

# Pakistan's foreign policy and changing world order

## Outline

### I. Introduction

**Thesis statement:** Foreign policy of Pakistan is evolving with changing world order. Many opportunities and obstacles are present in the changing dynamics of the world order. Pakistan can make or break itself through its foreign policy.

### II. Changing dynamics of world order

- (a) Evolution of new world order from unipolar to multipolar
- (b) Formation of new alliances and de-dollarization
- (c) Indo-pacific region as a stage of cold war between the USA and China

(d) Revival of relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia with China's mediation

### III. Pakistan's foreign policy in response to changing world order

(a) Building friendly relationship with leading power players

(b) Playing the role of mediator to end hostilities between Iran and the KSA

(c) Facilitating the peace deal between the US and the Taliban

(d) Neutral role in the proxy wars of the Middle East

### IV. Challenges to foreign policy of Pakistan in changing world order

(a) Pakistan's place in the rivalry between the USA and China

(b) Strained relationships of Pakistan with India

(e) Shifting from Geo-strategic orientation to geo-economics.

d) Political unrest in the state

## v. Suggestions

a) Enhancing relationship with China

b) Conducting free and fair elections in the country to bring political stability in the country.

c) Exploring trade opportunities with Russia without annoying the USA and the European Union

d) Improving the ties with the Muslim world without going into block politics.

## v1. Conclusion

The world is like a puzzle, and the pieces are changing places. It is like a giant game where the rules are evolving, and everyone is figuring out their new role. Imagine a kaleidoscope turning, and each turn brings a different pattern of countries and alliances. It is like a big, global dance where the partners are switching, and we are learning new steps. Likewise, the world order is changing. It is moving towards multipolarity. De-dollarization is taking place. Alliances are shifting. The Indo-Pacific region has become a stage for cold war between the USA and China. In addition to them, there is a considerable improvement in the relationship between Iran and Saudi-Arabia with the mediation of China.

In this changing world order, Pakistan is responding in following ways. It is building friendly relationship with leading power players. It is playing a role of mediator between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is facilitating peace deal between the USA and the Afghan Taliban. However, foreign policy of Pakistan is grappled with hydra-headed challenges like US-China trade war, strained relationships with India, weak economy and political unrest within the state. These challenges can be coped by enhancing the spectrum of relationship with China, conducting free and fair elections, exploring new economic partners and reviving the spirit of Muslim Ummah. In simple words, many challenges and opportunities are available in the changing world for Pakistan. It is Pakistan's foreign policy which can make or break Pakistan.

In the changing world order, the global politics is shifting from unipolarity to multipolarity. The unipolarity means a single power's dominance over the politics and the economics of the world. Now this is shared by multiple stakeholders. For example, after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, the USA emerged as a sole superpower on the global scale. However, now China, Russia and many ASEAN countries are challenging the hegemony of the USA.

As mentioned in the book of **Parag Khanna - 'The Future is Asian'**, the book delves into how economic and geopolitical forces are fostering a more multipolar world, challenging the once-dominant Western-centric ~~now~~ narrative.

Along with multipolarity, there is commendable change in alliances, and there is strong campaign against dollar's hegemony in the changing global order. Multiple blocs are formed in just a few years. For example, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) along with recently added 6 countries is a strong evidence of changing world order and multipolarity. This organization contains 3.7 billion world population, which is 46% of the total population. In a recent meeting of the BRICS, which is conducted on 22 August to 24 August 2023, the member countries pledged to trade in their indigenous currencies instead of dollar. This was a significant development in the changing world order.

Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific region has become a stage of cold war between the USA and China. China is an emerging power which is a threat to super power USA. It has created a 'Thucydides' trap. For instance, in the Indo-Pacific theater, the brewing cold war tensions between the USA and China are expertly dissected in **Robert D. Kaplan's** book, '**The Revenge of Geography**'. Kaplan delves into the strategic significance of the region examining the geopolitical chessboard where the two powers vie for influence. It provides a valuable insights into the complex interactions and potential flashpoints that define the contemporary power struggle in the Indo-Pacific.



Likewise, a significant shift was observed in the Middle Eastern politics, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran came closer to each other with the mediation of China. This was a powerful setback to the USA's influence in the Middle East.

China is slowly and gradually replacing the USA from the Middle Eastern politics. For example, 'The Deal' between the KSA and Iran with China's role has restored diplomatic ties between them.

China's role in brokering the deal could have "significant implications" for Washington, said Daniel Russel, the top USA diplomat for East Asia under former president Barack Obama.

The USA has been diplomatically marginalised by the development. The US plan to normalise Saudi-Israel relations has been scuttled for the immediate future.

order, Pakistan is wisely responding through its foreign policy, the most significantly, it is building friendly relations with leading global powers. Pakistan's diplomatic engagement with global powers are explored in 'Pakistan: A Hard Country' by Anatol Lieven, offering insights into its complex relationships. The book explores Pakistan's geopolitical importance situated at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Due to its strategic location, Pakistan is significant for various global powers. Like China, the USA and Russia, they consider Pakistan very important, similarly, Pakistan also has economic and political interests with these countries. Therefore, Pakistan is maintaining healthy relations with all these global powers.

Similarly, Pakistan is playing a pivotal role in ending hostilities between the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan played an important role in defusing tensions between arch-foes Saudi Arabia and Iran. For instance, according to the Foreign office's spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahara Baloch, Pakistan like several other countries and friends of both Iran and Saudi Arabia played a significant role in facilitating dialogue. Ms Baloch said, "Pakistan commends China's visionary leadership in coordinating the historic agreement: **The Deal**". This reflects a larger tectonic shift in the international order, where American unipolarity is on the wane and a new multipolar order, led by Russia and China and supported by the BRIC's states is being born.

In the same vein, peace deal between the USA and the Afghan Taliban was brokered by Pakistan. Pakistan played an important role in the 'Global War on Terror' launched by the USA. According to Islamabad Policy Research Institute, cost of war was paid by Pakistan in the form of more than 80 thousand casualties, and economic loss of approximately \$150bn. In spite of all this loss, Pakistan brought the Afghan Taliban on dialogue table. Resultantly, in January 2022, 'Doha Deal' was signed between the USA and the Afghan Taliban as mentioned by Peter Marsden in his book 'The Taliban: War, Religion and the New order in Afghanistan'. In this way, Pakistan tried to maintain peace in the region.

Furthermore, Pakistan remained neutral in the proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan cannot afford tense relations with any one of them because of its vast majority of Sunni and Shia Muslim. In the constitution of Pakistan, it is mentioned in the Article 40, Pakistan should develop brotherly relations with Muslim countries. It did not go into bloc politics in the Middle East. For example, in 2015, when the KSA asked Pakistan to send its troops in Yemen, but Pakistan kindly refused through a parliamentary resolution. Shortly, it impacted the relations between Pakistan and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Countries), but in long run that decision saved Pakistan from a major loss. This was a significant feat of Pakistan's foreign policy.

However, Pakistan is facing multiple challenges in the changing world order, the most significant among them is US-China rivalry. Pakistan has dependency on both these nations. Therefore, it cannot afford politics of alignment. For example, Pakistan's strategic relationship with China is necessary but insufficient to address its economic and security challenges. Pakistan also need the USA, an important bilateral economic partner that has traditionally been a valuable security provider. Regardless, an alienated America has the capacity to harm Pakistan directly or through India. The situation might change if the economic evaluation becomes overly weighted in China's favour.

Another hurdle in the way of foreign policy of Pakistan is strained relations with India. India is an existential threat for Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan has to make its foreign policy India centric. For example, Umar Karim has explained in his book '**India - Pakistan Relations: Beyond Pulwama and Balakot**' shed light on the historical, political and security dimensions between Pakistan and India. It highlighted that the strained relationship with India posed a significant challenge for Pakistan marked by historical conflicts and territorial disputes. Consequently, Pakistan cannot make its foreign policy entirely economy centric. It has a significant economic potential with India as well, but it cannot be tapped until friendly relations will be built between them.

In addition to this, Pakistan is facing challenge in shifting from geo-strategic to geo-economic orientation. Pakistan remained a security ridden state since its inception. However, now there is need to shift from geostrategic posture to geo-economic position. For example, Pakistan can become a transit corridor for the Central Asian Republics, Russia, China and India. This dream can be realized by establishing friendly relations with neighbouring countries by engaging them in different economic projects. Until Pakistan will become an economically independent country, it cannot make an independent and strong foreign policy. This shift is very important in materializing a strong foreign policy in the



changing world order.

Another challenge Pakistan is facing in the formulation of good foreign policy is political unrest in the country. There is political victimization which is going on in the country. The undemocratic forces are also disrupting the political evolution of Pakistan directly or indirectly. The elections are delayed. They were not conducted on the date stipulated in the constitution of Pakistan 1973. All these factors are hindering the way of a vibrant foreign policy in the changing world order. Anatol Lieven in his book "Pakistan: A Hard Country" explains that political unrest in Pakistan stems from complex interplay of factors. Historical tensions between civilian government and the military,

coupled with ethnic and sectarian divisions, contribute to a fragile political landscape. Economic challenges, corruption, and unequal distribution of resources further exacerbate discontent among the population. All of these factors impact foreign policy of Pakistan.

In spite of all these challenges, Pakistan can ~~make~~ make its foreign policy strong in the global dynamics by taking certain steps, the foremost among them is Pakistan should broaden its relationships with China. China is an all weather friend which did not leave Pakistan in lurch. Therefore Pakistan should increase its ties with China both economically and strategically. For example,  
"The China - Pakistan Axis: Asia's New

Geopolitics' by Andrew Small provides valuable insights into the benefits of deepening economic ties between Pakistan and China. It highlights the strategic significance of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), emphasizing its potential to boost Pakistan's economic growth through infrastructure development and trade partnership.

Foreign policy of Pakistan can only be strengthened through by bringing house in rest. For this there is a need of free and fair elections in the country. Parliament is the place where foreign policy objectives are made and proceeded. As mentioned in the book of Hasan Askari, "Elections in Pakistan: An Analysis of General Elections 1970 - 2018"

that elections have the pivotal role in shaping Pakistan's political landscape. He underscores that free and fair elections serve as a mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power contributing to political stability. In this way, Pakistan will be in a better position to adapt itself in the changing world order.

In the changing world order, Pakistan should also consider Russia in its foreign policy objectives without annoying the Western world in trade and economic connectivity.

The Western world remained a transactional friend of Pakistan. Therefore, there is a need to explore new trade opportunities with Russia. "The Eurasian Connection:

Supply chains and Economic Integration between Russia and China" by Bruno Maçoes sheds light on the evolving economic dynamics in Eurasia, including potential trade opportunities for Pakistan with Russia. Exploring the geopolitical landscape, it suggests that Pakistan can tap into emerging opportunities by fostering economic ties with Russia, especially in sectors like energy, agriculture and technology.

Last but not the least way to adjust Pakistan's foreign policy in the changing world order is improving ties with the Muslim world. Pakistan is an ideological state, therefore, it has to connect itself with the Muslim bloc in order to rise as a political and economic power in the

fluctuating world order. "Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis" by Abdul Sattar provides insights into Pakistan's role in adapting to the changing world order. It discusses how Pakistan strategically engages with the Muslim world to navigate evolving geopolitical dynamics. Emphasizing diplomatic initiatives and participation in forums like the organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Pakistan seeks to ~~work~~ enhance cooperation on shared challenges.

To conclude, in the light of the above mentioned points, Pakistan is reshaping its foreign policy with changing world order. There are multiple manifestations of the changing world order like

a shift from unipolarity to multipolarity, a strong campaign against dollar's hegemony, and a seismic shift in the Middle Eastern politics. Pakistan is responding with a positive approach. It is building friendly relations with global powers and is playing role in bringing peace in the region and the world. However, there are multiple challenges for Pakistan in the global dynamics. Despite these challenges, Pakistan can orient itself in the changing world order by taking certain steps, the foremost among them is strengthening relationships with China and Russia. Moreover, it can become the leader of the Muslim world through a vibrant foreign policy in this changing world order.