawned a comparable force in Pakistan's FATA region (COLE, 2009). A non-Pashtun government in Kabul alarmed Pakistan because they believed it would be pro-Indian and antagonistic to their country. Pakistan backed the Taliban up until the US invasion in October 2001 in an effort to stop this. Pakistan persisted in pressing for the inclusion of "moderate" Taliban in the new Kabul government even after US engagement. Pakistan has backed a number of Pashtun political heavyweights since the September 11, 2001 attacks and has acknowledged the Pashtun community's complaints about political marginalization and economic advancement. There are rumors that the establishment in Pakistan has begun to support the Taliban in Afghanistan. (GRARE, 2010).

The Soviet invasion and subsequent political

unrest resulted in almost three million Afghan refugees fleeing to Pakistan between 1979 and 1989. With the help of the US, the Taliban were driven out in 2001, bringing the total up to five million. Eighty-five percent of the Afghan refugees are Pashtuns; the remainder people are Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. There were still 1.7 million registered Afghan refugees living in Pakistan as of March 2009, despite the fact that many had subsequently returned to their country of origin. These people are mainly found in Pakistan's smaller and largest cities, FATA, KPK, Quetta, Karachi, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi (Kronenfeld, 2008).

#### Conclusion

The research provides insight of the US and Pakistan ties throughout the Cold War, particularly during Pakistan's military dictatorship under generals Ayub Khan and Ziaul-Haq. By examining the historical viewpoint, the study shows that Pakistan and the United States had tight ties since the USA had its interests and the US required Pakistan's cooperation to stop the spread of communism in South Asia during the early Ayub Khan administration. At first, the USA did not play a sufficient role in Kashmir, which was expected by Pakistan. However, for Pakistan, it envisaged a serious threat due to alignment in various ways. The U2 incident put Pakistan in an ambivalent situation with an overarching threat from the USSR. Additionally, Pakistan was an ally in a real sense throughout the Zia administration in the fight against the USSR in Afghanistan. Through Pakistan, religious organizations waging the USA's proxy war were trained by NATO and USA member nations.

Our research indicates that while US assistance was beneficial for Pakistan's security and economy, the gains were only felt for a brief period. Pakistan and the United States developed very tight ties, and as a consequence, our policies backed the American position under Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq. As a result of these close ties, Pakistan experienced several detrimental effects. Ayub's policy goals during the first era were to uphold security and settle the Kashmir problem so that Pakistan would join the Western bloc. Due to the United States' double-

dealing and lack of commitment to finding a solution to the Kashmir issue, both policy objectives were unsuccessful for Pakistan. After the USSR's defeat in Afghanistan during the Zia era, NATO, led by America, with Pakistan playing a major role, created the Taliban. However, Pakistan suffered serious repercussions from this decision, as thousands of Afghan citizens migrated to Pakistan. After the war, when friends turned into enemies, the Taliban, who had grown up in the USA nursery, began attacking Pakistani forces and engaging in terrorism-insight territory, which became Pakistan's biggest security challenge. Our comprehension of the significant events and long-lasting effects of that era on Pakistan's internal security later on is enhanced by the study's historical perspective on the US-Pakistan relationship during the period known as the Cold War.

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