



ANALYZING U.S. SOFT POWER IMPACT ON PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of U.S soft power on Pakistan's foreign policy. Soft power, as defined Joseph Nye the ability of a country to shape the global order through influence military or economic coercion. The U.S as leading soft power hegemon in the international arena, has traditionally utilized its diplomatic, cultural and economic tools to influence Pakistan foreign policy. Particularly through processes such as strategic partnerships, defense cooperation, and economic alliances, the research focuses on three core pillars of U.S soft power: diplomatic relations, IT exchange programs, and military cooperation. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, grounded Joseph Nyes soft power theory to explore how the United States has projected its values, culture and institutional strength to enable its geopolitical interests in Pakistan. The study explores the challenges that have arisen in recent years, such as Chinas growing influence in Pakistan through CPEC, which provides an alternative to the U.S, centric world. It also discusses, rising anti-American sentiments and shifting global power dynamics, including the expansion of BRICS, have created hurdles for U.S soft power influence in Pakistan. The study also examines the limitations of U.S soft power in a region where authoritarianism, political instability, and extremist ideologies challenge democratic values. In conclusion the study evaluates how the theoretical foundations of soft power address the complexities of Pak-U.S. relations in contemporary geopolitical dynamics and provides insights into the future of U.S influence in Pakistan.

Keywords: U.S soft power, Pakistan foreign policy, political value, economic alliance, defense cooperation, global power shift, Pak-U. S relations.

Introduction

The term soft power has gain popularity in the context of public diplomacy. which mean states



ability to achieve its objectives through non-coercive means by attracting or co-opting others. It arises from the attractiveness of country's culture, political ideals, and policies. (Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA: n.d.). U.S. leverage its soft power through institutional influence, ideological appeal, and cultural dominance to shape global dynamics through persuasion rather than coercion. According to Joseph Nye, soft power is the intentional use of democratic governance, cultural diplomacy, and foreign policy legitimacy to encourage voluntary alignment with the United States. Organizations like the Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the Fulbright Program, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States fosters ideological resonance and global connection. Its global projection is further reinforced by the dominance of American media, technical superiority, and top-notch educational institutions (Nye, 1990). But maintaining this influence requires strong finance, diplomatic engagement, and policy coherence to counter growing strategic rivals, particularly China and Russia, with great endeavor to destabilize U.S. credibility on world stage (Nye, 1990).

This paper examines how U.S soft power influence Pakistan's foreign policy, which has been greatly shaped by U.S. soft power through strategic alliances, economic clout, and cultural diplomacy. A pro-American intellectual class has been nurtured by educational exchange programs like the Fulbright and YES programs, with students from all over Pakistan, Pakistan remains the world's largest sender of Fulbright scholars. The event included educational counselors who have participated in exchange programs and students with outstanding grades seeking to attend international or U.S universities. Both countries expand synergistic educational exchange programs to facilitate youth engagement. These initiatives aim to strengthen academic and cultural ties, promote long-term stability and enhance people-to-people connections. (Khan, 223). Additionally USAID program has collaborated with Pakistan Government to improve basic and higher education. they have trained over 46,000 teachers and school administrators since 2013 and provided 19000 scholarships for higher educations. It has also established research center to address energy and water challenges in collaboration with several Universities in Pakistan, through the U.S-Pakistan Center for Advance Studies (USPCAS) (U.S. Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in water, n.d.). these centers are located at NUST, (U.S. Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in Energy, n.d.). MUET, and UAF, and they collaborate with U.S universities, such as Arizona State University and the University of Utah to conduct joint research and develop policy solutions. (United States Agency for International Development, n.d.). Along with that U.S International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has been diligently supporting economic growth through various initiatives. As of December 2022, DFC had a \$258 million portfolio in Pakistan. Improving medical diagnostics and strengthening digital logistics in partnership with USAID Pakistan. DFC provided a \$4.2 million partial loan guaranty will mobilize \$6 million in private capital from Almavest Ltd, \$10 million loan portfolio guaranty to Pakistan Khushali Micro Finance Bank to mobilize \$29 million in private capital to women owned, managed, and staffed MSMEs (U.S. International Development Finance, Corporation n.d.). Additionally, DFC has enhanced pharmaceutical supply chains through a \$10 million equity investment in Integra Partners Fund II LP. Defense Finance Corporation (DFC) also supports MEDZnMORE, a company launched in 2020 to expand access to authentic medicine in Pakistan. (U.S. International



Development Finance, Corporation n.d.).

Furthermore, the widespread use of American media and internet platforms has assisted spread of democratic principles and administrative goals in Pakistan. The country's fiscal policies have been significantly influenced by USAID's economic support and American influence over global financial organizations like the World Bank and IMF. American financial assistance often includes policy advice that aligns with U.S. strategic interests, given Pakistan's frequent economic crises. Despite opposition from internal political groups, diplomatic engagement on human rights, democratic governance, and press freedom continues to pressure Pakistan to adhere to international standards. However, U.S. soft power in Pakistan is facing growing challenges. As China's emerges as a strategic and economic partner, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Providing more investment and diplomatic options. The paper will also examine the role of U.S soft power in shaping Pakistan foreign policy, focusing on its impact on diplomacy, economic relations, and security cooperations. It explores how cultural diplomacy, financial aid, and strategic alliances, have influence Pakistan geopolitical decision across different area. from cold war partnerships to post 911. Additionally, the study analyzes Pakistan's growing foreign policy diversifications. particularly in response U.S India relations and increasing ties with China Russia. Moreover, the paper aims to access both the influence and limitations of U.S soft power in Pakistan evolving global dynamics.

Research Methodology

This study examines the impact of U.S. soft power on Pakistan's foreign through a qualitative research approach and an extensive review of secondary data sources, including books, official documents, and articles from Google Scholars. The analysis draws on existing academic and policy-oriented literature to provide a thorough and analytical sound assessment of the topic. The study aims comprehend how Pakistan's strategic decision in the international arena have been influenced by non-coercive influence mechanisms rather than military or economic coercion. By applying Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory, the study analyzes how the U.S, has strengthened its influence through political values, financial backing, cultural diplomacy, and strategic partnerships rather than relying on hard power strategies like economic sanctions and military interventions.

Soft Power Theory

The concept of soft power in international relations refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. Coined by political scientist Joseph Nye in the late 1980s, soft power is the result of country foreign policy political values, and cultural values. (Nye,219). Unlike, hard power, which involves the use of military forces and economic sanctions, soft power moves away from conventional foreign policy tactics like rewards and punishments. Instead, its focuses on gaining influence through creating networks, telling persuasive stories, setting global standards, and leveraging the inherent qualities that make a country appealing to the international community. Soft power lies its ability to co-opt rather than coerce. As Nye explains, seduction is always more effective than coercion. Soft power is not exclusively controlled by government or non-state actors even individual can enhance nation soft power through their global



endeavors and reputations. (Soft Power 3, n.d.). Analyzing the soft power of the U.S. and its impact on Pakistan’s foreign policy through Joseph Nye’s soft power theory reveals how the U.S., as a world hegemon, leverages its economic influence, cultural dominance, and ideological influence to shape strategic partnerships with Pakistan. (Nye, 2004).

Since gaining independence in 1947, the U.S and Pakistan have maintained diplomatic ties and collaborated on various issues, from stabilizing Afghanistan and counterterrorism to energy, trade and investment, health, sustainable energy, and addressing climate change. Furthermore, through educational programs, like the Fulbright programs, which has been running for almost 70 years, the U.S. Educational Foundation in Pakistan, funded by both governments, administers the Fulbright programs to facilitate and strengthen people-to-people relations. Additionally, the U.S is Pakistan’s largest export market, importing over \$5 billion worth of goods in 2021, and has been a top investor in Pakistan for the past two decades. U.S. direct investment has increased by 50% in recent years, reaching its highest level in over a decade, with investments spanning consumer products, chemicals, energy, agriculture, business process outsourcing, transportation, and communications. (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

As part of its liberal internationalist agenda, the United States has made an effort to disseminate democratic principles, human rights campaign, and governance improvements from a normative and institutional perspective. Washington aims to help Pakistan consolidate its democracy by supporting elections, freedom of the press, and grassroots organizations. But inevitably, its reputation has been eroded by its past support of repressive regimes and its realpolitik-driven interventions, leaving Pakistan's diplomatic posture strategically ambiguous. (Chandio, 2017). In 2019, the U.S had 167 security aid programs with 87 recipients, totaling \$18.81 billion in funding, according to the Security Assistance report. Additionally, the U.S operated 20 training programs with almost 14,000 trainees across 137 countries. These training programs have produced over 485,000 trainees since 2013. Following the event of 9/11, the budget allocation for overseas security aid has more than doubled, indicating an intensification of these initiatives during the Global War on Terror. (New America, n.d.). Islamabad's involvement in the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), which has been a basis of U.S.-Pakistani military relations for over a decade. This reflects the strengthening ties following meetings between U.S. President Donald Trump and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. Washington also credited Islamabad for its assistance in discussions regarding the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, where negotiation between the United States and the Taliban have commenced. The U.S officials have noted that Pakistan’s military intelligence has provide asylum and other forms of assistance. (Landay, 2019).

Fundamental Pillars of U.S. Soft Power

Political values, culture, and foreign policy serve as the core pillars of U.S. soft power, enabling the country to project influence globally through attraction rather than coercion. The political values of the United States, centered on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law serve as a powerful tool in shaping the global perception of the U.S. As a proponent of these values, the U.S. promotes freedom and equality worldwide, supporting initiatives that advance peace,



democracy, and human rights. These values not only strengthen U.S. legitimacy on the world stage but also inspire other nations to align themselves with American principles, fostering partnerships and strategic alliances (Nye, 2004). In this way, culture and political values are intricately connected, with U.S. foreign policy acting as a bridge to connect them to broader geopolitical goals. As a result, the U.S. not only enhances its influence but also solidifies its credibility as a central actor in shaping global governance, illustrating the symbiotic relationship between culture, political values, and foreign policy in the exercise of soft power (Brooks, 2021).

Additionally, tense bilateral relations have spasmodically been affected by altering regional interests, such as Washington's pivot to the Indo-Pacific, and evolving U.S.-Pakistan military relations. Furthermore, public openness to U.S. influence has been subverted by anti-American sentiment fueled by past foreign policy decisions. Particularly those related to Afghanistan and the Middle East. Although American soft power is still a major consideration in Pakistan's foreign policy calculations, its long-term efficacy will rely on continued participation, consistency in policy, and the ability to counter emerging geopolitical rivals (Cull, 2019).

Contemporary Geopolitical Landscape

The current geopolitical order is witnessing a seismic shift, with China's burgeoning influence posing a formidable challenge to U.S. soft power in Pakistan. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Beijing has provided Pakistan with an alternative to Western-centered economic models, establishing a growing strategic partnership that encourage Islamabad's economic and security strategy. This move represents a deeper change in the balance of power in the global arena, as traditional Western influence is subverted by rising powers, particularly China (Iqbal, 2019). The United States' soft power is facing declining dividends as Pakistan reorients its foreign policy to balance its shifting relationships with China and the United States (Ali, 2019). To be in the loop in multipolar, Washington needs to rethink its approach and use multilateral diplomacy, innovation, and cultural engagement. Pakistan's ability to balance its ties with China and the U.S while maintaining its strategic autonomy will shape its foreign policy (Rafiq, 2017).

Moreover, the shifting dynamics of global power, the rise of China and the inclusion of Indonesia in BRICS, directly intersect with U.S. soft power, creating both challenges and opportunities for the United States. While China's growing influence within BRICS and its broader geopolitical strategy position it as an alternative global trendsetter, U.S. soft power remains a critical tool in maintaining global dominance. U.S. cultural diplomacy, educational exchange programs, and technological innovations continue to project an image of leadership, innovation, and values such as democracy and human rights. As countries like Indonesia join BRICS, the United States faces increasing competition, but this also offers an opportunity to reaffirm its soft power in regions critical for global influence. By enhancing its diplomatic and cultural ties, particularly in Southeast Asia, and promoting democratic governance, the U.S. can strengthen its influence in these rapidly growing regions while offering an alternative to China's approach to development and governance (Rodrigues, 2022).



Impact of U.S. Soft Power on Pakistan Foreign Policy

The United States leverages a comprehensive spectrum of soft power strategies, such as development aid, educational exchange programs, disseminations of democratic values, to influence Pakistan foreign policy. The impact of these soft power strategies, which are designed to influence legislation and cultivate favorable opinions, is versatile. Development aid and educational interactions develop goodwill, but because of regional dynamics and national interests, they could not immediately result in policy consistency. Although military ties have been reinforcing by security cooperation, Pakistan's foreign policy decisions are still influenced by strategic concerns and past grievances (Wikipedia Contributors, 2025). The Fulbright program, which facilitates people-to-people tie between two states. With approximately 800 Pakistan students annually, this initiative strengthens educational and cultural understanding and promote democratic values (U.S Department of State, 2022). In addition to educational programs, USAID program shaping Pakistan Scio-economic landscape.

While these endeavors strive to foster goodwill and strengthen soft power of U.S. but they face significant challenges. Although U.S. aid assist in reinforce the strategic partnership between both nations, its impact is not straightforward. While the U.S. strive to advance its foreign policy goals, particularly in regional issues like Afghanistan and India, the partnership may not always be fully aligned. The complex web of historical skepticism, coupled with Pakistan's own national interests, means that U.S. aid, in the eyes of many Pakistanis, is more than just financial support; it is often view as a tool for exerting political leverage, causing in deep skepticism about the true intentions behind U.S. assistance, despite their influence, they are incapable to dictate Pakistan's foreign policy on their own. Mutual interests occasionally collide with pride in one's country and one's sovereignty in this unsettling balance of cooperation and resistance (Zafar, 2018). The perception of U.S. interventions, as driven by realpolitik and short-term interest shapes Pakistan's diplomatic stance, creating strategic ambiguity in its foreign policy. while U.S. soft power tools have strengthened a long-standing cooperation, their impact on Pakistan's foreign policy remains complex and restricted by past tensions and regional dynamics (U. S Department of State, 2022). The impact of U.S. soft power manifests in three main pivotal domains the transition from strategic partnership to geopolitical estrangement, economic collaboration and trade alliances, and the dynamics of Defense Cooperation and Security Alliances.

Strategic Partnerships to Periodic Estrangements

Due to fluctuating geopolitical priorities and mutual dependency, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has been speculated by patron-client relationship of strategic engagement and diplomatic estrangement. Pakistan became a key ally of the United States during the Cold War, acting as a check on Soviet influence in South Asia. When the United States provided Pakistan with financial and military backing for its involvement in the Afghan resistance movement against Soviet forces in the 1980s, this cooperation grew stronger. However, the relationship has frequently been transactional, with diplomatic rifts occurring after periods of intense cooperation. After the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan, relations drastically deteriorated due to U.S. disengagement and the sanctions imposed by the Pressler Amendment. With Pakistan joining the



U.S.-led War on Terror as a frontline partner and receiving major military and economic backing in exchange for counterterrorism cooperation, the post-9/11 era witnessed a resurgence of strategic cooperation (Haqqani, 2013). Although both countries aligned on counterterrorism and regional security, ongoing tensions over Pakistan's nuclear ambitions and alleged support for militants have fueled diplomatic friction. The 2011 Abbottabad raid that killed Osama bin Laden exemplified the suspicion, exposing intelligence gaps and strategic divergences. Today, as the U.S. pivots towards countering China and strengthening Indo-Pacific alliances, Pakistan has grasped Beijing's economic and strategic embrace through CPEC, further complicating its ties with Washington. Ultimately, the relationship remains transactional, driven by necessity rather than ideological alignment, ensuring long-term stability elusive (Fair, 2014).

In order to align Islamabad's policies with its broader geopolitical ambitions, the United States has traditionally utilized soft power as a key strategy in influencing Pakistan's foreign policy. That includes cultural diplomacy, economic aid, and strategic engagement. The Fulbright Program and the U.S.-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor are evidence of educational and cultural exchanges that have built enduring diplomatic goodwill and produced pro-American constituencies within Pakistan's intellectual and policymaking circles. Similarly, USAID-led financing initiatives have left a big impact on Pakistan's development priorities, especially in areas like governance, health, and energy. However, during the Cold War and the years following 9/11, when strategic collaboration was crucial, the United States' soft power impact was evident in shaping Pakistan's security and counterterrorism approaches.

Despite engagements, U.S.-Pakistan relations have experienced periodic estrangements, largely due to the changing geopolitical order and mutual distrust. Divergent security interests are often the ushing factor behind the oscillation between strategic alliances and diplomatic conflicts, particularly concerning Afghanistan, nuclear strategy, and Pakistan's expanding relations with China. Washington's emphasis on press freedom, democracy, and human rights has occasionally caused conflict with Pakistan's civil-military leadership, which sees such support as outside meddling. Moreover, Pakistan's increasing economic dependency on China and the extension of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have gradually reduced the influence of U.S. soft power. The United States continues have an important role in Pakistan's foreign policy calculations, but continuous involvement, strategic adaptability, and the strengthening of interpersonal ties outside of conventional defense structure will be important for it to retain influence (Javaid, 2022).

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship has traditionally exhibited characteristics of a patron-client system, particularly during the Cold War, the War on Terror, security cooperation, military aid, economic assistance, and diplomatic backing in return for strategic cooperation, particularly in counterterrorism and regional security. However, such partnerships are often hindered by shifting geopolitical orders, and the potential of estrangement when interests diverge. Traditional patron-client systems have been affected by China's rise as an alternative patron to many emerging nations, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which provides smaller states with alternative sources of strategic and monetary support. This evolving dynamic shows how international alliances are flexible and how patron-client interactions are governed by strategic priorities (Barston, 2019).



Economic Partnership and Trade Alliances

The economic relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan has experienced significant fluctuations in recent years. U.S. goods exports to Pakistan reached \$3.2 billion in 2022, an outstanding 106 percent increase from 2012 but a 12.7 percent decrease from the previous year. Conversely, the U.S imported \$6.0 billion worth of goods from Pakistan in 2022, up 13.5 percent from 2021 and 65 percent from 2012. The U.S. goods trade imbalance with Pakistan thus surged to \$2.8 billion, which is representing 70.5 percent increase compared to 2021. In 2022, U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan falls swiftly, falling by 59.3 percent to \$127 million. Similarly, Pakistan's foreign direct investment in the United States dropped by 14.3% to \$144 million in 2022. These changes show how the economic alliance is evolving, with trade increasing despite decreasing investment flows. As the United States shifts its focus to other regions and Pakistan expands its trade relations, particularly through initiatives like China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), this could be a sign of broader geopolitical trends (U.S. Trade Representative, n.d.).

Pak-U.S. IT Exchange Program

Pak-U.S. IT Exchange Program the Pak-U.S. IT Exchange program connects successful Silicon Valley entrepreneurs with startups, IT workers, business students, and government authorities from Pakistan. In order to foster a startup ecosystem in Pakistan, this initiative provides a platform for information sharing and the exchange strategies that works. By providing training and initial funding potential, the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. State Department additionally focuses on supporting Pakistani women entrepreneurs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan's startup and IT industries witnessed unprecedented growth. Tech startups raised \$350 million in 2021, hitting a new record. Pakistan is ranked as one of the largest freelance markets in the world. The national government has set a target of earning over \$3 billion from this sector by 2024 (Tariq & Younus, 2022). In 2022, Pakistani startups raised \$322 million total, including over \$227 million in the first half of the year. Additionally, with IT exports tripling from \$1.19 billion in 2019 to \$2.62 billion in 2022, Pakistan's IT services sector is currently Pakistan’s largest net services exporter.

In 2023, the U.S.-Pak Women's Council also launched the Women's Economic Accelerator Program, a trial program focused on promoting female-led businesses. USAID is another example of strategic partnership between the U.S and Pakistan technology sector, focusing on eliminating trade and investments restrictions. The intention of this partnership is to enable Pakistan to reinforce its governance systems and establish an atmosphere that is more advantageous for investment. By making a commitment to the long-term sustainability and growth of such initiatives, both countries could promote deeper technological links that will spur innovation and solid foundations for future diplomatic and fiscal growth. Moreover, the U.S international Development Finance Corporation (DFC) can enhance collaboration between both states in sectors like pharmaceuticals, information technology, textile and renewable energy (Stimson Center, 2024). In 2024, Pakistani startups raised \$42.5 million, a 42.5% decrease from the \$74 million they raised in 2023. However, the fourth quarter of 2024 was particularly impressive, with companies raising \$26.5 million, accounting for more than 62% of the year's total fundraising and representing a 76.7% increase from the previous year. The fintech industry dominated the



investment scene rising \$30.5 million, which was or over 72% of the total amount raised (Woodman,2025).

Defense Cooperation and Security Alliances

The U.S maintained military ties with Pakistan through security assistance programs, including the International Military Education and Training (IMET), which have improved Pakistan's defense capabilities and promoted collaboration between the two countries armed forces. Nye argues that military power can generate soft power when used for protection and humanitarian aid. He suggests that non-coercive and positive military action can be an important source of soft power behavior, framing agendas, persuasion and attraction in world politics (Nye, 2011). The United States has significant influence over Pakistan's foreign policy through defense cooperation and security assistance. Pakistan has historically received military aid, and counter-terrorism collaboration from the U.S, which has strengthened its reliance on American defense technology and intelligence sharing mechanisms. Furthermore, U.S security assistance served as soft power. Initiatives such as Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) are components of U.S security assistance (Fair,2014).

Moreover, the presence of terrorist groups in Pakistan's frontier regions meant that security and counterterrorism remained high priorities targets. Including \$1.2 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) counter-narcotics financing, and counterterrorism training, the United States has provided \$1.9 billion in security assistance since 2002. By providing money for tactical equipment, helicopters, and maritime surveillance planes, this aid supports Pakistan's military operations against extremist organizations. Additionally, in order to integrate the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into Pakistan's political and economic framework, the United States also provided \$750 million for a five-year development effort in these areas. In order to stabilize Pakistan, defeat extremism, and promote enduring U.S.-Pakistan relations, the overall strategy included economic, military, and democratic reforms (U.S Department of State,2007). However, Pakistan's role in regional security, particularly in relations to Afghanistan, complicates the strategic significance of these programs. Despite Pakistan support for U.S efforts in Afghanistan peace talks with the Taliban, historical complexities in U.S.-Pakistan relations mean that military aid alone cannot fully align Pakistan with U.S. foreign policy goals.

Challenges and Strategic Divergence

U.S soft power in Pakistan are twofold: internal political instability, and external influence. The increasing prominence of extremist groups with anti-American sentiments have fueled resentment towards U.S engagement in the country, making it more difficult to cultivate positive influence. The rise of China particularly through CPEC has shifted Pakistan strategic focus (Chandio,2017). Additionally, shifting global power dynamics extension of BRICS poses a significant challenge to U.S soft power influence in Pakistan. As country navigates competing global perspectives. Pakistan find itself at a crossroads of global power dynamics, with China and the BRICS bloc, providing an alternative to the Western-centric world order traditionally backed by U.S. As the global power structure becomes more multipolar U.S soft power in Pakistan face



an uphill struggle (Guo,2020).

Moreover, the public hostility has been intensified by the U.S. military operations that are seen as violation of sovereignty, such as drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal belt. Anti-American sentiment is further fueled by the perception that the United States is a hegemonic force that disregards the interest of smaller states like Pakistan. The United States is frequently portrayed in Pakistan as a foreign power that puts its own geopolitical interest particularly in the war on terror, over Pakistan's requirement for growth security, and sovereignty. The U. S long-standing assistance for dictatorial regimes in Pakistan has also tarnished its reputation, with many viewings American assistance has hindering democratic processes rather than enabling real politic al change (Wikipedia Contributors, 2025). The perception of U.S. interventions, as driven by realpolitik and short-term interest shapes Pakistan's diplomatic stance, creating strategic ambiguity in its foreign policy. while U.S. soft power tools have strengthened a long-standing cooperation, their impact on Pakistan's foreign policy remains complex and restricted by past tensions and regional dynamics (U.S Department of State, 2022).

Lastly as previously we have discussed three main pillars of U.S foreign policy, political value, culture, foreign policy plays a significant role shaping global political landscape. But geopolitical changes, the emergence of alternative power blocs, and the erosion of democratic ideals are making these pillars vulnerable in current international politics. Growing backlash due fall of democratic regimes, shifting alliances, and the emergence of multipolarity. One of the most pressing challenges to U.S soft power in global politics is decline of democratic regimes, overthrow of shaikh Hasina in Bangladesh, fall of Assad regime in Syria, exemplify the fragility of democratic governance in region where authoritarianism, populism and political instability persist. Similarly, the expansion of BRICS is formidable challenge for U.S soft power which provides unorthodox economic models. This global power shift threatens U.S soft power in many regions, including South Asia. In era of changing global power dynamics, Washington to reevaluate its soft power strategies in light of the waning popularity of Western political values, new regional alliances, and domestic instability.

Findings and Conclusion

Through diplomatic engagement, educational exchange programs, and military collaboration, the United States has utilized soft power as instrument of strategy to influence Pakistan's foreign policy. Washington tried to promote pro-Western sentiments in Pakistan's academic and policymaking spheres by fostering elite through programs such as Fulbright Scholarships, International Defense Finance Corporation, and the U.S.-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor. Additionally, counterterrorism partnerships and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) have consolidated U.S. influence in Pakistan's security system, securing its credibility as a vital defense ally. But in spite of these safeguards, U.S. influence has been severely eroded by anti-American sentiment, evolving geopolitical alliances, and increasing economic reliance on China. While BRICS expansion has created new opportunities, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has given Islamabad an exclusive economic model, reducing U.S. economic influence. Other obstacles to U.S. soft power projection include Pakistan's internal political instability and separatist



groups, and also the geopolitical realignment towards multipolarity. Mistrust and skepticism have been stoked among political elites and the ordinary people due to the waning popularity of Western democratic values and perceived U.S. meddling in Pakistan's domestic affairs. Washington's unilateral influence is being curbed, however, by the rise of China's military and digital involvement, particularly in defense alliances, artificial intelligence, and technological developments, which has given Pakistan access to new strategic allies. A more nuanced and flexible strategy that prioritizes financial investment, cultural diplomacy, and a reevaluated security alliance in line with Pakistan's changing geopolitical goals is required if the United States hopes to rebuild its soft power in Pakistan.

The far-reaching presence of U.S. soft power in influencing Pakistan’s foreign policy has traditionally been a pillar of bilateral engagement, influencing diplomatic maneuvering, financial reliance, and strategic security posture. Despite this, the recalibration of global power structures, the emergence of unorthodox geopolitical blocs, and the proliferation of anti-American sentiment have severely diminished Washington’s strategic leverage over Islamabad. The effectiveness of U.S. soft power tools, from diplomatic overtures to economic statecraft, has been clearly diminished as multipolarity increases and Pakistan broadens its coalitions, pushing Washington to rethink its engagement strategy in the changing international order. By stepping away from a transactional approach and toward a more partnership-driven engagement strategy, the United States can adjust to evolving geopolitical realities and regain its soft power dominance in Pakistan. To stay relevant in Pakistan's strategic calculus, Washington should focus on economic cooperations, leveraging digital diplomacy, and reinforcing long-term technological collaboration rather than just military aid and counterterrorism cooperation efforts. Rebuilding trust and credibility can be achieved through mutual economic growth and transparent diplomatic measures to address anti-American sentiments. To retain its influence in the new multipolar world order, the U.S. soft power must strategically reassess its approach as Pakistan expands its diplomatic relationships and broadens its network of allies. The U.S. soft power needs to undergo a strategic recalibration, to ensuring its continued relevance in the multipolar global order.



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