



Global Variants: Pakistan's Foreign Policy Challenges and Opportunities in the Contemporary Era

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Abstract:

The remarkable progress of new technologies in the communication and transportation sectors is the major factor that escalates new patterns of international dealings. Geopolitics is gradually transforming with a focus on global economic notions and initiating new political, social, cultural, and moral criteria. The role of major powers including the USA, China, Russia, and the UK in changed scenarios of Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asian regions indicates the need for alteration in foreign policies of different states. At this point, the questions arise: how countries like Pakistan, which are facing internal political instability, and fragile economic conditions restructure their foreign policy, and how in shifting global dynamics such states safeguard their national interests and economic prosperity, deal with security issues, and pursue their diplomatic affairs. This study analyzes Pakistan's situation through the lens of geopolitical notions and addresses the topic by highlighting the need for adaptability in diplomacy as an essential tool. Pakistan's foreign policy needs to navigate horizons in the complex and ever-evolving international environment with a blend of balanced strategic interests aligned with regional and global dynamics. It is significant to address the challenges in response to emerging global dynamics and a few recommendations have been proposed.

Keywords: Pakistan, foreign policy, challenges, opportunities, global dynamics, diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of any state is based on the approaches and strategies of the specific country to interact with other countries and international performers at the global level. These strategies aim to protect the state's interest at multiple forums in motivating situations of the international system. Technological advancement in the communication sector has played a vital role in

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redefining traditional concepts with the dawn of the twenty-first century. Among other numerous notions in the sphere of political science and international affairs, 'Digital Diplomacy' is gaining popularity in the third decade of this 21st century (Kurbalija, 2024). Globalization and a rapidly changing world have redefined the concept of international relations (Kissinger, 2002). Diplomatic dynamics evolve around well-defined objectives and are considered the core of the foreign policy of a state. It depends upon a twofold context including, the structural and functional mechanism (Waltz, 2010). Structural Foreign policy formulation typically involves several stages which may slightly depend on the country and its specific processes, however, mainly it deals with agenda-setting, analysis, appraisal, policy design, decision-making, execution, evaluation, feedback, alteration, and modification. The following diagram reflects the main factors:

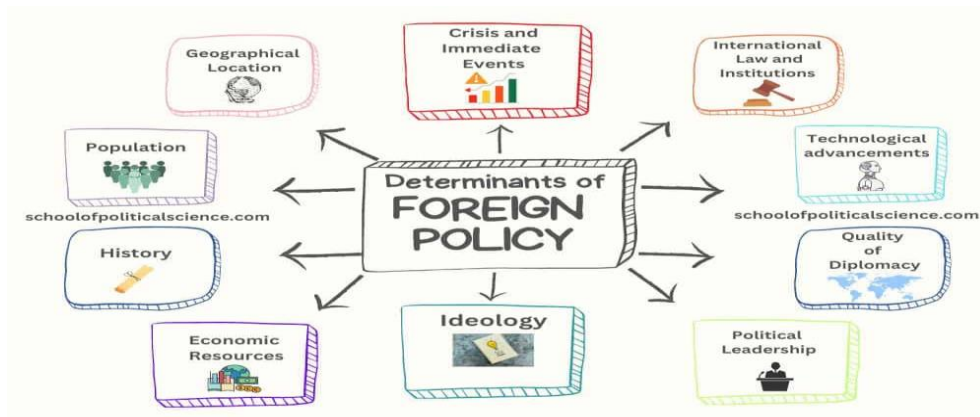


Fig 1: Determinants of Foreign Policy (Biswas, 2023)

Identification of variables of foreign policy for any state is vital, as these shape the foreign relations conduct of any state, among the global community. Pakistan being no exception has to formulate foreign policy in a fluctuating situation of international concerns in shifting paradigms of foreign affairs. Foreign policy formulation is a multilayered phenomenon for developing countries. For instance, in politically unstable and economically deprived countries like Pakistan, a suitable foreign policy model could be the "Eclectic Paradigm" (EP) model adapted from Dunning's (1988) business model for international production. This model combines elements from various foreign policy approaches to suit the country's specific needs according to geo-political requirements. This modal consists of three major factors including ownership, location, and internationalization (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.). Pakistan is facing political instability and economic challenges at the same time with a blend of new challenges of digital diplomacy and realignment of geo-political equilibrium in the South Asian region due to newly emerging social, political, economic, and diplomatic patterns (Mohan, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan's foreign policy is a crucial part of discourses related to its position in the world. Foreign policy is always important for policymakers, states people, political activists, think tanks and intelligentsia (Hamilton & Tiilikainen, 2018). A country cannot exist in isolation, and for its existence, its foreign policy for maintaining relations with other states is an important consideration (Jain, 2018). A country's foreign policy influences its existence, growth, and prosperity since its relations with other countries affect its internal affairs (Gimba & Ibrahim,

2018). Likewise, Pakistan's foreign policy is an essential element, and it is strongly influenced by its geography, geo-political importance, military and technological dependence, economy, exports, growing population, foreign employment and immigration of its inhabitants, ethnic diversity and related factors (Chattha, 2023-a; 2023-b).

Various models, approaches, frameworks, and mechanisms are available in the extant literature on framing a country's foreign policy. Among them, the 'structured mechanism' is also a famous one. The structured mechanism is a set of fundamental ideologies, rubrics, roles, and limitations that create a network based on all state and non-state actors altogether into a large international system (Clarke & White, 1989) that is based on different stages to avail the opportunities by articulating the foreign policy on contemporary moves and strategies.

Structure Mechanism of Foreign Policy and Adaptation

The review of relevant literature on the topic reveals that many factors can be analyzed to understand the study questions and to find a viable solution. Firstly, agenda setting stage involves identifying and prioritizing the issues that will be addressed by the foreign policy. This can be influenced by a range of factors including national securities, geopolitical considerations, international events, and domestic politics (Wendt, 1999). Secondly, once the agenda is set, policymakers conduct in-depth analysis and assessment of the issues at hand. This includes evaluating the potential risks and opportunities associated with different courses of action, as well as assessing the capabilities and intentions of other countries or actors involved. Thirdly, the policy formulation process which based on in-depth scrutiny of all the processes and stages of the policy. Policymakers develop potential policy options to address the identified issues. These options may range from diplomatic initiatives and negotiations to economic sanctions or military actions, depending on the nature of the issue and the country's objectives. Fourthly, in the decision-making stage, in this stage, policymakers evaluate the various policy options and make decisions on which course of action to pursue. This often involves consultation with relevant stakeholders, including government officials, diplomats, military leaders, intelligence agencies, and sometimes external experts or advisors. The fifth step is the Implementation. Once a decision is made, the chosen policy must be implemented. This may involve coordinating actions across different government agencies, engaging with international partners, allocating resources, and communicating the policy to the public and other stakeholders. The sixth stage is the evaluation and Feedback. After the policy is implemented, policymakers assess its effectiveness in achieving the desired objectives. This involves monitoring developments, collecting data, and analyzing outcomes to determine whether adjustments or revisions to the policy are necessary. Feedback from stakeholders, including other countries, international organizations, and the public, may also inform this evaluation process. The seventh, step is the adaptation and adjustment based on the evaluation and feedback received, policymakers may decide to adapt or adjust the foreign policy as needed. Policymakers need to understand and follow a complex systematic process for choosing a preferred course of action and identifying alternative options while keeping a constant eye on the possible consequences (Walker, 2000). This could involve fine-tuning existing policies, revising strategies, or even shifting priorities in response to changing circumstances or the latest information.

These stages are often interrelated and interconnected, with policymakers constantly cycling through them as they identify the directions, highlight the complexities of international relations,

and pursue their country's interests on the global stage. Moreover, international-level incidents and crises can sometimes interrupt these processes and require quick and appropriate changes or adjustments in foreign policy.

Functional Mechanism of Foreign Policy and Adaptation

The literature on this topic reveals that the functional mechanism of foreign policy refers to how a nation's foreign policy operates in practice to achieve its strategic objectives and safeguard its national interests (Snyder, 2003). The foreign policy of a country is influenced by events, decisions, identities, imbalances, threats, and other such factors at the international level (Guzzini, 2022). The functional mechanism of foreign policy involves several key components including diplomacy, economic interest, security and defense, multilateralism and establishment of relations with international organizations, cultural and public diplomacy, humanitarian assistance and development aid, intelligence and information gathering, sharing and exchange, crisis management, and conflict resolution.

Firstly, diplomacy is the primary tool of foreign policy, involving negotiations, dialogue, and communication between states. Diplomatic efforts aim to promote cooperation, resolve conflicts, and advance national interests through bilateral and multilateral channels. All sovereign states have their selection criteria for diplomats and assignment of tasks. Diplomacy through diplomats is an official, formal, and governmental channel. It is very important to select diplomats equipped with clear concepts of foreign policy objectives of the state, excellent communication skills, and tactful, brilliant, well-informed, responsive, and dedicated mindset. Secondly, economic considerations play a significant role in foreign policy. Nations engage in economic diplomacy to promote trade, investment, and economic cooperation with other countries. Economic incentives and sanctions may also be used as tools to influence the behavior of other states. In the first century, the concept of Geo-politics is swiftly replacing the concept of Geo-economic. The initiative of the European Economic Community (EEC) is the best example (Chrisdoulak, 2010) and proof in this regard. Thirdly, security and defense policies are integral to foreign policy, especially in addressing threats to national security. This may involve military alliances, defense cooperation agreements; arms control negotiations, and efforts to combat terrorism and transnational crime. Fourthly, multilateralism and establishing relations with international organizations is another important sector. Engagement with international organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and regional bodies allows nations to pursue their interests through collective action. Multilateral diplomacy enables countries to address global challenges, promote peace and security, and shape international norms and standards. Fifthly, cultural and public diplomacy and people-to-people contact. Cultural and public diplomacy initiatives seek to promote a country's culture, values, and image abroad. This involves activities such as cultural exchanges, educational programs, public outreach, and the use of media and digital platforms to enhance a nation's soft power and influence. Sixthly, humanitarian assistance and development aid are very important to deal with crises. Providing humanitarian assistance and development aid to other countries is another aspect of foreign policy. This can enhance a nation's reputation, build goodwill, and foster stability and prosperity in recipient countries. Seventh, is the intelligence and information gathering and exchange and sharing of information and analysis are essential for informing foreign policy decision-making. Governments collect and analyze information on international

developments, the intentions of other states, and emerging threats to national security to formulate and alter the internal policies of the states. Eighth is crisis management and conflict resolution. Foreign policy mechanisms include strategies for managing crises and resolving conflicts diplomatically. This may involve mediation, negotiation, peacekeeping operations, and efforts to promote reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction.

Overall, the functional mechanism of foreign policy comprehends a range of diplomatic, economic, security, and humanitarian tools and activities aimed at advancing a nation's interests and addressing global challenges. Effective coordination and integration of these components are essential for achieving foreign policy objectives in a complex and interconnected world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prospect Theory, proposed by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman in 1979, describes the situation and reflects the true picture of the relations between strong and poor states in the contemporary era. It deals with "losses and gains" which are valued differently. Moreover, the decisions made by individuals are based on perceived advantages instead of perceived disadvantages. This theory is also known as the "loss-aversion" theory (Chen, 2024). The basic idea is that when an individual or state faces two equal options, one of which is presented in terms of prospective benefits and the other in terms of potential losses, they will choose the former. Compared to the expected utility theory, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1992) propounded "Advances in Prospect Theory" which is viewed more psychologically accurate in explaining how policymakers or people make decisions. Prospect theory (Tversky & Kahneman, 1979;1992) states that choices and decisions are made through a two-stage process, considering short-term and long-term measures.

PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES IN 2024

In 2024, Pakistan is facing various foreign policy challenges (Nasar, 2023) that require careful triangulation and strategic decision-making. Following are some of the key challenges, addressing the questions and main objectives of the study:

Regional Security Dynamics

Pakistan continuously struggling to handle security challenges emanating from its immediate neighborhood, particularly in Afghanistan. The uncertain situation following the withdrawal of NATO forces and the resurgence of Taliban poses significant security concerns for Pakistan.

Relations with India

Tensions between Pakistan and India persist, particularly over issues such as Kashmir and cross-border terrorism. Managing these tensions and fostering stability in bilateral relations remains a critical challenge for Pakistan's foreign policy.

Counterterrorism Efforts

Pakistan's commitment to combating terrorism remains under scrutiny, both domestically and internationally. Effectively addressing the internal security threats while maintaining cooperative relationships with key allies in the fight against terrorism is a complex challenge.

Economic Diplomacy

Pakistan's economic challenges, such as high inflation, unemployment, and a growing debt burden, necessitate a robust economic diplomacy strategy. Attracting foreign investment, expanding trade relations, and securing financial assistance from international partners are key priorities.

Regional Integration

Enhancing regional connectivity and cooperation is essential for Pakistan's economic development and regional stability. However, geopolitical rivalries and divergent interests among regional powers pose obstacles to meaningful regional integration efforts.

Climate Change & Environmental Diplomacy

Pakistan is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including water scarcity, natural disasters, and agricultural disruptions. Engaging in international climate diplomacy and collaboration to address these challenges is crucial for Pakistan's long-term resilience.

Diplomatic Outreach

Strengthening diplomatic ties with traditional allies such as China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, while also diversifying partnerships with emerging powers and non-aligned countries, is essential for Pakistan's diplomatic outreach and strategic positioning.

Humanitarian Assistance and Refugee Crisis

Pakistan continues to host millions of Afghan refugees, while also facing internal displacement due to conflicts and natural disasters. Balancing humanitarian assistance efforts with the socioeconomic strains of hosting refugees presents a humanitarian and foreign policy challenge.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

As a nuclear-armed state, Pakistan's nuclear policy and posture are closely monitored by the international community. Ensuring the security and stability of its nuclear arsenal, while upholding non-proliferation commitments is a key foreign policy imperative.

Soft Power Projection

Enhancing Pakistan's soft power through cultural diplomacy, education exchanges, and public diplomacy initiatives can help improve its international image and influence. However, negative perceptions and misperceptions about Pakistan's domestic stability and security situation pose obstacles to effective soft power projection.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and nuanced approach that considers Pakistan's security concerns, economic interests, and diplomatic priorities. Effective coordination between government agencies, proactive diplomacy, and engagement with regional and international partners are essential for navigating Pakistan's foreign policy challenges in 2024.

PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH USA

Pakistan's relations with the US have been adopted on national interests rather than friendship (Russett, 1995). Pak-US relations were established on the fulcrum upon two magnitudes including historical turnings and issues related context. As of 2024, Pakistan's relations with the United States continue to be multifaceted (Patro, 2024), influenced by a combination of strategic interests, regional dynamics, and bilateral issues.

Here are some key aspects of Pakistan-US relations in 2024; Counterterrorism Cooperation: Counterterrorism cooperation remains a cornerstone of Pakistan-US relations. Both countries have a shared interest in combating terrorism and extremism in the region. Pakistan has been a crucial partner in the US-led efforts to combat terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and the wider region.

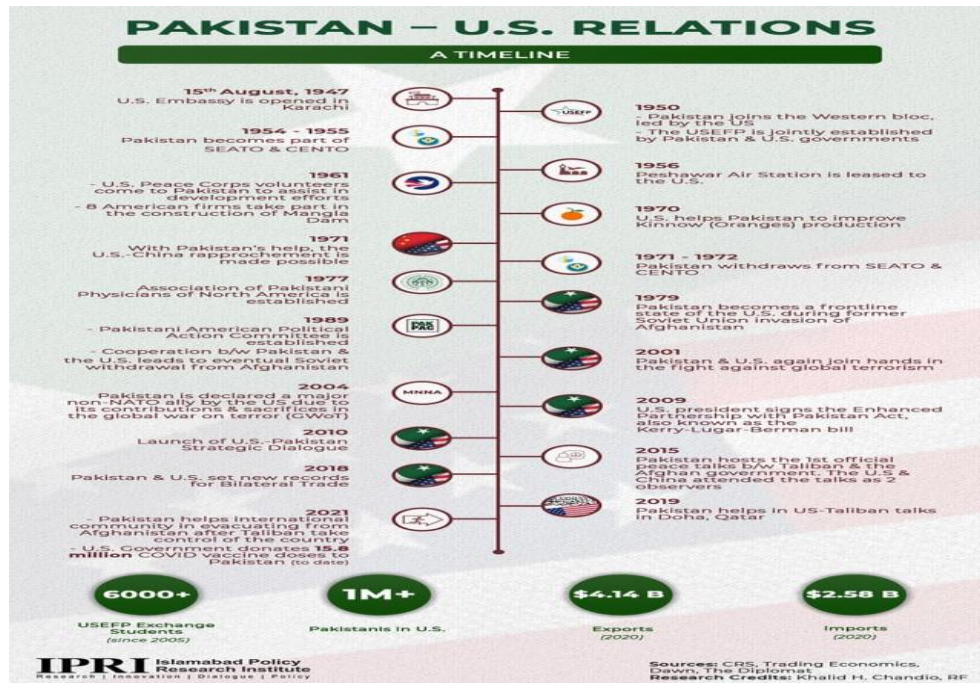


Fig.2: Timeline of Pak-US relations, IPRI (Chandio, 2021)

Afghan Peace Process

Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace process is significant, and its cooperation is crucial for achieving a political settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan. The United States has been engaging with Pakistan to facilitate peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, aiming to stabilize the region and ensure a smooth transition.

Security Assistance & Military Cooperation

Despite occasional tensions, military cooperation between Pakistan and the United States persists. The US provides security assistance to Pakistan, including military aid and equipment, to support its counterterrorism efforts and enhance its capacity to address security challenges.

Regional Stability and Security

Pakistan's strategic location makes it a key player in promoting regional stability and security. The US recognizes Pakistan's importance in maintaining stability in South Asia and addressing shared security concerns, such as nuclear proliferation and the threat of non-state actors.

Economic and Trade Relations

Economic and trade relations between Pakistan and the United States have room for improvement. Both countries have expressed interest in enhancing bilateral trade and investment, although issues such as market access, trade barriers, and intellectual property rights continue to pose challenges.

Humanitarian and Development Assistance

The United States provides humanitarian and development assistance to Pakistan in various areas, including health, education, and infrastructure. This assistance contributes to addressing socio-economic challenges and promoting stability and prosperity in Pakistan.

Diplomatic Engagement

High-level diplomatic engagements between Pakistan and the United States continue, reflecting the importance of bilateral relations. Diplomatic dialogue and cooperation are maintained through regular meetings, exchanges, and consultations on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Challenges and Frictions

Despite areas of cooperation, Pakistan-US relations also face challenges and frictions. Differences over issues such as Afghanistan, counterterrorism strategy, human rights, and nuclear proliferation have at times strained bilateral ties and led to periods of tension and mistrust.

Overall, Pakistan-US relations in 2024 remain characterized by a complex mix of cooperation, mutual interests, and occasional disagreements (Hussain, 2024). Both countries continue to engage with each other to address shared challenges and advance their respective interests in the region and beyond.

PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA

As of 2024, Pakistan's relations with China continue to be characterized by deep strategic cooperation and close bilateral ties across various domains. On December 27-28, 2023 the Central Conference on China's Foreign Affairs was held in Beijing. President Xi Jinping was the keynote speaker; he addressed the gathering and thoroughly reviewed the significant accomplishments of China in the diplomatic sector in the new era. He presented China's foreign relations and policy plans with a focus on the international milieu with a vision and mission for the new journey in the upcoming era (Shiren, 2024). Pakistan and China have long praised and close ties with each other. Pakistan's exports to China in September 2023 have surged by an impressive 100.5%. Pakistan is committed to increase exports to strengthen the weak economy and China is at the top of the list in the following export profile:

EXPORT PROFILE			
*Trade values in US\$ million			
TOP PARTNER COUNTRIES SHOWING INCREASE			
Country	September Fy'2023-24	September Fy'2022-23	% Change
China	350.2	174.7	100.5%
United Arab Emirates	111.0	97.0	14.4%
Saudi Arabia	56.6	41.5	36.4%
Malaysia	34.4	23.5	46.4%
Turkey	33.6	22.5	49.2%
Sri Lanka	33.2	29.7	11.7%
Viet Nam	29.9	16.3	84.3%
Poland	28.6	27.3	4.9%
Korea (South)	19.8	14.8	34.1%
Yemen	18.4	2.3	696.2%

Fig.3: Pakistan's Exports Profile (Ali, 2023) Trade Development Authority of Pakistan's statistics

Here are some key aspects of Pakistan-China relations in 2024; Strategic Partnership: Pakistan and China maintain a robust strategic partnership, which is often described as "all-weather" or "iron

brothers." The relationship is anchored in mutual trust, shared strategic interests, and a long history of cooperation.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

CPEC remains a flagship project in Pakistan-China relations. As part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC aims to enhance connectivity between the two countries through infrastructure development, energy projects, and economic cooperation. Both countries continue to prioritize the completion and expansion of CPEC-related initiatives.

Economic Cooperation

Economic ties between Pakistan and China continue to deepen, with trade and investment cooperation being key components. China is one of Pakistan's largest trading partners and a significant source of foreign direct investment (FDI). Efforts to further enhance bilateral trade, address trade imbalances, and promote investments are ongoing.

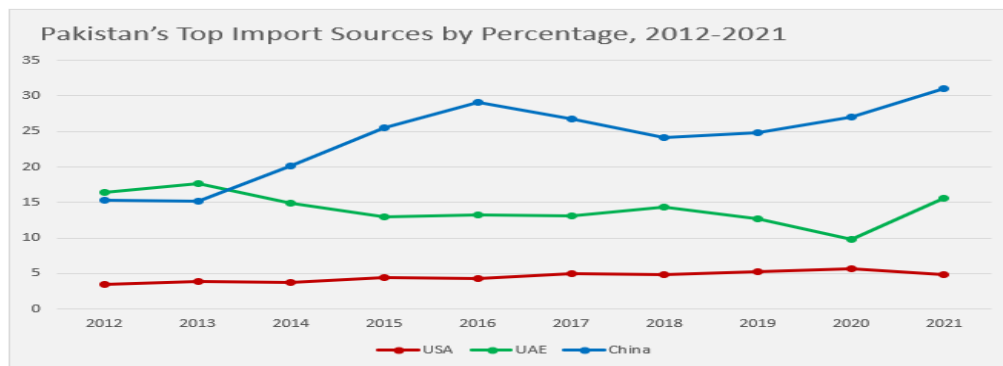


Fig 4: Pakistan's Top Imports (Sariieddine, 2022)

Security Cooperation

Security cooperation between Pakistan and China remains strong, with a focus on counterterrorism, defense collaboration, and intelligence sharing. Both countries share concerns about regional stability and security, particularly concerning Afghanistan and counterterrorism efforts.

People-to-People Exchanges

People-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China are actively promoted to strengthen cultural and educational ties. Initiatives such as student exchange programs, cultural festivals, and academic collaborations contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries.

Diplomatic Support

Pakistan and China consistently support each other on various diplomatic fronts. They often align their positions on regional and global issues, including at forums such as the United Nations, where they cooperate on issues of mutual interest and concern.

Military Cooperation

Military cooperation between Pakistan and China is also significant, encompassing defense collaboration, joint exercises, and arms sales. Both countries engage in regular military exchanges and cooperation to enhance defense capabilities and address security challenges.

Regional and Global Cooperation

Pakistan and China collaborate closely on regional and global issues, including those related to South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. They advocate for shared interests such as regional stability, economic development, and multilateralism.

Overall, Pakistan-China relations in 2024 continue to be characterized by strong political, economic, and strategic cooperation. The partnership between the two countries plays a significant role in shaping regional dynamics and promoting mutual interests in various fields.

PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Pakistan maintains varying degrees of relations with its neighboring countries, influenced by historical, geopolitical, and strategic factors. Here's an overview of Pakistan's relations with its neighbors as of 2024:

India

Relations between Pakistan and India have been historically tense, primarily due to disputes over the region of Kashmir and other bilateral issues. Despite occasional efforts to normalize relations and engage in dialogue, tensions persist, particularly regarding cross-border terrorism and security concerns. As of 2024, diplomatic engagement between the two countries remains limited, with sporadic dialogue attempts mediated by third parties.

Afghanistan

Pakistan shares a long and porous border with Afghanistan, and the two countries have complex and interconnected histories. Bilateral relations have been marked by periods of cooperation and tensions, with Pakistan playing a significant role in the Afghan peace process. As of 2024, efforts to promote stability and reconciliation in Afghanistan remain a key priority for Pakistan, although challenges such as border security and refugee management persist.

Iran

Pakistan shares a long and porous border with Iran, with historical ties dating back centuries. Relations between the two countries have been generally cordial, with cooperation in areas such as trade, energy, and border security. However, occasional tensions arise, particularly regarding issues such as border security, smuggling, and regional geopolitics. Efforts to strengthen economic ties and enhance regional cooperation continue to be pursued.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

Pakistan's bilateral relations with these Central Asian states have been relatively limited. Efforts to enhance connectivity and trade relations through projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline have been pursued. However, greater economic and diplomatic engagement with Central Asian countries remains a potential area for further cooperation.

Overall, Pakistan's relations with its neighboring countries are characterized by a mix of cooperation, competition, and occasional tensions. Efforts to enhance regional connectivity, promote economic cooperation, and address shared security challenges remain ongoing priorities for Pakistan's foreign policy in the region.

Pakistan's Relations with Russia

Pakistan's relations with Russia have witnessed significant developments in recent years, moving from a historically distant relationship to a more pragmatic engagement marked by growing cooperation in various fields.



Fig. 4: Pak-Russia Relations (Jahangir's World Times, 2021)

Here's an overview of Pakistan's relations with Russia as of 2024; Diplomatic Engagement: Pakistan and Russia have made efforts to strengthen diplomatic ties through high-level visits and exchanges. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in diplomatic contacts, including visits by heads of state and foreign ministers from both countries, signaling a desire to enhance bilateral relations.

Military Cooperation

Military cooperation between Pakistan and Russia has expanded in recent years, with both countries conducting joint military exercises and exploring opportunities for defense collaboration. Pakistan has shown interest in acquiring Russian military equipment, including helicopters and air defense systems, diversifying its defense procurement beyond traditional suppliers.

Counterterrorism and Regional Security

Pakistan and Russia share concerns about regional security threats, including terrorism and extremism. Both countries have expressed willingness to cooperate in counterterrorism efforts and promote stability in the wider region, particularly in Afghanistan.

Economic Relations

Economic cooperation between Pakistan and Russia remains relatively modest compared to other areas of engagement. Efforts to enhance trade and investment ties have been hindered by logistical challenges, trade barriers, and limited business interactions. However, both countries have expressed interest in exploring avenues to boost economic cooperation, including through trade promotion initiatives and business forums.

Energy Cooperation

Pakistan and Russia have explored opportunities for cooperation in the energy sector, including the possibility of Russian investment in Pakistan's energy infrastructure and the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Enhanced energy cooperation could contribute to addressing Pakistan's energy needs and diversifying its energy sources.

Regional and International Forums

Pakistan and Russia collaborate in various regional and international forums, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the United Nations. Both countries coordinate their positions on regional and global issues of mutual interest, such as counterterrorism, peacekeeping, and regional stability.

Overall, Pakistan-Russia relations have witnessed a positive trajectory in recent past, with both states seeking to expand cooperation in multiple areas. While challenges remain, such as historical mistrust and divergent interests in some areas, there is a growing recognition of the importance of bilateral engagement and the potential benefits of closer ties between Pakistan and Russia.

PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Pakistan's relations with the countries of the Middle East have been historically characterized by cultural, economic, and strategic ties. As of 2024, these relations continue to be multifaceted, with Pakistan maintaining close diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation with countries in the Middle East. Here are some key aspects of Pakistan's relations with the Middle East:

Diplomatic Engagement

Pakistan maintains diplomatic relations with all countries in the Middle East and has embassies or consulates in most of them. High-level visits and exchanges between Pakistani and Middle Eastern leaders occur regularly, reflecting the importance of bilateral ties.

Economic Cooperation

Economic ties between Pakistan and the Middle East are significant, with trade, investment, and remittances playing crucial roles. Many Pakistanis work in the Gulf countries and send remittances back home, contributing to Pakistan's economy. Additionally, Pakistan exports goods, particularly textiles, to Middle Eastern markets.

Security Cooperation

Pakistan and Middle Eastern countries cooperate on security matters, including defense, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism efforts. Military training programs and joint exercises are common, reflecting shared security concerns and the desire to enhance defense capabilities.

Islamic Solidarity and Cultural Ties

Pakistan shares cultural and religious ties with many countries in the Middle East, based on Islam being the dominant religion in both regions. This cultural affinity fosters a sense of solidarity and cooperation, with Pakistan often aligning with Middle Eastern countries on issues related to Islam and the Muslim world.

Labor Migration and Remittances

Labor migration to the Middle East is significant for Pakistan's economy, with millions of Pakistanis working in states such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Oman. Remittances from the expatriates in the Middle East constitute a substantial portion of Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings.

Diplomatic Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Pakistan plays a role in diplomatic mediation and conflict resolution efforts in the Middle East. It has historically maintained diplomatic relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, often serving as a mediator or facilitator in resolving disputes or promoting dialogue between regional actors.

Energy Cooperation

Pakistan imports oil and gas from several Middle Eastern countries to meet its energy needs. Cooperation in the energy sector includes oil and gas exploration, investment in energy infrastructure, and agreements on energy supplies and pricing.

Humanitarian Assistance and Development Cooperation

Pakistan provides humanitarian assistance and development cooperation to Middle Eastern countries affected by conflicts or natural disasters. This includes sending relief supplies, providing medical assistance, and offering reconstruction support.

Overall, Pakistan's relations with the Middle East are diverse and multifaceted, spanning diplomatic, economic, security, cultural, and humanitarian dimensions. Maintaining and enhancing these relations remains a priority for Pakistan's foreign policy, given the region's strategic importance and its impact on Pakistan's economy and security.

PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM

Pakistan's relations with the United Kingdom (UK) have deep historical roots and encompass various dimensions, including political, economic, cultural, and security cooperation. Here are some key aspects of Pakistan's relations with the UK:

Historical Ties

Pakistan's relationship with the UK is rooted in its colonial history. Pakistan was part of British India until gaining independence in 1947. Despite the end of colonial rule, historical ties between the two countries continue to shape their bilateral relations.

Diplomatic Engagement

Pakistan and the UK maintain diplomatic relations, with both countries having embassies in each other's capitals. High-level visits between Pakistani and British leaders occur regularly, facilitating dialogue and cooperation on bilateral and international issues.

Trade and Investment

Economic ties between Pakistan and the UK are significant. The UK is one of Pakistan's largest trading partners and a major source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Bilateral trade covers a wide range of sectors, including textiles, pharmaceuticals, information technology, and services.

Development Cooperation

The UK provides development assistance to Pakistan in areas such as education, health, governance, and poverty alleviation. Development cooperation aims to support Pakistan's socio-economic development and improve the livelihoods of its citizens.

Defense and Security Cooperation

Pakistan and the UK cooperate on defense and security matters, including military training, counterterrorism, and intelligence sharing. Both countries have a shared interest in promoting regional stability and combating terrorism and extremism.

Cultural and Educational Exchanges

Cultural and educational exchanges between Pakistan and the UK are facilitated through programs such as student scholarships, academic collaborations, and cultural events. These exchanges strengthen people-to-people ties and promote mutual understanding and cooperation.

Pakistani Diaspora

The Pakistani diaspora in the UK is sizable and plays a significant role in bilateral relations. Pakistani expatriates in the UK contribute to the economy, society, and cultural diversity of both countries and serve as a bridge between the two nations.

Human Rights and Democracy

Pakistan and the UK engage in dialogue on human rights, democracy, and governance issues. The UK advocates for the promotion of human rights, rule of law, and democratic principles in Pakistan, while also supporting initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and civil society.

Overall, Pakistan's relations with the UK are characterized by cooperation and mutual interests across various sectors. Both countries continue to work together to enhance their partnership and address common challenges, while also building on their historical ties and shared values.

PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024

Despite the challenges, Pakistan also has several opportunities in the realm of foreign policy that it can leverage to advance its national interests and enhance its international standing. Following are some of these opportunities:

Strategic Location

Pakistan's geographical location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East provides it with significant strategic importance. It can capitalize on its location to become a hub for regional connectivity, trade, and energy cooperation through projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Economic Diplomacy

Pakistan has the opportunity to diversify its economy and attract foreign investment through economic diplomacy initiatives. Strengthening trade ties with neighboring countries, as well as emerging markets in Africa and Southeast Asia, can boost Pakistan's economic growth and development.

Energy Resources

Pakistan possesses abundant energy resources, including hydroelectric, solar, and wind power potential. By investing in renewable energy infrastructure and promoting energy cooperation with neighboring countries, Pakistan can address its energy needs while also contributing to regional stability and sustainable development.

Diplomatic Engagement

Pakistan has the opportunity to enhance its diplomatic engagement with key regional and global players. Strengthening ties with countries like China, Russia, and Turkey, as well as expanding cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), can bolster Pakistan's diplomatic influence and leverage.

Counterterrorism Cooperation

Pakistan can further strengthen its cooperation with the international community in combating terrorism and extremism. By demonstrating its commitment to counterterrorism efforts and actively participating in multilateral initiatives, Pakistan can improve its global reputation and strengthen security cooperation with other countries.

Regional Integration

Pakistan has the opportunity to play a constructive role in promoting regional integration and cooperation. Initiatives such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) provide platforms for Pakistan to engage with its neighbors and foster economic, political, and cultural ties.

Youth and Education Diplomacy

With a large youth population and a growing education sector, Pakistan can leverage its human capital to enhance its soft power and influence abroad. Promoting educational exchanges, cultural programs, and youth initiatives can help improve Pakistan's image and build bridges with other countries.

Cultural and Heritage Diplomacy

Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, including its historical sites, cuisine, and arts, offers opportunities for cultural diplomacy. Showcasing Pakistan's cultural diversity and heritage can enhance its cultural diplomacy efforts and promote understanding and cooperation with other countries.

Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

Given its experience with internal conflicts and its role in regional conflicts, Pakistan can contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. By facilitating dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes, Pakistan can help mitigate conflicts and promote stability in the region.

Climate Change Leadership

As a vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change, Pakistan can demonstrate leadership in addressing environmental challenges. By implementing climate mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as engaging in international climate diplomacy, Pakistan can contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.

Overall, Pakistan has a range of opportunities to pursue in its foreign policy endeavors, ranging from economic cooperation and diplomatic engagement to peacebuilding and cultural diplomacy. By effectively leveraging these opportunities, Pakistan can enhance its regional and global influence while advancing its national interests and promoting regional stability and prosperity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Foreign policy operates within a structural framework determined by international systems such as bipolar, multipolar, or unipolar and functional dynamics, including economic interdependence, security threats, and cultural exchanges. Identification of variables is very important in this regard. Understanding the variables that shape foreign policy is crucial for any country. These variables may include geopolitical considerations, economic interests, security concerns, cultural ties, and ideological beliefs. In the era of digital diplomacy, it is very important to review the objectives of Pakistan's Foreign Policy. Pakistan, like any other nation, needs to articulate clear objectives for its foreign policy. These objectives may include ensuring territorial integrity, promoting economic development, enhancing regional stability, combating terrorism, and fostering diplomatic alliances. The impact of global developments is another very important factor that needs to be addressed seriously. Rapid advancements in technology and globalization are reshaping international relations. These developments influence the strategies and priorities of countries, necessitating adaptability in foreign policy approaches. Geopolitics and economic considerations are very important areas of review of foreign relations. Geopolitical factors, such as strategic location and access to resources, continue to influence foreign policy decisions. However, there is a growing emphasis on economic interests, as globalization and trade play an increasingly significant role in shaping international relations. Countries like Pakistan in the South Asian region cannot overlook the role of major Powers. The actions and policies of major powers, including the USA, China, Russia, and the UK, have significant implications for global politics. Their involvement in regions like the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia may influence the geopolitical landscape and shape the foreign policy priorities of other nations. This research analysis indicates that Pakistan should plan a smart review of foreign policy that must be based on short-term and long-term strategies and address the state's future political, economic, and security requirements. The short-term plans need to address diplomatic engagement and strengthen diplomatic ties with key allies and neighboring countries and neutrality should be maintained in this regard.

Moreover, there is a vital need of hour to engage the teams of polished, trained and balanced international relations experts in constructive dialogue to resolve unresolved issues, such as the Kashmir conflict with India, and foster regional stability. It is the need of the hour to actively pursue peaceful resolutions to conflicts, particularly with India and Afghanistan. Encourage dialogue, mediation, and confidence-building measures to reduce tensions and promote stability in the region. Another key area is counterterrorism cooperation. The revised foreign policy document must include the details of plans to enhance cooperation with international partners to combat terrorism and extremism. Pakistan should demonstrate its commitment to eradicating terrorist groups operating within its borders and work closely with the international community to dismantle terrorist networks. Economic diplomacy is a very important sector. Economic diplomacy can strengthen bilateral relations and attract foreign investment. There is a need to enhance trade partnerships with countries beyond traditional allies to diversify economic ties and promote growth. Public diplomacy can improve Pakistan's image abroad through effective public diplomacy efforts. The country's cultural richness, economic potential, and contributions to regional peace and stability should be highlighted to counter negative stereotypes and misconceptions.

CONCLUSION

Regional integration is a vital segment and relevant quarters should actively participate in regional forums and initiatives to promote economic integration and cooperation to achieve the country's goals as per the theoretical framework based on the prospects approach. Moreover, one can easily determine the variables of the foreign policy of Pakistan after an appraisal of gains and losses in the light of the historical review of relations with different important countries at regional and international levels. There is a need to explore opportunities for increased connectivity, trade, and people-to-people exchanges within South Asia and beyond. Successful water diplomacy can be the game changer in this agro-based region. Pakistan needs to address water-related issues, particularly with India, through dialogue and cooperation. Develop mechanisms for equitable sharing of water resources to mitigate tensions and promote sustainable development. The international community is focusing on humanitarian assistance. Therefore, Pakistan may provide humanitarian assistance to the neighboring countries facing crises, such as Afghanistan, to foster goodwill and strengthen bilateral relations. Pakistan can support efforts for Afghan refugees' rehabilitation and reconstruction in Afghanistan to contribute to regional stability. Cultural exchange programs can serve as bridges in fractured relations with other countries. Pakistan's foreign diplomats can foster cultural exchanges and educational partnerships with other countries to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. Academic and cultural exchange programs can significantly contribute to bridging people and promoting peace, especially with the neighboring countries. Hence, international norms and commitments are another vital area for rapid improvement in international relations, to uphold international norms and commitments, including human rights, democracy, and non-proliferation. A commitment to global peace and security is needed by adhering to international agreements and conventions.

Implementation of the aforementioned measures requires a combination of political will, diplomatic skills, and sincere and sustained efforts. By addressing these urgent issues, Pakistan can strengthen its foreign relations, enhance regional stability, and contribute to global peace and prosperity. Overall, Pakistan's foreign policy must navigate a complex and evolving international environment, balancing its strategic interests with regional and global dynamics. Adaptability, diplomacy, and a clear understanding of its objectives and challenges are essential for effectively pursuing its foreign policy goals with well-thought policy formulation.

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