**Reinventing US-Pakistan Relations**

[Hassan Khan](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/hassan-khan/)

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The United States has become the most talked-about country within Pakistani political and diplomatic circles in recent months not because of flourishing ties but because of the nature of the allegations made by former prime minister Imran Khan. He’s adamant that Washington played a “primary role” in toppling his government via outwardly legal means.

Whether his stance has weightage or not, it has stirred a never-ending debate even in the local communities. His party has gained unprecedented support amongst the masses and the impression given by state institutions is pointing towards an impending showdown owing to an upshot in polarisation. This itself is an indication that the country is in a situation last witnessed in the 1970s. It’s simply an ominous sign that no political or state-level stakeholder can choose to look away from. Going by the pulse on the streets and social media platforms, the seething anger is unwelcoming to the sociopolitical fabric of society.

As for US-Pakistan relations, they have remained transactional for a better part of their history with the security angle being the key factor. As someone who strongly advocates for multifaceted ties, I specifically wish for a major reset in bilateral ties based on pragmatically idealistic diplomacy that can repair them on the grounds of mutual respect and economic cohesion (especially when Washington is Islamabad’s largest trade partner in the West). Frankly speaking, the cold nature of the relations under President Biden’s Administration has rather increased uncertainty and made a vast number of Pakistanis tilt towards conspiracy theories. Of course, Khan’s bravado nature in light of the Afghan quagmire is one angle no one can ignore but simultaneously, Washington itself was disinterested in pursuing better ties or more specifically, keep them “stable” which the Trump Administration chose to do so despite the initial hiccups.

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Former Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in my last interaction, made serious allegations against staffers from the Obama Administration playing a key role in pushing Islamabad aside since Biden took over. While this is something debatable, coming from someone who remained Pakistan’s top diplomat should not be taken lightly.

There was much room for improvement in ties and both sides could’ve worked something to benefit one another. Yet the underlying hostilities overshadowed every possible door to stability. While Trump may have been eccentric and hungry for publicity, his team knew how to balance ties with the two South Asian rivals. Of course, New Delhi got the larger piece of the pie in the form of strategic and economic relations but the Republicans chose to keep Islamabad “happy” as well in one way or another. All of this was seemingly thrown out of the window under the new administration.

Hypothetically speaking, Khan would’ve went along really well with Senator Bernie Sanders had he won the nomination and subsequent elections. While Khan-Trump ties implied stability, a Khan-Sanders bonhomie would’ve been the perfect symmetry that exuded idealism on a global scale. More importantly, I don’t agree with the notion of comparing Khan with Trump since his values are closely knit with Sanders on factual grounds. Some of his unconventional political methods may have a Trumpian glimpse but that’s just it and nothing beyond that can prove that he’s following his footsteps.

With Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif running the country and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari overseeing foreign policy, we are yet to witness a major breakthrough in Islamabad-Washington ties. Despite his young age, Bilawal has potential in reshaping Islamabad’s place on the global stage but he needs to take expert opinion from the Foreign Office seriously and take everyone onboard in order to delve into the world of complex diplomatic challenges.

Pakistan is the fifth most populous while the US is the third most populous country in the world. This itself speaks volume of the potential in pursuing relations that cover everything whether of security, economic or political nature. One can only hope for an upward trend for both sides cannot choose to ignore or shut out each other regardless of who’s in power in either capitals.

*The writer is Associate Editor (Diplomatic Affairs), Daily Times. He tweets @mhassankhan06*