

US Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Its Political Impacts on Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan has significant political impacts on Pakistan, given the country's close proximity. The study has highlighted the impacts like increased in terrorism and extremist activities in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, as the Taliban and other extremist groups have filled the vacuum left by the departure of US forces. Hence, this led to destabilization of the region, with unfavorable political effects on Pakistan. The study aims to highlight far-reaching political impacts on Pakistan of withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. The research is purely qualitative and secondary sources are used to collect data. The study's methodology is entirely qualitative, relying on secondary sources to collect data. The US withdrawal also presents an opportunity for Pakistan to play a more constructive role in the region, working with other nations to promote stability in the area and prevent the resurgence of extremism in Afghanistan. Achieving this would necessitate the Pakistani government taking a more proactive and collaborative approach towards its neighbor, as well as collaborating with other nations and international organizations to address the underlying drivers of conflict in the region. It is critical for the government to carefully consider its response to promote stability, enhance trade ties, and prevent the spread of extremist violence. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis and a coding method.

Keywords: *US withdrawal, Afghanistan, Political situation in Pakistan, Terrorism, stability, Political Impacts.*

INTRODUCTION

The cold war had triggered political turmoil across the globe, especially in the Asian and Middle eastern region. Afghanistan is one of the adversely affected countries during the eastern western bloc conflict during the cold war. Though the withdrawal of US troops ended the U.S. military's two-decade war in Afghanistan, it is still politically unstable and coping with economic insecurity. Pakistan is among the countries who wants peace and stability in the region owing to its role in Taliban peace talks. Pakistan strives to have results best suited for its own political stability and maintain good neighbor's relation

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with Afghanistan. The article studies the links that connects the impacts of USA withdrawal from Afghanistan on Pakistan's politics.

The study explores the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan has been a topic of much discussion and speculation in recent years. The impact of this withdrawal on the region, particularly Pakistan, has become a topic of interest for scholars and policymakers alike. This research article aims to examine the implications of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan on Pakistan, considering political factors. Involvement of Islamabad in the Afghanistan current situation after US withdrawal signifies the importance of its ripples effect directly on Pakistan (Hamidzada & Ponzio, 2019).

The author has analyzed the current situation in Afghanistan and the potential consequences of the US pullout, as well as the role that Pakistan may play in shaping the future of the region. The article also considers the historical relationship between the US and Pakistan and its influence on current developments. Through a comprehensive examination of the situation, this research article aims to shed light on the complex interplay of factors shaping the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan in the aftermath of the US withdrawal.

Research Objectives

The objective of the research has been summarized as:

1. To analyze the potential political impacts of the withdrawal on Pakistan.
2. To assess the potential for increased violence and instability in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US forces, and the impact it had on Pakistan.
3. To examine the role of Pakistan in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and its influence on the political landscape of the country.
4. To evaluate the impact of the withdrawal on Pakistan, including its effect on political stability.

Research Question

The main research question of this paper is:

1. What are the political impacts of US withdrawal from Afghanistan on Pakistan?

Research Significance

The research would contribute to the literature; it would add and contribute to the already existing literature. The research is important for researchers as it make a significant contribution to the field of research, the work can inspire and inform future research efforts, leading to a deeper understanding of the topic and potentially impacting how we approach the issues in practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

United States of America (USA) has been a key player in the geopolitical affairs of the world for decades. In recent times, the USA's decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan has had a significant impact on the region, particularly Pakistan. This literature review aims to explore the effects of the USA's withdrawal from Afghanistan on Pakistan. The process of literature review includes this work done by the researchers in the topic. Some of the work has already been done by researchers on the above topic. The work already done by different researchers are discussed here. The gaps left by the previous researchers are also tried to address in the present research.

The US rapid invasion of Afghanistan and swift exit had some indirect effects on the neighboring states. Due to its turbulent previous connection, Pakistan is the most impacted of these nations. Bordering nations have been attempting to relieve Afghanistan of its suffering in the most recent situation following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan had been attempting to help the US leave peacefully and aid the Taliban in seizing control of Kabul in order to accomplish this goal. Due to other regional and international forces' plans to influence Afghanistan's future, this is a difficult endeavour. The instability in Pakistan political scenario is directly linked with the situation and recent withdrawal of US from the region (Malik & Zhilong, 2018).

Kaura, (2018) talked about the process of peace and its importance and impact on Pakistan. Pakistan has been a key stake holder in maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan, by bringing the government, US and Taliban on one table and discussing the future prospects. The paper specifically discusses peace and stability in the region and does not cover the political and economic factors which are very important factors.

Shaffan et al., (2020) in their study discussed, the presence and impacts of military on Policies, how the US Defence Diplomacy is working in Afghanistan. The long-running war on terror and the shift in global dominance have had a significant impact on US foreign policy. It has dealt a blow to global political, economic, and diplomatic relations, leading to greater militarization and securitization of American foreign policy. Civil-military tensions have shifted as a result of post-9/11 variances in military-related policies to report these shifting security conditions. This study focuses on the military role of USA in Afghanistan and the consequences and their impacts.

In another study by Paliwal, (2019), the role of India is being explained as it is one of the emerging regional power and a good neighbor of Afghanistan, so closely examining the past relation between Pakistan and India in the light of current withdrawal and a cautious balance—explaining India's approach toward Afghanistan's peace process as it is one of the biggest Asian security concerns.

Afghanistan is known as the grave yard of the empires as many great empires tried to conquer it but failed in one way or the other. Recent example is of US who tried to control this land and in turn have to suffer heavy losses in terms of men and money. Thus,

US evacuated Afghanistan and withdrew all its soldiers leaving a power gap in Afghanistan. Pakistan is being on the crossroads as being an ally of US and neighbor of Afghanistan is suffering in terms of geo strategic positions and the wave of terrorism (Habib, 2018).

Though Pakistan has been a key stake holder in maintaining peace in Afghanistan, by bringing the government, US and Taliban to one table (Idrees et al., 2020). In this study we will analyze the impacts of this withdrawal on the political situation of Pakistan.

In South Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan are next-door neighbors. The Taliban mostly operates along Pakistan's and Afghanistan's shared border, having an impact on the politics of both nations. During the Afghan-Soviet war, Pakistan is accused of hosting enemies of Afghanistan (1979-1989). Afghanistan's internal divisions and fragmentation grew following the fall of the Soviet Union. In 1996, the Taliban became a significant political and military force. They received material and diplomatic help from Pakistan, and they also hosted Osama bin Laden, a participant in the 9/11 attack. Pakistan made the decision to assist the U.S. counterterrorism strategy, which resulted in an official declaration of war against the Taliban. A stable Afghanistan is what Pakistan wants to see, but if the U.S (Akhtar, 2008).

The paper has analyzed the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and its impacts on the Pak-Afghan relationship. The Afghanistan mystery deserves all the attention it can receive due to its amazing nature and enormous scope as a refuge for terrorists. The US rapid invasion of Afghanistan and swift exit had some indirect effects on other states. Due to its turbulent previous connection, Pakistan is the most impacted of these nations. Bordering nations have been attempting to relieve Afghanistan of its suffering in the most recent situation following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan had been attempting to help the US leave peacefully and aid the Taliban in seizing control of Kabul in order to accomplish this goal (Faheem et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature. The data has been collected from secondary sources including books, research article, websites and journals. These sources have been used together to provide a more comprehensive picture of the political impacts of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan on Pakistan. The author used secondary sources due to easy accessibility and time constraints.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The author has chosen qualitative research so themes have been extracted after thoroughly analyzing data for which thematic analysis has been used. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data in which the researcher identifies patterns or themes in the data. This approach is commonly used in social sciences, psychology, and other fields that rely on qualitative research methods. It involves analysis of the content of data,

identifying recurring patterns, themes, or concepts that emerge from the data. This typically involves a systematic process of coding, categorizing and identifying meaningful themes. It provides insight and understanding into the underlying themes or patterns that exist within the data, and to draw meaningful conclusions that can inform research or practice. (Terry et al., 2017)

The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has been a complex and highly debated issue that has been ongoing for many years. The withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan has significant political implications for Pakistan, given its proximity and shared border with Afghanistan. The most recent data and events related to the withdrawal can be analyzed and discussed below. The fourteen (14) main themes were drawn from the discussions, among which eight (08) are shown in the following figure, followed by detailed analysis.

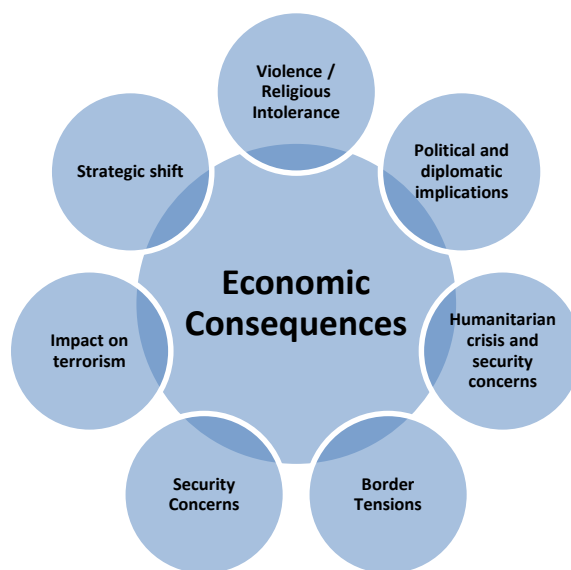


Figure 1

Evacuation of US citizens and Afghan allies

The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan officially began on May 1, 2021, with the goal of completing the process by September 11, 2021. However, due to various challenges and delays, the withdrawal was ultimately completed on August 30, 2021, ahead of schedule. One of the most significant aspects of the withdrawal was the evacuation of US citizens and Afghan allies from the country. This was a challenging and complex operation, as the Taliban rapidly took control of the country and the security situation deteriorated. According to data released by the US government, over 120,000 people were evacuated from Afghanistan in the weeks leading up to the completion of the withdrawal. This included over 5,500 US citizens and over 115,000 Afghan nationals.

Humanitarian crisis and security concerns

The withdrawal has also been accompanied by a humanitarian crisis and security concerns, as the Taliban has taken control of the country and many Afghans fear for their safety and security. There have been reports of human rights abuses and violence against civilians, particularly women and girls. The US and other countries have been working to provide humanitarian aid and support to those in need, while also addressing security concerns related to potential terrorist threats.

Political and diplomatic implications

The withdrawal has had significant political and diplomatic implications, both within the US and on Pakistan. The decision to withdraw has been a matter of concern for Indian military chief that their biggest worry is that disruptors should not really gain access to the void left by the U. S. and NATO's withdrawal. As a hasty and poorly executed plan, it was necessary to end the US's involvement in the conflict with the help of government of Pakistan. The Taliban's rapid takeover of the country has also raised questions about the effectiveness of the US's involvement in Afghanistan over the past two decades (Reuters & Miglani, 2021).

Violence / Religious Intolerance

The Afghan security forces have struggled to maintain control in the face of a resurgent Taliban, and there has been a significant increase in violence in the country since the US withdrawal. The security situation remains a major concern, and many Afghans fear that the country may descend into civil war.

Economic Consequences

The withdrawal of US forces has also had economic consequences, as the country has relied heavily on foreign aid and military spending. The end of the US military presence has led to a reduction in foreign aid and investment, which has had a negative impact on the Afghan economy. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan has been a complex and controversial issue, with both proponents and detractors of the decision. While the end of US military engagement in the country was seen as a step towards peace and stability, the security situation in Afghanistan remains a major concern and the economic impact of the withdrawal is yet to be fully realized.

Shift in Regional Dynamics:

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan has led to a shift in regional dynamics, with different countries vying for influence in the region. This has increased tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as both countries seek to maintain stability in the region and protect their interests.

Border Tensions

The US withdrawal has heightened security concerns for Pakistan, as the instability in Afghanistan is expected to spill over into Pakistan. This has resulted in increased militarization along the border between the two countries, and increased tensions between the Pakistan military and Afghan insurgent groups.

Strategic shift

The US withdrawal has also led to a strategic shift for Pakistan, as the country seeks to balance its relationships with both the US and China. This resulted in increased cooperation between Pakistan and China, as the two countries work together to secure their own interests in the region.

Impact on terrorism

The US withdrawal has had a mixed impact on terrorism in Pakistan. While the reduction in violence in Afghanistan may have reduced the number of cross-border attacks into Pakistan, it has also created a vacuum that has been filled by other terrorist groups operating in the region.

Economic implications

The US withdrawal has had a significant impact on the Pakistani economy, as the country has lost significant investment and aid from the US. This has resulted in a reduction in economic growth and increased poverty in Pakistan, which has had political implications for the government.

The US has been engaged in military operations in Afghanistan since 2001, following the September 11th terrorist attacks. The main objective was to defeat Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces that were operating in the country.

In conclusion, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan has had significant political impacts on Pakistan, affecting the country's security, regional dynamics, strategic partnerships, and economic stability. The Pakistani government will need to carefully navigate these challenges in order to maintain stability and protect its interests in the region.

Security Concerns

The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan has created an uncertain security situation in the region. Insurgencies in Pakistan's tribal regions bordering Afghanistan has increased. TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) is the security threat in ex-FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas). This group lacks any external rivalry but has internal ones. With the US leaving, this threat will increase, and Pakistan will likely need to increase its military presence in this region.

Another security concern is the Baluchistan separatist movements' external assistance via Afghanistan. Pakistan has expressed concerns about India's backing for insurgencies in its border regions. Although it is anticipated that with the US's withdrawal, this support would decline, the links and capability of these terrorist groups will continue to pose a threat to security forces. This could lead to an increase in violence and insurgency, which could spill over into Pakistan. The Pakistani government will need to be vigilant and proactive in ensuring the safety and security of its citizens (Naqvi, 2015).

Impact on Pakistan's Relationship with the US

The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan could strain Pakistan's relationship with the US. The US has long accused Pakistan of providing safe havens to the Taliban and other militant groups in the region. With the withdrawal of US forces, Pakistan may be seen as having greater influence over the Taliban, which could lead to further tension with the US.

Role in Afghan Peace Process

Pakistan has played a significant role in facilitating the peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government. With the withdrawal of US forces, Pakistan's role in the peace process may become even more critical. The Pakistani government will need to continue to engage with the Taliban and other stakeholders to ensure a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Refugee Crisis

The withdrawal of US forces could also result in a refugee crisis in Pakistan. Pakistan is already hosting over 1.4 million Afghan refugees, and the influx of additional refugees could strain the country's resources and infrastructure.

In conclusion, the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan has significant implications for the politics of Pakistan. The Pakistani government will need to navigate a complex security situation, maintain its relationship with the US, and continue to play a role in the Afghan peace process, manage the economic impact of the withdrawal, and address the potential refugee crisis.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In 2020, the US and the Taliban signed a peace agreement, which provided for the withdrawal of US and coalition forces from Afghanistan within 14 months. This was a key milestone in the peace process and the end of the US military engagement in the country. Overall, the data related to the withdrawal from Afghanistan highlights the complex and challenging nature of this issue.

While the evacuation of US citizens and Afghan allies was a significant accomplishment, the humanitarian crisis and security concerns that have followed the

Taliban's takeover of the country underscore the ongoing challenges in Afghanistan. The political and diplomatic implications of the withdrawal are likely to continue to be debated and analyzed in the months and years ahead.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan in August 2021 has had significant political impacts on Pakistan, its neighboring country. It has led to an increase in the presence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which has resulted in concerns in Pakistan about a potential spillover of violence and extremism into its own territory. Pakistan has a long history of dealing with militancy and terrorism, and the presence of the Taliban in Afghanistan could potentially provide a safe haven for militant groups to operate from as it shares a long and porous border with Afghanistan.

The most immediate impact of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan for Pakistan is the potential for increased security threats. The Taliban, which now controls most of Afghanistan, has close ties to several militant groups operating in Pakistan, such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). If the Taliban strengthens its grip on Afghanistan, it could embolden these groups and lead to increased attacks on Pakistani soil. Another major impact of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan for Pakistan is the potential for a large-scale refugee crisis. Pakistan is already hosting around 1.4 million Afghan refugees, and the UN estimates that up to 500,000 more could flee to Pakistan as a result of the current conflict. This could place a significant burden on Pakistan's resources and infrastructure.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan could also have economic implications for Pakistan. Afghanistan has historically been an important trade partner for Pakistan, and the instability in the country could disrupt trade and economic activity. Additionally, if the Taliban gains control over Afghanistan's mineral resources, Pakistan could potentially benefit from increased trade and investment. Finally, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan could have strategic implications for Pakistan's relations with other regional powers. Pakistan has historically had a complex relationship with both the US and India, and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan could impact both of these relationships. Additionally, China is becoming an increasingly important player in the region, and its interests in Afghanistan could intersect with Pakistan's.

The withdrawal has also had implications for the stability of the region. Pakistan has been trying to play a role in bringing peace to Afghanistan and has been involved in the peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government. The withdrawal of the US has created uncertainty about the future of the peace process, and Pakistan has expressed concerns about the potential for the situation to deteriorate further. Additionally, the withdrawal of the US has also had economic implications for Pakistan. Pakistan has been a key transit country for the US military and NATO supplies to Afghanistan, and the withdrawal has resulted in the loss of revenue from these supply routes.

Overall, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is likely to have significant and multifaceted impacts on Pakistan. The situation in Afghanistan is still unfolding, and it remains to be seen how these impacts will play out in the long term but in conclusion, the situation in Afghanistan remains uncertain, and the implications of the withdrawal will continue to be felt in the region for some time to come. The Pakistani government can play a crucial role in facilitating a peaceful and stable transition in Afghanistan. It can use its influence over the Taliban to encourage them to engage in peace talks with the Afghan government. Pakistan has a history of supporting the Taliban, and it can use this influence to encourage the group to negotiate a peace settlement that is acceptable to all parties. Pakistan shares a long border with Afghanistan, which makes it an important player in managing the movement of people and goods between the two countries.

The Pakistani government can work with the Afghan government to ensure that the border is secure and that there is no illegal movement of militants, weapons or drugs. The withdrawal of US forces is likely to lead to an increase in violence and instability in Afghanistan, which could lead to a humanitarian crisis. The Pakistani government can play a vital role in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees who may cross the border into Pakistan.

The Pakistani government can work with the Afghan government to promote economic cooperation between the two countries. Pakistan can help to develop infrastructure in Afghanistan, which can boost economic growth and create employment opportunities for the people of Afghanistan. The Pakistani government can work with the Afghan government and international partners to combat terrorism and prevent extremist groups from using Afghanistan as a safe haven. This can involve sharing intelligence, conducting joint operations and implementing measures to prevent the financing of terrorism.

Overall, the Pakistani government can play a crucial role in promoting peace, stability, and economic development in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal. However, this will require a concerted effort by the Pakistani government and its international partners to ensure that Afghanistan does not descend into chaos and violence.

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