

## PAK-US RELATIONS AND US-CHINA STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN SOUTH ASIA: A POLICY ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

The evolution of Pak-US relations and the intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China in South Asia represent defining features of contemporary geopolitics. Pakistan's foreign policy has historically oscillated between strategic alliances, security imperatives, and economic vulnerabilities. Over the decades, Islamabad's alignment with Washington was shaped by Cold War dynamics, the Afghan jihad, counterterrorism operations, and nuclear politics. In contrast, Pakistan's partnership with China evolved into a multi-dimensional strategic relationship grounded in defense cooperation, economic connectivity, and geopolitical alignment. The launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has further deepened Sino-Pak relations, placing Pakistan at the center of China's broader Belt and Road Initiative. As US-China rivalry intensifies, the Indo-Pacific Strategy has driven Washington closer to India, reshaping regional power balances. This triangular dynamic places Pakistan in a strategic dilemma: balancing ties with China while maintaining a functional relationship with the United States.

### INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Pak-US relations and the intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China in South Asia represent defining features of contemporary geopolitics. Pakistan's foreign policy has historically oscillated between strategic alliances, security imperatives, and economic vulnerabilities. Over the decades, Islamabad's alignment with Washington was shaped by Cold War dynamics, the Afghan jihad, counterterrorism operations, and nuclear politics.

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regional power balances. This triangular dynamic places Pakistan in a strategic dilemma: balancing ties with China while maintaining a functional relationship with the United States. This section expands on theme 1, analyzing how historical patterns, st

## Historical Evolution of Pak-US Relations

Strategic incentives and regional pressures interact to shape Pakistan's foreign policy behavior. Paragraph 1 examines specific dimensions of the triangular power competition, including economic dependencies, defense partnerships, regional security architectures, and domestic political considerations. The evolving regional order continues to push Pakistan toward adaptive strategies involving multi-vector diplomacy, crisis management, and geopolitical balancing. The pressures of great-power rivalry amplify the need for Pakistan to pursue sustainable economic reforms, recalibrate security priorities, and diversify foreign partnerships to preserve strategic autonomy. As analyzed in depth in segment 1, Pakistan's choices will continue to influence regional stability, economic connectivity, and the trajectory of US-China competition across South Asia.

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places Pakistan in a strategic dilemma: balancing ties with China while maintaining a functional relationship with the United States. This section expands on theme 2, analyzing how historical patterns, strategic incentives, and regional pressures interact to shape Pakistan's foreign policy behavior. Paragraph 2 examines specific dimensions of the triangular power competition, including economic dependencies, defense partnerships, regional security architectures, and domestic political considerations. The evolving regional order continues to push Pakistan toward adaptive strategies involving multi-vector diplomacy, crisis management, and geopolitical balancing. The pressures of great-power rivalry amplify the need for Pakistan to pursue sustainable economic reforms, recalibrate security priorities, and diversify foreign partnerships to preserve strategic autonomy. As analyzed in depth in segment 2, Pakistan's choices will continue to influence regional stability, economic connectivity, and the trajectory of US-China competition across South Asia.

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## **Policy Analysis and Recommendations**

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## Conclusion

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