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# OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND ON-GROUND IMPACT OF PAK-US COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS

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## Abstract

The article elucidates how effective operational systems of Pakistan and United States counterterrorism partnership function in their actual field operations. The study assesses how Pakistan and the United States developed their military operations through their strategic and diplomatic relationships. The analysis evaluates how effective Pak-US counterterrorism efforts have been in achieving their goals while reducing extremist threats and improving regional security. The analysis examines security cooperation between Pakistan and the United States through Security Cooperation Effectiveness Framework SCEF which shows that their partnership achieved operational success through three main areas but their ability to operate successfully ended because of trust issues and problems with national sovereignty and limitations on operations after 2021. The results demonstrate that operational success depends on specific conditions which require intelligence sharing based on trust between organizations and continuous institutional operations to achieve lasting counterterrorism results.

**Keywords:** Counterterrorism, Pak-US Relations, Operational Effectiveness, Intelligence Sharing, SCEF, Terrorism Mitigation

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## INTRODUCTION:

The United States and Pakistan have maintained their counterterrorism partnership since the early 2000s to establish both regional and global security systems. The strategic and political aspects of this partnership through research studies have received more scholarly attention than its operational efficiency and field results. The partnership needs research about how security cooperation produced actual security results because this research will determine its success evaluation and guide future counterterrorism partnerships. This article addresses this gap by assessing the operational dimensions of Pakistan and the United States counterterrorism efforts, focusing on intelligence sharing, joint and coordinated operations, military assistance, and capacity-building initiatives. The system operates through two main elements which cause the operational system performance to fluctuate according to trust levels and threat conditions and regional security changes.

The United States and Pakistan have maintained their counterterrorism partnership since the September 11 attacks which created an international security system that covers both regional and global territories. Pakistan became a crucial partner for United States military operations because it served as a primary combat zone in the War on Terror, which targeted Al-Qaeda and the Taliban and later Islamic State groups according to. The United States and Pakistan have encountered ongoing political disputes about their counterterrorism partnership despite their extensive joint activities and financial support and collaborative efforts. The research investigates the strategic and political elements which lead to the operational breakdowns of this partnership. The study establishes counterterrorism operations as an operational activity that requires analysis within international geopolitical frameworks and domestic political structures and established normative standards. It argues that counterterrorism cooperation is best understood as a politically mediated security relationship, where trust, perception, and strategic alignment are decisive variables.

The new millennia brought a major change in the way the world looks at global security. One of the main issues became counterterrorism and how to cooperate between countries to fight it (Akhtar, 2022). The very first major event that made governments worldwide rethink their security strategies and unite in the fight against transnational terrorism was the 9/11 attacks. Pakistan and United States (U.S.) relationship has remained one of the most significant yet tricky, among the post, 9/11 alliances, which has had far, reaching consequences (Adil & Khan, 2023). As a neighbor of Afghanistan, Pakistan became the front line in U.S., led War on Terror. The two countries worked together in the military, intelligence, and diplomatic fields to eliminate the terrorist networks especially Al, Qaeda and the Taliban which is reflected in Fair (2024). Despite that, their collaboration was full of obstacles, such as lack of trust, differences in strategic priorities, and accusations of Pakistan's double game wherein it supports the U.S. but still harbors militant groups (Hussain, 2023).

After the events of 9/11, relations between the U.S. and Pakistan evolved into a more strategic partnership. The US war in Afghanistan received a major shift when President Pervez Musharraf chose to back the US military operations there. The United States granted them the status of major non-NATO ally after they made that decision. The United States provided them extensive military and economic assistance because they chose to assist the US military. The agreement between both parties seemed advantageous at the beginning. The partnership showed signs of weakness from its initial moments. The two parties involved in the agreement failed to achieve their intended objectives. The US government actively worked to dismantle jihadist organizations during its global operations. Pakistan dedicated its security resources to deal with the ongoing conflicts with India and the situation in Afghanistan which borders its territory. People who observe this situation might speculate that problems would emerge because the two areas of focus differed so greatly. The Afghan situation particularly concerned them the most (Pitafi, 2023).

The relationship between the US and Pakistan has deteriorated through multiple severe incidents which have occurred throughout the years. The US conducted a raid to kill Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad without informing Pakistan about their operation. The Salala checkpoint attack just made everything worse because it resulted in further damage to US-Pakistani relations. The United States believes Pakistan has been hiding militants, which has damaged their relationship. Their partnership exists in a state of distrust because their relationship only benefits them when they need something from each other. The strategic thinking process of both partners began to change after 2013, but this process proved to be extremely difficult. The US focused more on India through its Indo-Pacific plan, which resulted in a partial shift away from other Asian countries. Pakistan developed closer ties with China to obtain security and economic assistance, which resulted in stronger relations between the two countries. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and Taliban takeover created more obstacles for their counterterrorism efforts. Pakistan faces multiple challenges which include handling regional conflicts and internal political problems. The US is currently developing a new global plan to combat terrorism. Current cooperation between both parties remains uncertain because it exists in a state of extreme danger. The next steps people will take remain unclear because the situation has become increasingly difficult to understand (Kasi et al., 2022).

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

The United States and Pakistan have received numerous negative evaluations of their joint terrorist combat operations throughout their partnership. The partnership has not achieved its intended outcomes even after two decades of working together. The team achieved several victories when they successfully eliminated crucial terrorists who posed a major threat to national security. The terrorist groups keep continuing their operations in the world. The region experiences terrorist attacks which make me question the value of the initial achievements. The short-term stuff might hold up a bit, but the long-term goals, they look shaky now. Mistrust has always been there between the two countries, sort of defining their relationship. It gets in the way of real teamwork. Both sides keep pointing fingers, saying the other is being dishonest or playing both sides. That kind of thing just builds up and messes with everything. While Pakistan has been accused of supporting certain extremist groups, America has been blamed for acting unilaterally, including the use of drone strikes, with civilian casualties and anti, American sentiment resulting. Counterterrorism is now one of the most pressing security concerns for any country, but especially for places like Pakistan which have been at the absolute centre of global & regional security worries for years now. The aftermath of 9/11 marked a new era for relations between Pakistan & the United States, A strategic partnership formed in the wake of that disaster, with a primary focus on dismantling terrorist networks & on wiping out the roots of extremist threats. However, as a result of the way tech has evolved internet communication, encryption, drones & AI the playing field has changed dramatically. The article radicalisation now happens online. Radicalisation, extremist financing and non-state actors using drones make it essential, for Pakistan and the US to step up their counterterrorism work. Pakistan and the US must develop a partnership.

#### **Research Questions:**

Q1: What have been the most important milestones and accomplishments in Pak-US counterterror collaboration since 2001?

Q2: What are the main barriers and challenges that have confronted the partnership, and in what ways have these been overcome?

### LITERATURE REVIEW:

The two nations have experienced multiple challenges to their diplomatic ties which began with the American military operation that killed Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad without notifying Pakistani authorities and continued with the Salala checkpoint attack and US allegations that Pakistan protects militant groups. This shows that the relationship is transactional. The time after 2013 brought even more difficulties as both countries reconsidered their strategic partnerships. Gradually, the U.S. under the Indo, Pacific strategy moved its focus towards India, and Pakistan increased its strategic and economic relations with China. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and the Taliban's return to power were additional factors that weakened the Pak, U.S. counterterrorism collaboration. While Pakistan is dealing with a complicated set of regional and domestic issues, and the U.S. is adjusting its global counterterrorism strategy, their next cooperation is at stake (Kasi et al., 2022).

The existing body of work provides detailed accounts of aid flows and the operational timelines that define the history of the region. However, it reveals a dearth of comprehensive evaluations tracking over time the quantifiable effects of collaborative actions on financing networks for terrorism and radicalization drivers, especially after 2021. A minor number of works consider micro, level data from deradicalization programs alongside economic models of aid diversion, thus scant attention is given to the manner in which U.S. sanctions and suspensions might have, in a roundabout way, facilitated Pakistan's shift towards China, Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) dependencies. Besides, there are numerous normative gaps wherein the silenced voices of Pakistani civil society and Afghan stakeholders reveal a bias towards the U.S. narrative, with a negligible focus on gender, sensitive analyses explaining how counterterrorism measures worsen the situation of women in border regions. Mixed methods, including AI, driven sentiment analysis of open, source intelligence, could be employed in future studies to fill these voids in evidence. Although the literature vividly captures the thematic tensions, it fails to sufficiently highlight the intersectional aspects, for instance, the linkage between the grievances of ethnic Pashtun and the intensified recruitment of TTP via U.S., Pakistan operations, with very few ethnographic studies being in their infancy in this regard. Moreover, the disparities are present in the comparative analyses that scarcely compare Pak, U.S. cooperation with U.S., India Quad dynamics, thereby neglecting the ways in which the tolerance of anti, India militants leads to a decrease in trilateral trust. On the methodological front, heavy dependence on data sourced from the U.S. facilitates an unbalanced portrayal of events; while the lack of access to Pakistani archives creates a one, sided account of history.

According to Irfan and Riaz, The economic pattern of Pakistan has been greatly influenced by the dynamics of Pak-US relations from 2008 to 2022. The complex relationship between foreign relations and economic stability is exemplified by this period, which was marked by changes in geopolitics, strategic partnerships, and mutual dependence. This relationship was particularly affected by international efforts to combat terrorism, the war in Afghanistan, and the economic crisis in Pakistan. The economic crisis in Pakistan was initially alleviated by major events, such as economic assistance in military partnerships and US aid packages in accordance with the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act. The economic weaknesses of Pakistan became evident through the alteration of US support which occurred after NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan. The economic links between countries proved to be unstable because of trade imbalances and foreign direct investment (FDI) restrictions and the particular conditions attached to foreign aid. The United States imposed stricter aid conditions and economic sanctions against Pakistan because it suspected Pakistan of supporting non-state groups which resulted in economic instability for the country. The paper investigates how Pak-US relations from that period created economic effects which affected Pakistan's economic independence through its study of assistance dependency and trade imbalances and policy changes. The report demonstrates that Pakistan needs to develop a complete foreign policy framework which reduces its economic dependency on foreign nations while it benefits from its strategic position.

The article by Sulaiman et al. (2023) presents the key concerns that have defined the Pakistan-US relationship. It illustrates how the Cold War, the emerging entente cordiale in the war between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, and the post-9/11 strategic partnership founded on counter-terrorism have all come together. The history also illustrates the challenges that have hindered cooperation between the United States and Pakistan, particularly those associated with the nuclear program of Pakistan, the relationship between Pakistan and India, and Pakistan-China ties. These factors, which have fluctuated over the years, show that in order to advance their own interests in times of insecurity, both countries have had to adjust and move in this way. Finally, this summary provides a clear insight into how regional, geopolitical, and security factors have defined the bilateral relationship.

According to Akhtar (2012), the economic relations between Pakistan and the United States are founded on trade, aid, and investment, and there are instances of cooperation and disagreement. The US-Pakistan relationship is a source of military and economic assistance to Pakistan, especially during the major global wars, such as the Cold War and the War on Terror. The export of textiles and clothing by Pakistan and the

import of oil and gas, technology, agriculture, and energy investment in Pakistan by the US define the trade between the two countries.

According to McCartney's (2011) research, the weak economy of Pakistan is due to its dependency on foreign funding. Other reasons for the weak economy of Pakistan are its increased dependency on remittances from overseas workers and funding from its trading partners. The United States, multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and IMF, and regional partners have all contributed in large measures to the economy of Pakistan, especially in times of crisis. The major reasons behind this are structural issues such as an albatross of foreign liabilities, a weakly diversified export base due to its textile industry, and, worst of all, a fiscal imbalance.

According to Hussain (2004), America has become a strategic ally of Pakistan and vice in this regard as a result of its income supporting its economy over time. Due to geopolitical concerns, the United States has provided Pakistan with substantial foreign aid in the form of military assistance, funds for economic growth, and through multilateral institutions like the World Bank and Interpol. The Cold War, the Afghan-Soviet War, and the post-9/11 War on Terror, in which Pakistan became a front-line ally, are just a few of the major world power conflicts in which this relationship has always been evident. In addition, Pakistan has always had a financial issue that may be resolved with US assistance for infrastructure, health, and education, among other areas.

According to Waheed's (2017) research, the social tie between Pakistan and the United States has been shaped by economic dependency, trade, and cooperation. In fact, the United States has provided Pakistan with billions of dollars in assistance over the years in recognition of its support in several key moments in world politics, including the Cold War, the Afghan-Soviet War, and the post-9/11 period. Assistance and trade have been the ties that bind; the basis of this relationship has been the export of Pakistani clothing and textiles to the United States.

The first category of relationships, according to Jabeen et al. (2010), illustrates the economic linkages between Pakistan and the United States, which bring both opportunities and risks. The United States imports equipment, chemicals, and agricultural items from Pakistan, which is the country's 24<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner. Textiles, clothing, and agricultural products are the main exports from the country to the United States. However, there are still some asymmetries present in this flourishing trade relationship, where the Pakistani government is seeking diversification of exports, and the United States is seeking better access and protection for pharmaceutical products. Apart from forums and various trilateral discussions like the US, Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, or TIFA, bilateral exchanges also play a role in promoting international trade.

Economic imbalances characterized by trade deficits and dependence have been the main issue in Pakistan, US relations (Kronstadt, 2012). For the most part, Pakistan exports textiles and agricultural goods to the United States but imports costly machinery, technology, and chemicals from there, thus leading to a trade imbalance in favor of the United States. Furthermore, Pakistan's dependence on loans and financial aid from the United States has also skewed the economic relationship and the latter's fiscal stability has become thus vulnerable. Pakistan's limited range of exports and structural economic problems are factors that hinder the country from fully exploiting the market potential in the U. S. economy.

According to Khan et al. (2024), the US is the exporter and Pakistan is the importer in their unequal economic exchange, which has resulted in several trade imbalances. The majority of Pakistan's exports to the United States are textiles and agricultural goods, while it imports expensive machinery, technology, chemicals, and other items. As a result, Pakistan has a trade deficit and is heavily reliant on American help and loans. Problems with export diversification and structural economic challenges that prevent Pakistan from taking full advantage of all opportunities in the US market have further exacerbated this disparity.

Saez (2012) paper determine how this partnership affects the socio-economic development of the region by analyzing the goals of the south Asian partnership in light of U.S current strategic, economic and security interests. India is at the core of the US regional policy as it has been recognized as the emerging strategic partner in the steps like the Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain China's momentum. Over the years, the main pillars of the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the United States are counter-terrorism cooperation and security but trade and investment, regional security are also domains of cooperation.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:**

This study applies the Security Cooperation Effectiveness Framework (SCEF) to operational counterterrorism outcomes. Within this framework, operational effectiveness is understood as the extent to which cooperation produces measurable security gains at the tactical and operational levels. SCEF conceptualizes operational success as dependent on the interaction between material inputs (aid, technology, training), processes (coordination, intelligence sharing), and mediating variables particularly trust and sovereignty sensitivity.

### **Strategic Cooperation Theory**

The theory of Strategic Cooperation explains why countries work together to address critical security matters during periods of intense distrust. The theory establishes its framework from instrumental rationality which states that countries need to defend themselves against shared security dangers while keeping their national

sovereignty intact (Lake, 2009; Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). The US-Pakistani relationship shows that their joint anti-terrorism work after the 9/11 attacks created security risks because both countries considered transnational terrorism their most dangerous security challenge. Pakistan wanted to protect its government while receiving financial support and international recognition. The USA required access to the region to obtain intelligence and military support from Pakistan (Rashid, 2012). The theory of Strategic Cooperation explains why partnerships between two parties with different interests cannot work because this leads to a breakdown in their relationship which results in unstable partnerships. The theory, therefore, provides the Strategic Alignment (S) part of the SCEF model. It points out that cooperation reaches its maximum when threat perceptions are the same and decreases when strategic priorities are different.

#### **Institutionalism and Capacity Coordination**

According to institutionalist theory, formal institutions, rules, and coordination mechanisms are instrumental for cooperation to endure when there is uncertainty in the environment (Keohane, 1984). A case of counterterrorism partnerships in which institutional depth decides whether the cooperation can be extended beyond mere ad hoc interactions and would result in sustained operational effectiveness is Pak-US cooperation. This partnership was based on a joint military framework, intelligence, sharing platform, aid, conditionality mechanism and training program. The periods of successful collaboration, especially between 2014 and 2018, coincided with strong institutional synchronizations between Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies on the one hand and U. S. counterterrorism command on the other (Jones, 2020). This conceptual model provides the theoretical basis for the Capacity (C) and Engagement (E) aspects of the SCEF framework. It accounts for the fact that operational results deteriorated when U. S. ISR assistance was reduced, aid was suspended, and there was diplomatic disengagement after 2018, even though Pakistan was still carrying out counterterrorism activities. Therefore, institutionalism helps to understand that cooperation entails more than mere political will; it is about institutional compatibility and continuity.

#### **Constructivism: Trust, Identity, and Normative Alignment**

Constructivist theory offers the greatest explanatory power for this research through its focus on identity, perception, norms, and trust as the main mechanisms through which cooperation is established (Wendt, 1999). The main difference between constructivism and other rationalist theories is that the former explains how cooperation can be stable in situations where it is costly or why it can break down in cases of shared interests. Evidence from the study largely confirms constructivist hypotheses. Trust, which was the most regularly identified theme, is indicative that the lack of alignment in terms of norms rather than the lack of capabilities is what makes cooperation difficult to sustain. Incidents such as the Abbottabad operation, drone strikes carried out by one party only, and sharing of intelligence in a selective manner have strengthened the Pakistani viewpoint of sovereignty being violated and of their being strategically disrespected, which has resulted in a long, standing trust deficit (Yousaf, 2021; Wagner, 2022). Constructivism accounts for the Trust (F) element of the SCEF model and illustrates how trust plays the role of either a facilitator or a barrier to the other elements. Even if there is great compatibility in terms of strategy and there are abundant resources, without convergence in terms of norms and mutual recognition durable cooperation cannot be achieved.

#### **Foreign Policy Analysis and Domestic Constraints**

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) provides an important and different domestic level perspective to explain how perceptions of elites, bureaucratic politics, public opinion, and the relationship between the military and civilian authorities influence decisions on counterterrorism (Hudson, 2014). In Pakistan, the need for domestic legitimacy, the hostile public reaction against the U.S., and the power struggle between the military and civilian authorities limited the policymakers' room for manoeuvre to align U.S. counterterrorism policies fully. On the other hand, the U.S. policy against terrorism was influenced by pressure from Congress, election cycles, and changing priorities at the global level, especially the shift in focus to great, power competition with China. These domestic limitations make it understandable that cooperation was often transactional, temporary, and conditional rather than strategic and institutionalized. The Security Cooperation and Engagement Framework (SCEF) model uses Foreign Policy Analysis to demonstrate how political conditions determine counterterrorism cooperation which requires both domestic legitimacy and successful military operations. The research used specific methods to study the strategic and political elements of Pak-USA counterterrorism cooperation.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The research methodology will meet all requirements of the research objectives and research questions and the SCEF Model which will be used as a theoretical framework for the study. The research will use a qualitative dominant mixed-methods research approach because counterterrorism cooperation involves complex relationships between different entities.

#### **Research Design**

The research uses qualitative research philosophy as its main framework to include some practical elements of pragmatism. The research uses interpretivism because it studies how people perceive trust and political stories about Pak-US cooperation while examining strategic intent in detail instead of using quantitative data

about cooperation results. Researchers must use qualitative methods to explore how people interpret counterterrorism cooperation through their personal identities and their understanding of existing social norms.

### **Counterterrorism Trend Analysis**

The analysis of terrorist incident data along with radicalization data and safe haven activity data, enables researchers to examine how security has evolved over time. The research uses this method to study security changes which occurred in Afghanistan after the US military withdrew in 2021. The research tests its theoretical framework through this method by testing hypotheses which include H1: Strategic self, interest influences cooperation levels, which helps the research gather data for its testing of predictions and prediction refutation.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:**

The research results demonstrate that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and United States of America achieved successful counter-terrorism operations but faced risks which endangered their accomplishments. The highest operational effectiveness occurred when intelligence sharing reached deep levels and trust between parties remained strong and active coordination took place between different groups business partners in the organization. The ground achievements rapidly diminished because sovereignty conflicts and trust breakdowns and regional disturbances began to impact operations. The article supports the view that counterterrorism effectiveness depends on relationship dynamics between people and organizations in addition to forceful actions and technological capabilities.

### **Strategic Interests and Threat Perceptions**

Present study looked at the qualitative analysis. Study saw interests as a theme. The analysis showed mentions of threat priority concerns, about security and political calculations. The article presents that the thematic analysis data show that Pakistan and the United States both think counterterrorism cooperation is needed. The article presents that the threat rankings of Pakistan and the United States do not match. Selected martial described that Pakistan sees counterterrorism as a matter of security and border control. Selected martial also described that Pakistan sees the threat, from Tehrik, i, Taliban Pakistan (TTP). On the other hand, the United States places the cooperation within its overall global counterterrorism strategy, with a special focus on Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and transnational threats.

### **Discussion**

The findings here support very strongly the core ideas of the realist theory that the states only behave in terms of their self, interests and how they perceive a threat against them. It is true that the Arabs and the Israelis united for a short, term cooperation because they had a common enemy. However, the differences in their interests made their strategic harmony unstable. As realism theory also states, the disparity in power gave the US the upper hand in dragging the cooperation initiatives to their liking, which consequently resulted in tensions if the Pakistani security concerns were not given due priority. The findings here illustrate that only strategic convergence can be sufficient to lead to sustained cooperation. If there is no constant adjustment of the perception of threats, then cooperation will be only of a transactional and episodic kind and not be institutionalized.

### **Institutional Mechanisms**

Institutional mechanisms like counterterrorism dialogues, military assistance frameworks, and joint coordination forums were considered as facilitators but only effective intermittently. Qualitative coding also showed a moderate density of token occurrence around institutional processes where thematic analyses pointed out that the authorities have been complying with the procedures but the enforcement capacity remains weak.

Key findings indicate that:

- Formal dialogues helped stabilize diplomatic relations during crisis periods.
- Aid conditionality generated political resentment and perceptions of coercion.
- Bureaucratic fragmentation impeded implementation on the Pakistani side.

### **Discussion**

From a liberal institutionalist perspective, institutions facilitate cooperation by reducing uncertainty among states. However, this finding suggests that rather than being a means to enhance cooperation, institutions in the Pak, US case facilitate conflict management. The efficacy of institutions in conflict management was hindered by a lack of binding commitments and mutual accountability. The nature of the institution itself was insufficient to bridge political mistrust, thus supporting the SCEF's assertion that institutions facilitate cooperation only in the presence of trust and strategic congruence.

### **Normative Alignment and Trust Deficit**

Trust emerged as the most frequently coded theme, confirming its central role in shaping cooperation outcomes. Thematic analyses repeatedly cited the Abbottabad raid, unilateral drone strikes, and selective intelligence sharing as sources of enduring mistrust.

The article presents that the gap:

- Pakistan views U.S. actions as sovereignty violations.

- The U.S. questions Pakistan's commitment against certain militant groups.

#### **Discussion**

The results clearly support constructivist theory which emphasizes the importance of identity and perception and normative beliefs. The two parties diminished their information exchange and their operational depth because trust between them had broken down their partnership and turned their relationship into suspicion. The SCEF model establishes trust as a mediating factor which links strategic interests with institutional performance. The lack of trust made cooperation systems useless despite the existence of abundant resources. The times of most intense military confrontations represented the periods when political goodwill reached its lowest point.

#### **Technological and Operational Interdependence**

Technological cooperation in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) was especially highlighted as a key factor in counterterrorism success. The figures demonstrate a link between the times when tech cooperation was ramped up and the intervals with fewer major terrorist attacks. On the other hand, the data after 2021 indicate that there has been a drastic decrease in ISR access and operational coordination especially after the U.S. pullout of Afghanistan.

#### **Discussion**

These findings are consistent with the complex interdependence theory that stresses cooperation in several domains other than the traditional use of military power. By technological interdependence, Pakistan was able to enhance its counterterrorism capacity but at the same time, it also became dependent in a way that created vulnerabilities.

Reduction in the U.S. presence led to a decrease in Pakistan situational awareness which in turn points out the weakness of a cooperation that is deep in technology but shallow in politics. SCEF shows that such results may be expected when interdependence is not supported by institutional resilience and normative trust.

#### **Integrated Discussion Through the SCEF Lens**

The combined findings validate the Security Cooperation Effectiveness Framework. Counterterrorism cooperation proved most effective when:

1. Strategic interests were aligned (realism),
2. Institutions functioned coherently (liberalism),
3. Normative trust was present (constructivism),
4. Technological interdependence was sustained (complex interdependence).

Breakdowns in any one dimension weakened overall effectiveness, demonstrating the interactive and systemic nature of security cooperation.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This article claims that while Pakistan and US counterterrorism relations were able to achieve several operational victories, these victories were never enough to obtain institutionalized gains. Although wins were recorded in several intelligence operations, leaders were decapitated, but dependency, mistrust, and geopolitical changes remained. The research provides a testament to the theoretical capabilities of the counterterrorism relations. According to the framework, trust, as well as continuity, are important for the operational impact of intervention. Also, from the research, it is evident that the partnership between Pakistan and the United States in terms of counterterrorism collaboration has been successful in attaining tactical operations that are quantifiable, especially in instances where the two entities have managed strategic synergy. The successes of the partnership include the dismantling of global terror networks, the elimination of senior leaders associated with Al Qaeda, improved border security, and effective led operations. However, these successes have over time presented challenges, particularly because the partnership has always failed to attain strategic sustainability. The relationship has always had challenges in relating transient operational successes to strategic stability.

The main takeaway from this study is that trust is the key intermediary variable in the Pakistan, US counterterrorism collaboration. Trust deteriorates when one party takes unilateral actions, infringes on the other's sovereignty, or has different perceptions of the threat, leading to a reduction in intelligence sharing, weakening of institutional frameworks, and decline in political support. On the other hand, if dialogues, transparency, and acknowledgment of each other's security concerns bring about a partial restoration of trust, the cooperative endeavors comprising.

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