

Pakistan Quest for security An Analysis of Internal and External Security

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ABSTRACT

Many times, people think of terrorism as a premeditated, harsh response to perceived injustices. Unfortunately, reports on the repercussions of terrorism frequently lack a clear understanding of the psychological and societal reasons that underlie these kinds of acts. Pakistan has been at the forefront of both the global counterterrorism effort and the experience of terrorism since the events of 9/11. This essay examines the security issues that Pakistan faces as a result of terrorism, which feeds a vicious cycle of radicalization. Pakistan is suffering greatly as a result of the aftermath of terrorism, which has affected its political, social, economic, and physical infrastructure. Terrorism has cost the nation dearly on the social, economic, and human fronts. Despite playing a significant role in the global campaign against terrorism, Pakistan has received unjust labels as a financier of global terrorism. Pakistani terrorism is a complicated problem shaped by many variables, with psychological aspects being one of the most important ones. Since 9/11, countries with a majority of Muslims, especially Pakistan, have felt emotionally threatened by the term "terrorism," frequently connecting it to crimes committed by extreme groups wrongly classified as Muslim.

KEYWORDS:

international relations, counterterrorism, terrorism, Pakistan, 9/11, radicalization, psychological causes, social impact, and economic impact.

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INTRODUCTION

Etymologically, the concept of security involves the absence of real or perceived threats, which may arise from internal disruptions, external sources, or economic disparities and inequalities (Paleri, 2022; "Security: The absence of actual or imagined dangers", 1989). To effectively address these threats, nations pursue various forms of power—economic, political, and military—and implement measures to either counter or mitigate the potential negative impacts of these threats. Additionally, nations strive to enhance their power continuously. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, famously remarked, "The weak and powerless in this imperfect world invite aggression from others." In response to perceived threats and potential challenges, strategies and tactics are developed to manage and prevent undesirable outcomes. Concurrently, efforts are made to foster a sense of security among the populace.

In the post-9/11 era, threats are increasingly defined by the internal divisions within societies rather than by the borders between states. Challenges such as terrorism, global disease, and environmental degradation have become transnational issues, reflecting a shift in world politics in the twenty-first century. Previously, national security was assessed by examining foreign frontiers, comparing the strengths of different states, and evaluating industrial capabilities. An adversary needed to mobilize large armies to be considered a threat, with dangers emerging gradually and visibly through weapon development, conscription, and military maneuvers. Larger states, possessing more at stake, were also more susceptible to deterrence (9/11 Commission Report).

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, underscored how developments in Southwest Asia could significantly impact the United States. The relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan, particularly in relation to Afghanistan, became crucial. The U.S. could not afford to let Pakistan fail or ignore the extremists in its tribal regions (*Pakistan's role in U.S. security strategy*, 2008; Polych, 2020). Prior to 9/11, the U.S. had minimal security ties with South Asian nations. It did not recognize the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and had imposed sanctions to compel its expulsion of Al-Qaeda. Relations with Pakistan were strained, with the U.S. unable to persuade Pakistan to curb its nuclear program or end its support for the Taliban. Additionally, Pakistan was criticized for exacerbating tensions with India in Kashmir in 1999, which nearly led to a nuclear conflict. The events of 9/11 transformed South Asia into a central front in the "war on terrorism" declared by President George W. Bush, reshaping U.S. relations with the region. This led to the deployment of American security forces to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and neighboring Central Asia for the first time. The subsequent strategic realignments with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India were intended to address terrorism, but each relationship



has encountered distinct challenges (Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2005).

President Musharraf's cooperation with the United States in counterterrorism has further strained internal tensions within Pakistan, as many of the country's regional priorities clash with Washington's objectives. This cooperation could be jeopardized by domestic political opposition or by a terrorist attack on U.S. interests originating from Pakistan. Similarly, U.S.-Indian relations have strengthened since 9/11, particularly in military exchanges. This trend is likely to persist, especially if economic relations between the private sectors grow. However, differences in strategic priorities between Washington and New Delhi could constrain their international partnership (Hodge, 2004; Shah, 2021). The U.S.-led "war on terrorism" has significantly impacted Pakistan, presenting even more complex challenges than those faced by Afghanistan. Since 9/11, U.S. strategy has shifted from containing Pakistan to re-engaging with it. Despite efforts to expand the alliance, it remains largely focused on counterterrorism. Pakistan's cooperation with the U.S. has increased since it joined what E.J. Dionne termed the "coalition of the not-so-willing" (Dionne, 2004). Pakistan is grappling with internal conflicts exacerbated by both internal and external forces, all pursuing their agendas with little regard for the future of the Pakistani people or the broader implications for South Asia and the world (Kushi, 2018).

To understand Pakistan's security challenges, they can be categorized into three main groups: external, domestic, and those that link both external and internal situations, such as terrorism. These challenges can further be divided into traditional and nontraditional security threats (Cheema, 2006). Externally, Pakistan faces significant challenges from the conflict in Afghanistan and the ongoing Kashmir dispute. The country has also been a victim of terrorism, which now poses a global threat. Domestically, Pakistan inherited a troubled economy plagued by corruption and mismanagement six years ago, and it was often labeled a failing state by some media. However, the situation has improved considerably. A senior analyst notes that "Weak governance and over-reliance on military solutions have contributed to political disorder and increased extremism." Al-Qaeda and its affiliates remain active in Pakistan, linking up with the Pakistani Taliban, which is a major source of insecurity. This connection has led to numerous suicide attacks and bombings across the country. On September 3, 2008, Pakistan experienced a direct military attack from foreign forces, marking the first such incident in 60 years, excluding conflicts with India (The Express Tribune, 2005). This was a significant shock to Pakistan's security and sovereignty (Malik, Ahmed, and Khan, 2017). Moreover, external pressures on Pakistan's security have intensified recently with the rise of ISIS, prompting the Pakistan Army to establish a separate unit to address this new threat (Khushi, 2004).

Statement of the problem

Pakistan faces numerous external and internal pressures, including economic dependency, political instability, law and order issues, inadequate social sector spending, and security challenges related to neighboring India and Afghanistan. Externally, some nations have struggled to accept Pakistan's existence. Both Afghanistan and India have harbored strong resentment towards Pakistan since its creation and have sought to undermine it from the outset. Additionally, the United States has been discontented with Pakistan's close ties with China. The U.S. has aimed to maintain influence over Pakistan to oversee China's activities, as well as those of Iran, Russia, Central Asian states, Afghanistan, and India. This study will examine the internal and external security threats that Pakistan has encountered since 9/11. The analysis will seek to identify potential solutions to address these security challenges.

Research Questions

1. What external challenges has Pakistan faced to its security since 9/11?
2. How has Pakistan responded to internal issues in emerge of 9/11?
3. What is Pakistan's strategic response to these challenges?

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the external security challenges faced by Pakistan since 9/11.
- To analyze the internal security challenges encountered by Pakistan in the post-9/11 period.
- To explore Pakistan's strategic responses to these challenges.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to address a gap in the existing literature by providing an original contribution to the field. While there is substantial literature on Pakistan's quest for security since 9/11, this thesis will contribute specifically to understanding both external and internal security dynamics faced by Pakistan in the post-9/11 context.

Review of Literature

The events of September 11, 2001, significantly altered global perspectives on terrorism, making Pakistan a key frontline state in combating this threat. There is a consensus that terrorism must be countered decisively due to its

potential to destabilize modern societies. However, addressing the root causes of extremism, which include political disputes, deprivation, and poverty, is also crucial (*Pakistan's role in the war on terror*, 2005).

Externally, Pakistan has confronted major challenges from two primary sources: the conflict in Afghanistan and the unresolved Kashmir dispute. Over the past two decades, terrorism has become a global menace, and Pakistan has been both a victim and a battleground. Domestically, Pakistan faced severe economic issues, corruption, and governance problems, leading some observers to label it a failing state. Despite these challenges, progress has been made. In the post-9/11 environment, the international community has renewed its support for Afghanistan's stabilization efforts. Pakistan has supported the Bonn process and the Afghan government under President Karzai, recognizing that a peaceful Afghanistan is crucial for regional stability and economic development. Pakistan has also provided crucial transit access to landlocked Afghanistan despite its own limited resources (*Pakistan's role in the war on terror*, 2005).

A senior analyst has noted that "Weak governance and an over-reliance on military solutions have contributed to political instability and rising extremism." Al-Qaeda and its affiliates continue to be active in Pakistan, contributing to ongoing security concerns (Malik, 2017). The connection between Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban represents a major source of insecurity for Pakistan, leading to numerous suicide attacks and bombings across the country. Pakistan has faced more than a dozen attacks targeting its military, security forces, government officials, and civilians. Notably, on September 3, 2008, Pakistan experienced a direct military assault from foreign armed forces, marking the first such incident in 60 years, aside from conflicts with India (*The Express Tribune*, 2005). This event was a severe blow to Pakistan's security and sovereignty (Malik et al., 2017).

The emergence of ISIS has further intensified external pressures on Pakistan's security in recent years. The threat posed by ISIS has been significant enough to compel the Pakistan Army to establish a specialized unit to address this challenge (Khushi, 2004). Two critical factors have significantly impacted Pakistan's security and political landscape. The missteps of the Pakistani government in 1971 led to a secessionist movement in East Pakistan, which ultimately resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. These factors continue to influence Pakistan's approach to maintaining a strong central government, robust defense, and seeking powerful international allies. The effectiveness of these measures is reflected in various indicators (M. A. Khan, 2005). Pakistan faces a complex internal conflict driven by both internal and external forces, each advancing their own agendas without regard for the long-term consequences for the Pakistani people or the broader South Asian region. Key pressures include economic dependency, political instability, law and order issues, inadequate social sector spending, and security challenges from India and Afghanistan.

Externally, Pakistan's primary challenges stem from the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the unresolved Kashmir dispute. Over the past two decades, terrorism has emerged as a significant global threat, affecting Pakistan as well. Domestically, Pakistan inherited a severely compromised economy, plagued by corruption and mismanagement. Although previously dismissed by some as a failing state, significant progress has been made.

External Forces

Since 9/11, Pakistan has become a central player in the global fight against terrorism (Woodward, 2002). Its strategic location provides crucial access to energy-rich Central Asia (Paul, 2004). Historically, Pakistan has maintained alliances with the U.S. and its Western allies, initially as a frontline state during the Cold War by joining SEATO and CENTO, and again as a key ally when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 (Jayaram and Deshpande, 2008; A. M. Khan, 1967). Stability in Afghanistan is vital for regional peace, requiring cooperation from regional stakeholders like Pakistan, India, and Iran, while also considering the roles of external forces.

Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan has been a significant external threat to Pakistan since the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have experienced numerous ups and downs since then (Cheema, 2006; Hussain and Latif, 2020). The post-9/11 era has added further complexity to these relations. Although both Pakistani and Afghan people have a mutual respect, the policies of their respective governments often diverge. Certain elements within the Afghan government, particularly those sympathetic to Pakistan's eastern neighbor, have contributed to tensions. Whether these actions are driven by external influences, personal biases, or vested interests remains uncertain.

Strategically, Afghanistan's internal issues and military weaknesses mean it cannot pose a direct threat to Pakistan. However, the potential spillover of Afghanistan's instability into Pakistan's provinces—such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), and Balochistan—remains a concern. Evidence suggests that these regions are encouraged and supported by external actors using Afghanistan as a base. Recent statements, such as those from Senator Chuck Hagel during his confirmation hearings for Secretary of Defense, indicate that India has played a role in creating problems for Pakistan from Afghanistan (Baqai and Wasi, 2021; "Senator Chuck Hagel's confirmation hearings: India's involvement in Afghanistan", 2013). The complexity of the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship is compounded by ongoing issues, including Taliban linkages, the Durand Line status, Indo-Afghan relations, Afghanistan's landlocked status, the presence of foreign forces, and Afghan leaders' critical remarks about Pakistan. The situation worsened following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, which further complicated an already chaotic environment.

Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan has become increasingly complex, largely due to the policies of the Afghan government. Several key issues have consistently impacted Pakistan-Afghanistan relations since the emergence of Pakistan as an independent nation. These issues include rumors about Taliban connections with Pakistan, the status of the Durand Line, Indo-Afghan relations, Afghanistan's landlocked status, the presence of foreign forces such as American and NATO troops, and critical statements by Afghan leaders against Pakistan. Each of these factors has periodically contributed to strained relations. The situation further deteriorated after the 9/11 attacks, which led to a U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and exacerbated the already chaotic conditions. For any resolution to be effective, both Afghan authorities and the international community must take more decisive actions. Afghanistan needs to address corruption, reduce its dependence on drug barons, and focus on economic development and law enforcement improvements. Pakistan, on the other hand, seeks a stable and peaceful Afghanistan due to its own strategic interests, including trade and energy concerns. The instability in Afghanistan has hindered Pakistan's access to Central Asia and affected stability in its tribal areas. The potential for further instability post-NATO/ISAF drawdown remains a significant concern. Pakistan's policy will continue to prioritize efforts to support a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, given its vital importance for regional stability (Cheema, 2006).

Afghanistan has historically resisted accepting Pakistan, partly due to claims over the Pashtun regions in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. There are forces within Pakistan that have sought to exert influence over Afghanistan through the Taliban, which has aggravated tensions with other Afghan ethnic groups. Despite not having direct conflicts with Central Asian states, Pakistan's support for the Taliban against Uzbek and Tajik groups has caused friction, as the Taliban's activities also impact these Central Asian nations (Kushi, 2018). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked the beginning of Afghanistan's role as a Cold War battleground. With the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, international attention shifted away, leading to neglect of Afghanistan's internal conflicts, which worsened over time. Pakistan bore significant consequences, including hosting millions of Afghan refugees and facing the rise of extremist groups like Al-Qaeda. In the post-9/11 context, the international community has committed to supporting Afghanistan's reconstruction. Despite its limited resources, Pakistan has contributed to this effort by providing unrestricted transit access to Afghanistan (*Pakistan's role in the war on terror*, 2005).

India

India's animosity towards Pakistan dates back to the latter's creation, with persistent efforts to undermine Pakistan's existence. Since partition, India and Pakistan have engaged in three major wars (1948, 1965, and 1971), two significant border clashes (Rann of Kutch in 1965 and Kargil in 1999), and several crises (Brasstacks in 1987, Kashmir in 1990, and the 2001-2002 troop confrontation), along with numerous skirmishes along the Line of Control. This history of conflict underscores deep-rooted suspicions and mutual distrust that continue to affect Indo-Pak relations even after more than six decades of independence. The Kashmir dispute remains a central issue in Indo-Pak relations, with ongoing violence and unrest in the region. The Indian government often attributes the unrest in Kashmir to Pakistani interference, dismissing it as an indigenous movement. The prolonged conflict has led to significant casualties and suffering among the Kashmiri people. Despite periodic dialogues aimed at normalization, incidents like the Mumbai attacks have disrupted the peace process. The resumption of dialogue is seen as a hopeful step towards improved relations, but consistent and meaningful engagement is essential for long-term stability (Cheema, 2006).

Terrorism and Extremism; Threats to Pakistan's Security

Terrorism and extremism represent significant security challenges for Pakistan. The term "terrorism" lacks a universally agreed-upon definition, leading to various interpretations based on specific national perspectives. For instance, American officials might view terrorism as violent acts against Americans by extremists, while for Indians, it could mean Pakistan-supported terrorism in Indian-administered Kashmir (IHK). Israelis might see it as Palestinian suicide attacks, and for Pakistanis, it could encompass a range of issues including violence by Indian security forces in Kashmir, anti-Muslim riots, and terrorist activities by both foreign and domestic actors ("Perspectives on terrorism and extremism in Pakistan", 2004). Pakistan has faced severe impacts from terrorism, with more than 6,700 military personnel killed, over 15,000 injured, and civilian casualties exceeding 37,000. The financial toll on Pakistan is estimated to be over \$78 billion. Despite its significant sacrifices, Pakistan is often unfairly blamed by the Afghan government and its U.S. allies for failures in Afghanistan, even in areas distant from its borders (Malik et al., 2017; Rashid, Jamil, and Minhas, 2023). This unjust blame overlooks the substantial support Pakistan has provided in the fight against terrorism and its own challenges.

The country has suffered extensively due to its involvement in the global war on terror. Since the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan has faced numerous incidents of terrorism, including bombings and suicide attacks, contributing to a deteriorating law and order situation. Economic instability, coupled with political and security challenges, has deterred both local and foreign investment. As a result, many Pakistanis have sought better opportunities abroad, leading to a significant brain drain estimated at six million people over the past three decades (Jaffar, 2008; Magsi et al., 2024). On the political front, weak leadership, power struggles, and conflicts between the executive and judiciary have impeded effective governance. This instability has exacerbated unemployment, inflation, and investment reluctance. Political bargaining and

power-sharing arrangements further strain the economy (Evans, 2002b; Murphy, Patel, and Singh, 2009). Additionally, Pakistan's internal security is compromised by armed Islamist insurgencies, with Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups remaining active within its borders (Blanton and Kegley, 2016; Hollen, 1980)(Hathway, 2010). The situation in tribal areas, such as FATA, is particularly dire, with poverty and deprivation fueling militancy (A. Ali, Lubna, and Khan, 2009).

Strategic Considerations for Pakistan

Pakistan's strategic location offers both benefits and challenges. Its geopolitical position places it in close proximity to major regional players: China to the north, India to the east, and Iran and Afghanistan to the west. This complex regional environment contributes to Pakistan's multifaceted security challenges (Akbar, 2011; S. M. Ali, 2020). The country faces severe security and economic difficulties, compounded by internal and external threats (Goraya, 2019; Gul, Munir, Shafiq, and Imran, 2022).

Internal Security Threats

Internal threats to Pakistan's security include internal rebellions driven by economic inequality, political instability, and ineffective state institutions. Poor economic conditions and reliance on foreign aid can make a country vulnerable to external pressures and demands that may undermine national interests. Political instability and terrorist activities by non-state actors further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult to address security issues effectively (Hassan, Shah, and Khan, 2016).

National Security: National security encompasses a nation's ability to protect itself from internal and external threats. According to the Farlex dictionary, it involves maintaining a nation-state's survival through economic, military, and diplomatic efforts. Berkowitz and Bock describe it as the capacity to safeguard internal values from external threats, while Lipmann emphasizes the importance of not sacrificing legitimate interests to avoid war and being able to defend them if necessary. Essential elements of national security include economic stability, democratic governance, a functional judicial system, educational equity, and a proactive approach to potential threats (Aziz, 1984).

Economic Security

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, had profound global repercussions, leading to significant economic losses and shifting international politics. In the aftermath, Pakistan was pressured by the U.S. to sever ties with the Taliban and take action against terrorism. Despite a positive initial response, Pakistan's economy has suffered due to the ongoing war on terror, which has negatively impacted various sectors including manufacturing and agriculture. Challenges such as power shortages, floods, and security issues have further hindered economic growth, underscoring the importance of economic security in the broader context of national security. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage made seven demands of Pakistan on September 13, 2001, including cutting off relations with the Taliban in the event that they continued to provide sanctuary to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Pakistan gave these demands a positive response. The Northwest region of Pakistan was the focus of the subsequent war on terror, which had severe economic effects that were made worse by power outages and flooding. This scenario highlights the significance of economic security, which is essential for a country's capacity to grow its economy in accordance with its own policies in the face of complex international trade and interdependencies.

Military and political parties, schism between civil societies

In Pakistan, the schism between civil society, the military, and political parties has become more pronounced since 9/11. The civil society has criticized the government and military for their inconsistent approach towards extremism, alleging that while Pakistan claimed alliance with the US in the War on Terror, it simultaneously supported Taliban elements. The military faced scrutiny for failing to detect Osama bin Laden near its own training facilities, while it in turn accused the US of violating Pakistan's sovereignty by not consulting with Pakistani authorities before the operation against bin Laden (Niazi, 2010; Crilly, 2011). Additionally, civil society has been critical of Pakistan's "Strategic Depth Policy," which seeks to exert control over Afghanistan (Gerring, 2007).

Terrorism and Religious militants

The term 'terrorism' has become increasingly ambiguous, particularly since the September 2001 attacks and the rise of al-Qaeda. The proliferation of terms like 'international terrorism' and 'global terrorism' has complicated the definition of terrorism, leading to varied interpretations. While not all militant religious groups in Pakistan are directly involved in terrorism, they contribute to a militant Islamic framework linked to such activities. The lack of consensus on a definition of terrorism has allowed states to apply the term broadly, sometimes using it as a pretext for repressive actions against guerrillas and freedom fighters. This definitional ambiguity has made it challenging to achieve international agreement on what constitutes terrorism (M. A. Khan, 2005; Yin, 2003).

The terrorist threat

In Pakistan, the threat of terrorist violence is a significant concern, often highlighted by media uproar following major attacks. Analysts debate whether terrorism represents an existential threat or has long-term implications, though the precise nature and impact remain speculative. Terrorism in Pakistan is fueled by two main groups: sectarian factions within Sunni and Shia communities, each targeting the other and advocating for distinct political or religious goals. This sectarian violence emerged following the Islamization of laws under President Zia ul-Haq (1977–88), which exacerbated communal tensions Berkowitz and Bock (2001)(Khan, 2005).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Pakistan has had to deal with issues including the continuous war with terrorist organizations and regional hostilities with nations like India. By investigating, how this external security problem affects Pakistan's internal security dynamics and shapes its broader strategic policies by looking at the case study of the border war between Pakistan and India. This method gives a clear picture of the connections between foreign and internal security concerns and gives a thorough grasp of Pakistan's security efforts. The framework for this case study aids in illuminating the intricate relationship between internal and external elements influencing Pakistan's security.

Research design

3.1.1 Case study

A systematic investigation's goal is to provide a basis for decision-making through research. It is carried out by organizations or by individuals to address particular issues or provide relevant information (Askari, 2008; Surbhi, 2018). The goals of the study and the resources at hand play a major role in the choice of research methodologies, whether they are quantitative or qualitative. Under time and budget constraints, quantitative research—which frequently makes use of instruments like tests and surveys—is especially well-suited. It includes measuring particular variables from big groups, and with the right staffing and resource allocation, it may produce meaningful data quite quickly. On the other hand, qualitative research usually takes more time and money but can yield deeper insights into an issue. It may involve document reviews, focus groups, or individual interviews. When there is little initial information available, this strategy is helpful.

According to Algozzine and Dawson (2006), research is a methodical examination that aims to provide a foundation for decision-making by examining a variety of potential elements influencing the topic under consideration.

Using a variety of sources of data, case studies are a unique kind of research that provide in-depth examination of modern phenomena in the context of real-world events (*Final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, n.d.; Yin, 2003). They are frequently employed in sectors where observational or experiential data is more common than numerical data, and they can cover a wide range of topics, including events, programs, institutions, and social groupings (Jayaram and Deshpande, 2008; Merriam, 2001). Case studies are helpful for delving into complicated problems and comprehending the related decision-making procedures. Though they have been criticized for being too objective and accurate, case studies are nonetheless a valuable research tool since they shed light on the dynamics of current trends and decision-making procedures (Gerring, 2007; Njolstead, 1990; Schramm, 1971; Yin, 2003). According to (Algozzine and Dawson, 2006), research is a methodical examination that aims to provide a foundation for decision-making by examining a variety of potential elements influencing the topic under consideration. This approach is especially applicable to political science and related fields where knowledge of dynamics and context is essential (Gerring, 2004).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Pakistan's strategic location and long-standing ties to the United States and other Western nations made it a front-runner in the war on terror following 9/11 (Woodward, 2002). Pakistan played a pivotal role as an ally in the struggle against communism both during the Cold War and during the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. Despite their importance, these relationships came at a heavy price, including continued war in Afghanistan and financial hardship for Pakistan (Farlex, n.d.; Paul, 2004). Threats from the inside and outside are included in the notion of security, as countries work to maintain their dominance in the face of uncertainty on a worldwide scale (Grare, 2007; ?). This study looks at Pakistan's defense strategies, security concerns, and opportunities for future regional collaboration. Since its founding, Pakistan has been subject to ongoing external challenges, particularly from Afghanistan and India, its neighbors. The country's changing internal circumstances and internal instability exacerbate its security issues. With three major wars, border conflicts, and crises since partition, India has been the main cause of these difficulties. One of the key issues that continues to fuel the long-standing hostility between the two countries is the Kashmir conflict. Deep-seated animosity and

divergent viewpoints on Kashmir continue to impede progress, even in the face of regional changes that may indicate the possibility of better ties (Hollen, 1980; Marshall, n.d.).

The Indian government has persistently opted for a military approach to suppress movements in Kashmir, dismissing the relevance of UN resolutions by arguing that local elections indicate the dispute's resolution. Besides Kashmir, issues such as Siachin, Sir Creek, and water disputes also strain Indo-Pak relations. The dialogue process, which began in 2004, was interrupted by the Mumbai attacks, causing delays in resuming constructive talks. Recent dialogues offer hope, but consistency remains crucial (Evans, 2002a).

The second major external threat to Pakistan stems from Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and subsequent developments, particularly after 9/11, have exacerbated tensions (Azam, 2013; Surbhi, 2018). Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been rocky, often influenced by Afghan internal politics and external pressures. Elements within the Afghan government have sometimes contributed to Pakistan's discomfort, whether due to their own biases or external influences. This situation is compounded by the ongoing instability in Afghanistan, which risks spilling over into Pakistan's vulnerable regions like Kyber Pakhtoonkhwa, FATA, and Balochistan (S. Ali and Khan, 2009). The persistent issues affecting Pak-Afghan relations include Taliban linkages with Pakistan, the Durand Line status, Indo-Afghan relations, Afghanistan's landlocked position, the presence of foreign forces, and derogatory statements from Afghan leaders. Post-9/11, the U.S. invasion further complicated Afghanistan's chaotic situation. Both Afghan and U.S. efforts have fallen short in addressing corruption, drug dependence, and instability (Askari, 2008). The Soviet invasion had previously led Pakistan to ally with the U.S., a relationship that later soured due to sanctions imposed by Washington and a strengthened strategic bond with India. The resulting instability and the influx of Afghan refugees exacerbated Pakistan's challenges (Murphy et al., 2009). In recent decades, the rise of Taliban factions and a substantial brain drain have added to Pakistan's woes. Political instability, characterized by weak civilian leadership and power struggles, hampers effective governance, leading to economic difficulties and security concerns. Post-9/11, terrorism and extremism have surged, marking a critical period of instability for Pakistan (Malik, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Pakistan, grappling with poverty and insecurity, has long relied on external support to address perceived existential threats from its neighbors. Founded on religious ideology, successive leaders have attempted to unite the country's diverse population and counter external challenges through Islamic principles. However, Pakistan faces numerous internal and external pressures, including economic dependency on major powers, political instability, religious extremism, and inadequate social sector spending. These issues contribute to a complex security landscape, where tensions with India and Afghanistan, along with strained relations with the U.S. and Iran, further exacerbate Pakistan's vulnerabilities. Externally, Pakistan's relationships with its neighbors are fraught with tension. Afghanistan and India, both displeased with Pakistan's creation, have persistently sought to undermine its stability. The U.S., wary of Pakistan's close ties with China, has aimed to exert influence in the region to monitor key players such as China, Iran, and India. Additionally, Iran's preference for India over Pakistan stems from the latter's alliance with Saudi Arabia and the persecution of Shia Muslims within Pakistan. Pakistan's policies, including its stance on Afghanistan, its nuclear status, and its involvement with extremist groups, have garnered global apprehension. For Pakistan to improve its internal and external security, it needs professional law enforcement, robust institutional development, and stable regional relationships, which would foster a more comprehensive understanding of the threats it faces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As neighboring countries, as this is crucial for their future security.
2. Persistent conflict between India and Pakistan could lead to a dire future for both nations.
3. India The global community should support Pakistan in becoming politically, economically, and strategically robust to ensure its stability and security.
4. Many terrorist activities in Pakistan are attributed to India and Afghanistan. Therefore, the international community should actively discourage these nations from engaging in such actions.
5. The persecution of Shias, allegedly influenced by Saudi Arabia, has strained relations between Iran and Pakistan. This has led to Iran forging stronger ties with India compared to Pakistan.
6. Both India and Pakistan need to address their internal extremism and foster peaceful relations should acknowledge and respect Pakistan's economic progress.
7. The international community and financial donors should urge Pakistani governments to ensure a corruption-free economy and implement accountability measures.
8. Donors and global actors should pressure Pakistani governments to increase investment in the social sector to tackle poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment.
9. A politically, economically, and strategically strong Pakistan is essential for global stability. Internal or external efforts to destabilize Pakistan could have severe consequences.

10. The world community should press India and Afghanistan to acknowledge Pakistan's sovereignty and cease policies that undermine its stability.
11. Pakistan's establishment should reassess and modify its policies regarding Afghanistan and Kashmir, focusing on diplomatic solutions rather than conflict.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Asma Begum: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. **Maria Umer:** Visualization, Investigation, Validation., Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

It is declare that all authors don't have any conflict of interest.. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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