

CHANGING CONTOURS OF FOREIGN POLICY OF PAKISTAN

1. Introduction

The foreign Policy of Pakistan has evolved over time and it is still changing owing to the shift in the global power dynamics, regional security concerns and economic preferences.

2. Evolution In The Foreign Policy Of Pakistan.

3. Changing Contours Of The Foreign Policy Of Pakistan:

3.1. Contemporary Shift In The Foreign Policy Of Pakistan Towards Neighbouring Countries:

3.1.1. Strengthening ties with China
to enhance economic collaborations
"China - Pakistan Economic Corridor"

3.1.2. Delineating relationships with India
over Kashmir issue.

"Stalemate after India revoked article
370 and 35-A of the Constitution."

3.1.3. Stringing relations with Afghanistan
due to security concerns.

"Strikes by Pakistan in Afghan
territory on 1st January."

3.1.4. Improving relations with Iran
focusing on regional security and
economic participations.

"Iran announced to boost bilateral
trade to \$10 billion."

3.2. Variation In The Foreign Policy Of Pakistan Towards Super-powers And Emerging Powers :

3.2.1. Strengthening bond between Pakistan and Russia

“ Oil trades between Pakistan and Russia in Yuan currency.”²³

3.2.1. Escalating tensions between Pakistan and the U.S. owing to arms development.

“ The U.S. declared new missiles of U.S. Pakistan, a danger to the U.S.”²⁴

3.3. Fluctuating Foreign Policy Of Pakistan In Maintaining Good Relations With Muslim World:

3.3.1. Bracing relations with Saudi Arabia

“Saudi Arabia investment in SIFC”

3.3.2. Unwavering support of Kashmiris and Palestinians.

“Diplomatic aid to Kashmiris and financial aid to Palestinians.”

3.4. Foreign Policy of Pakistan Towards Global Issues:

3.4.1. Promoting unity among muslims.

“Emergency meetings of OIC.”

3.4.2. Advocating for climate financing framework.

“Participation in COP 29 under UNFCCC”

3.4.3. Playing active role to combat regional terrorism.

“Using RATS of SCO”

4. Challenges To Foreign Policy Of Pakistan:

- i. Weak economic conditions.
- ii. Re-emergence of terrorism.
- iii. Poor governance at home.

5. Way Forward For Foreign Policy Of Pakistan:

- i. Promote international trade and economic collaborations to uplift economy.
- ii. Balance approach towards all global powers, friends and enemies.
- iii. Utilizing international connections to combat terrorism.
- iv. Ensure good governance and political stability by promoting negotiations and dialogues.

6. Conclusion.

Essay

"Domestic policy can only defeat us, foreign policy can kill us," aptly remarked by the 35th U.S. President John F. Kennedy.

Foreign policy of a country dictates the future relations, friends and enemies in the global arena.

It is used as an instrument by countries to promote their respective national interests. Foreign

policy consists of principles, references, decisions and actions of a country

that involves relations between

states. A balanced, clear and

well-structured foreign policy can uplift a country. On the

contrary, a vague foreign policy also borne its bitter fruits.

Pakistan came into being on 14th August, 1947. Since then its foreign policy is changing and evolving. Many countries who were friends with Pakistan are now mere acquaintances and there were countries who had tense relations with Pakistan but are now getting closer. Pakistan's foreign policy with neighbouring countries has also underwent many changes. Over the time relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan witnessed a deep decline along with India - Pakistan relations. Relationship with Iran also had its ups and down but it is now improving. Ties with China has strengthened over time and the spirit of brotherhood exists between them. Due to various actions and decisions of Pakistan,

the relationship between Pakistan and global - south improved, and on the other hand relations with well-established super-powers deteriorated. It is part of Pakistan's foreign policy to maintain good relations with muslim world. This task has its own challenges due to Iran - Saudi proxy wars. Furthermore, to enhance muslim unity Pakistan is very vocal regarding rights of oppressed muslims. Moreover, Pakistan's foreign policy also involves collaborations with international organizations to voice global issues. The foreign policy of Pakistan is always changing and there are various challenges posed to it. All is not lost if Pakistan act in the right time, it can

surely overcome the contemporary challenges to the foreign policy.

The stages of evolution foreign policy of Pakistan went through was to promote national interests.

These shifts in the foreign policy indicates that they are mostly influenced by its economic prospects, security concerns, ideologically perceptions and varying global power dynamics.

There is no doubt in the fact that since the time of creation, Pakistan's foreign policy is evolving. In beginning from 1947 - 1952, Pakistan was exploring its friendship with all.

From the time period of 1953-1962, Pakistan supported Western bloc. Then after a period of

transition from 1962-71, Pakistan finally moved towards bilateralism and a policy of non-alignment. It continued till dawn of the Cold War. 1990-2001 era is marked with influence of cold war in Afghanistan, and development of nuclear power. This era saw the surge of militant groups, and growth of terrorist. Afterwards from 2001 to onwards Pakistan is in continuous state of war against terrorism. Furthermore, the starting relationships of Pakistan were revolving around its geo-strategic importance. Over the time Pakistan has observed a shift from geo-strategic to geo-economics. In the contemporary times, the world is undergoing many changes and major power

shifts. Pakistan's foreign policy is evolving and developing in this context.

Foreign policy of Pakistan dictates its relationship with the neighbouring countries. Pakistan is bordered with India, China, Iran and Afghanistan. Among these countries China lie in the north-south of Pakistan. Pakistan was among first countries who recognized People's Republic of China. Both countries started bilateral relations since ^{from} 1950s. Since then there relation grew by leaps and bound. China has supported Pakistan immensely even at times when nobody else helped. Biggest manifestation of strong ties between countries is the China-Pakistan Economic

Corridor project. Under CPEC, China has promised to invest almost \$ 60 billions in Pakistan, in which almost \$ 23 billions has already been invested. CPEC is the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The growing ties between countries reaffirm the presence of iron-ties between them.

Furthermore, another neighbour of Pakistan is India. India is located at South-East of Pakistan. Due to history of partition of sub-continent, India-Pakistan relations were not good since the beginning. But there were times when peace-efforts were made. All the progress made to improve India-Pakistan relations entered into a stale-mate condition when

India revoked Article 370 and 35-A of the Constitution of India. By revoking these articles India suspended the special status of Kashmir (IOK).

This action was carried out in 2019.

Since then the ties between countries have not been able to recover.

Pakistan adopted a peaceful approach but because of India's stubbornness, Pakistan also had to shape its foreign policy accordingly.

Thus, Kashmir issue is the bone of contention between two countries and causing decline in healthy, peaceful relations.

Moreover, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are also very tense these days. Afghanistan is located at the West of Pakistan. Both

countries share historic & cultural and religious ties. But since beginning they had their tough times. Pakistan was only opposed at the United Nations by Afghanistan. Pakistan's foreign policy for a great time was influenced by its need to secure borders against India. It is in interest of Pakistan to have good relations with Afghanistan. Afghanistan provides strategic depth. Due to these reasons, Pakistan always kept a soft corner for Afghanistan. Pakistan supported Taliban government in 1992. It also opened its borders for refugees. But in the long run peace could not last long. After the incident of 9/11 in the U.S., Pakistan had to revise its foreign policy. It cause shift

in relations. Currently, Afghanistan is providing safe space for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, a militant group. Due to the presence of TTP in Afghanistan, Pakistan launched an offensive in Afghanistan that further deteriorated relations between the states. Thus the recent attack of Pakistan on the land of Afghanistan points towards the changing contours of foreign policy of the country.

Along with these countries, Pakistan also shares border with Iran. Iran is a muslim majority country located in the south of Pakistan. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan at United Nations. Despite having a good start, both

countries had their ups and downs. Pakistan's tilt towards Saudi Arabia in 1990s distanced it from Iran. In the present times, the lost bond between neighbours is recovering. Iran Consular General announced to boost bilateral trade to \$10 billion. This points towards the improving ties between the countries and adoption of a friendlier foreign policy by both countries.

Pakistan lies at the cross-road of south-Asia. This enhances its importance in the global power play. In the starting years Pakistan's foreign policy was revolving around geo-strategic gains. In the recent times, the foreign policy shifted from

geo-strategic to geo-economics. This shift motivated Pakistan to enter into economic partnerships with global south and specifically BRICS+ countries. One of the major manifestations of the strengthening bonds with emerging super-powers, is growing collaborations between Russia and Pakistan. Russia was not at good terms with Pakistan in the start due to Pakistan's tilt towards the U.S. bloc in the cold war.

But eventually both countries managed to grow friendly relations. Russia uplifted arm embargo on Pakistan in 2013. Recently, Pakistan bought oil from Russia in Yuan currency, contributing in the de-dollarization of the world.

Pakistan's foreign policy is being shaped to develop good relations

with emerging powers.

Moving forward it is important to note that relations of Pakistan with the well-established super-power, the U.S. is worsening. Pakistan and the U.S. has seen various fluctuations over the time. After the birth of Pakistan, both countries had cordial relations. But recently the closeness between Pakistan and China, pushed U.S. away. White House called the missile program of Pakistan as a threat to the U.S. on Dec, 2024. Thus, current foreign policy is designed in the shadows of the contemporary relations between the countries.

Along with neighbours, world-emerging powers and global super-power, Pakistan's foreign policy includes cordial relations with the muslim world. To maintain the healthy influence, Pakistan tilted towards Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has stood with Pakistan in tough times. There is no doubt in the fact that relations with Saudi Arabia have often cost Pakistan, the relations with Iran. But still to promote economy and to stay close to middle East, Pakistan strived to build health Pak-Saudi relations. Saudi Arabia has also welcomed Pakistan's friendly policies. The respective country has recently announced billions of investment in the SIFC award. These and many more

growing collaborations are evidence of strengthened bond of brotherhood between the countries.

Furthermore, to stand with the oppressed muslims throughout world, Pakistan has shaped its foreign policy accordingly. Pakistan has always been very vocal about the violations of rights of the Kashmiris and Palestinians by India and Israel respectively.

Pakistan openly advocated for Kashmir's right to self-determination at UNGA. Moreover, up till & now more than 2707 tons of aid, worth more than PKR 2.7 billion has been dispatched to Gaza for Palestinians. These actions of Pakistan are sign of its unwavering

support to muslim world.

Now a days, the world is suffering and divided into factions. One of the global issue faced by muslim countries is the lack of unity among muslims. Pakistan's Constitution very clearly sets the standard by providing that Pakistan will uphold muslim unity.

To fulfil this aspiration, Pakistan has often been a very active participant and caller of the emergency meetings of the OIC. When India revoked article 370 and 35-A, Pakistan called emergency meeting of the OIC. When Israel attacked Gaza, OIC meeting was called and Pakistan took an active part in it. Therefore it is evident from past actions

of Pakistan that it has been utilizing international organizations to promote unity among muslims.

Not only this but also advocating for climate financing framework is part of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan is among the countries worsted hit by climate change. The United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) in its Conference of Parties, i.e., COP 28 came up with the concept of solidarity levies. COP 29 was also focused on getting countries to realize and agree to the solidarity levies framework. It will be like 'climate damage tax' on the developed countries. Pakistan actively participated in the COP 29 and

advocate in favour of climate financing framework. This indicates that Pakistan is well-aware of its potential and the global issues suffered by it.

In addition to these issues the region of South-Asia and in general global-South are suffering because of regional terrorism. Many militant groups call this region their home and make sure de-stabilization of the region. China along with other countries came up with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Under SCO, there exists the framework of 'Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure' to combat regional terrorism. Pakistan joined SCO to leverage the opportunities and

specifically using RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure) to fight terrorism crisis. Recently, Pakistan successfully organized the 23th session of Council of Heads of Government at Islamabad. This illustrates commitment of Pakistan and its priority to end the plague of terrorism.

Pakistan's foreign policy is a continuously changing phenomenon but there are various threats to its independence. As Winston Churchill once said, "Here is my first principle of foreign policy, good governance at home." Until there is good governance at home, a successful foreign policy can not be crafted. Pakistan is a country suffering from political

instability. Moreover, re-emergence of terrorism also pose threat to a strong, independent foreign policy. Since 2023, Pakistan witnessed rise in terrorism. This endangers foreign policy and again pushes it from geo-economic to geo-strategic policies. Moving forward, weak economic condition of Pakistan also adds salt to the injury. It makes Pakistan dependent on bail out packages of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These relief packages bring short-term stability but brings more harm than good and trap country int to the debt traps.

All the above mentioned challenges to the foreign policy need to be caterred for

a healthy foreign policy. There is a need to promote international trade of Pakistan with regional and global markets. One of such markets are Central Asian Republics. These countries are accessible to Pakistan and can play vital role in fulfilling Pakistan's energy needs along with economic uplift. Furthermore, Pakistan need to balance its relations in the context of on-going US - China tensions, Iran - Saudi Proxy wars, & improving India - Afghanistan relations. There is a need of Pakistan to combat terrorism by leveraging international connections. Collaborating with China and Russia in arms trade and training can prove beneficial for Pakistan. In addition to these, Pakistan needs

to ensure good governance and political stability. Political stability can become a reality if all the interested parties sit at a table and negotiate with the intrinsic will to stabilize the country. Dialogues and negotiations can stop wars. They have potential to bring political stability at home. It is crucial to take these steps to move towards a rather stable more efficient foreign policy. Prof. Joseph said, "Just like carpentry foreign policy needs a right tool for the right job. It is time for Pakistan to take those right steps and promote national interests."

In a nut shell, it is quite evident that since the

birth of Pakistan, it has ~~underwent~~ underwent many changes and evolutionary phases. The foreign policy of Pakistan is still changing due to volatility of the global affairs. Pakistan is surrounded by strong forces like China and India. Furthermore, close borders with Afghanistan and Iran also are strong elements. Pakistan's relationship with all of its neighbours changed ~~had~~ tremendously. Some neighbouring states became friends from strangers, some became strangers from friends and some develop enmity over time. These major changes were not limited just to neighbouring countries. Pakistan's foreign policy with respect to alignment with

Northern bloc and Southern bloc has also been ever changing. Pakistan's shifting relations are only to preserve and promote its national interest. When the interest align with Northern bloc, it sides with it. However, in the contemporary times, Pakistan's interest align well with the Southern bloc, and it is quite visible in Pakistan's behaviour towards global-South. Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that maintaining good relations with the muslim world is also part of Pakistan's foreign policy. Not only these but also advocacy for global issues such as combating regional terrorism, promoting climate finance framework and unifying Muslim Ummah are also part and parcel of

Pakistan's foreign policy. In discussion of foreign policy of Pakistan, one cannot ignore the challenges posed to it. These challenges include, but not limited to, matters of governance at national level, weakening economy and revival of terrorism. Pakistan needs to be vigilant and take appropriate action before it's too late. Some of the actions that Pakistan may consider are promotion of international trade and collaborations to uplift economy and security conditions. It is very crucial to keep in mind that foreign policy of nations have power to dictate its fate. Therefore, Pakistan needs to be careful specially in today's fast changing era. Pakistan needs to adopt a foreign policy

that aligns with its ideology, security concerns, economic preferences and overall national interest. As the founder of Pakistan clearly stated in this regard;

“ Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world.”

‘ Qaid-e-Azam ’

Mohammad Ali Jinnah
Founder of Pakistan
