

DATE: 23 / 01 / 2025

## Changing World Order and Pakistan's

### Foreign Policy

### Outline

#### 1- Introduction

Thesis statement: In the current changing world order, transitioning from unipolarity to multipolarity, Pakistan faces both challenges and opportunities. This shift in global power dynamics requires Pakistan to carefully design its foreign policy. However, by formulating a well-thought-out foreign policy, Pakistan can leverage the benefits of this global change and secure a range of advantages.

#### 2- Pakistan's Foreign Policy in a shifting global order

#### 3- Manifestation of changing world order

- a) Rise of China as economic and military power
- b) Decline of hegemony of United States
- c) Russia's assertive foreign policy
- d) Shift of world from geo-strategies to geo-economics
- e) Growth of multilateralism

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- f) Military alliances and strategic agreements
- g) Proxy conflicts reflecting new power dynamics

4- Foreign policy of Pakistan in the wake of changing world order:

- a) Pakistan is following its independent foreign policy
- b) Playing key role in strengthening strategic alliances
- c) Shifting foreign policy from geo-strategic to geo-economic
- d) Engagement with the middle east
- e) Policy of alignment with state's interests
- f) Redefined national security policy to cover emerging threats

5- Changing world order and options for Pakistan's foreign policy (Way forward)

- a) Balance relations with China and the US
- b) Neutral stance on world conflicts
- c) Increase regional connectivity
- d) Project soft image of country in the world

6- Conclusion

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In 1945, during the Yalta conference, leaders like Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin made decisions that would divide the world into two rival blocs, marking the beginning of the cold war. This division shaped the global order for decades. However, after the 1991 collapse of the USSR, a unipolar world emerged, dominated by the United States. Today, the world order shifting once more, compelling Pakistan to adapt its foreign policy to new global realities. The manifestation of changing world order may be observed as the economic and military rise of China and assertive foreign policy of Russia, with decline in the hegemony of United States and shift of world from geo-strategic to geo-economic policies. Growth of multilateralism through military alliances and strategic agreements and proxy conflicts are reflecting a new power dynamics. However, changing world order has also waked Pakistan's foreign-policy by giving choke of independent foreign policy, strengthening strategic alliances, shifting its foreign policy from geo-strategies to geo-economics. Furthermore, it helps in policy of alignment with state's interests and redefining national security policy. Therefore,

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There is need to take good options for benefits of Pakistan foreign policy by balancing relations with China and the US, neutral stance on world conflicts, increasing regional connectivity and project soft image for the world. In a nutshell, in the current changing world order, transitioning from unipolarity to multipolarity, Pakistan faces both challenges and opportunities. This shift in global power dynamics requires Pakistan to carefully design its foreign policy. However, by formulating a well-thought-out foreign policy, Pakistan can leverage the benefits of this global change and secure a range of advantages.

The world is moving from unipolarity, led by the US, to multipolarity, where powers like China, Russia, and European Union are gaining influence. China's fast growing economy and projects like the \$60 billion CPEC show its rising influence and importance. Russia is also becoming more active in global politics. Pakistan's location makes it important in this changing world, offering chances to grow economically and politically. However, it also faces challenges like good keeping good relations with the US, its biggest export partner (\$6 billion in 2022), and dealing with India, which spends \$72 billion on defense. To succeed, Pakistan needs a smart foreign policy to handle

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these global changes carefully and protect its interests.

There are many factors which manifest changing world order chief among them is the rise of China as economic and military power. China has emerged as a major global power with its GDP surpassing \$19 trillion in 2023, making the world's second-largest economy. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), involving over 140 countries, highlights its growing influence. Militarily, China's defense budget of \$230 billion in 2022 reflects its ambition to strengthen its global standing, including modernizing its navy and building artificial islands in the South China Sea to assert territorial claims. Hence, China rises as a economic and military power of the world.

Along with rise of China as an economic and military power, US has also been declining in its hegemony. The US has witnessed the gradual decline in its absolute dominance, largely due to military overextension in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan, which drained resources and eroded public support. Despite accounting for 24% of global GDP in 2022, the US's control is weakening as multipolarity emerges, with other nations, including China, challenging its dominance (Statista.com, China's rise to manufacturing dominance, Feb 2020).

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Thus, the US's hegemony is being replaced by a more competitive and multipolar global order.

As the US losing its hegemony, Russia has become more assertive in his foreign policy, aiming to regain global influence. Russia's aggressive actions and strategic alliances are key components of its efforts to re-establish itself as major global power. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its military intervention in Ukraine in 2022 have demonstrated its willingness to take bold actions to assert its power. The evidence is that Russia has strengthened ties with nations such as China, India, and Iran, utilizing its vast energy exports to exert diplomatic influence and expand its sphere of power. Hence, through these actions Russia is positioning itself as a significant player in the shifting global order.

In addition to the Russia's assertive foreign policy, shift of world from geo-strategic to geo-economic is also main component which manifest changing global world order. The world is shifting focus from geo-strategy to geo-economics, with economic factors taking precedence over military dominance. This transformation reflects a growing emphasis on economic influence, rather than just military power, in shaping

global relations. The increasing importance of trade routes, energy corridors, and economic pattern partnerships, such as BRI and the EII's focus on economic cooperation, highlights this shift. China's BRI, which spans over 140 countries and is projected to involve investment of over \$8 trillion by 2049 (WB, Regional integration report, 2021).

In this way, economic considerations are bypassing strategic considerations.

Moreover, the world shift from geo-strategic to geo-economic, the growth of multilateralism also a factor in changing world order. The growth of multilateralism as the rise of international institutions like BRICS and SCO. These institutions reflect a shift towards multilateral cooperation, reducing the dominance of Western-led platforms such as NATO. The BRICS bloc established in 2009, and the SCO, founded in 2001, emphasizes collective decision-making and cooperation among non-Western powers. The evidence of multilateralism is that BRICS countries account for over 40% of the global population and 24% of global GDP in 2023 (BRICS official website). In closing, these multilateral organizations are gaining importance as alternatives to Western-dominated forums, signaling a shift in global governance.

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Similarly to the rise of multilateralism, military alliances and strategic agreements also play their role in global power shift. The formation of new military alliances and strategic agreements reflects shifting global power dynamics, particularly in response to China's growing influence. Notable military alliances such as AUKUS and the Quad have been established to counterbalance China's influence. The evidence is that the AUKUS agreement, signed in 2021, focuses on enhanced security cooperation, including nuclear-powered submarines for Australia, while Quad's growing engagement aims to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific (AUKUS official statement, 2021). Hence, the evolving military alliances highlight the shift in global power dynamics, with countries adapting to the changing geopolitical landscape.

Likewise, the military alliances and strategic agreements, proxy conflicts reflecting new power dynamics. Proxy conflicts, such as the Syrian civil war and Yemen conflict, highlight the competition between emerging and existing powers, reshaping global alliances. The Syrian civil war has seen active involvement from the US and Russia, with Russia supporting the Assad regime and the US backing certain opposition groups.



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Similarly, the Yemen conflict represents a proxy struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The evidence is that Russia's military intervention since 2015 has bolstered Syria's Assad regime, while the US provided \$13.5 billion in aid to Syrian opposition areas by 2023 (USAID, 2023)

Therefore, these proxy conflicts reflect shifting global power dynamics.

However, all these factors show that the changing world order, so it is important to see how Pakistan adjusts its foreign policy to these changes. Pakistan is pursuing a more independent foreign policy by balancing its relations with major powers. Pakistan's participation in multilateral platforms show its independence of choice. The fact is that Pakistan became a full member of the SCO in 2017 and at the same time, it has received over \$33 billion aid from US. Hence, balanced approach of Pakistan shows its more autonomous role in global affairs.

In addition to the independent foreign policy, Pakistan is also playing a key role in strengthening strategic alliances. Through initiative of alliances Pakistan started joint military exercises with Turkey, and Azerbaijan, as well as its defense exports and agreements, highlight its growing role in regional security and collaboration. The evidence is that Pakistan signed a deal to

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export 52 advanced trainer aircrafts (Super Mushshak) to Turkey, Azerbaijan and Nigeria by 2022 (TRT World 2022).

Thus, partnering with Turkey, Azerbaijan and Saudi Arabia shows that Pakistan strengthens its strategic role in regional and global affairs.

Likewise, its focus on military alliances and multilateral engagements, Pakistan has shifted its foreign policy from geo-strategic concerns to geo-economic priorities. Recognizing the significance of economic growth, the government has placed a strong emphasis on trade, investment and regional connectivity. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), central to this shift is expected to bring \$62 billion in investments, as projected by the World Bank (WB, CPEC investment report, 2021). Hence, this geo-economic shift marks a key transformation in Pakistan's foreign policy direction.

Moreover, in alignment with its new economic focus, Pakistan has strengthened its relations with middle eastern nations through key defense and economic agreements. For example, Pakistan has secured \$4 billion in financial aid from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as reported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, World Economic Outlook, 2020). Therefore, these strengthened relations

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are crucial in advancing Pakistan's broader diplomatic strategy.

Furthermore, in line with its growing partnerships in the Middle East, Pakistan's foreign policy now emphasizes aligning its external agreements with national interests.

This includes securing vital energy resources, attracting foreign investments, and ensuring regional stability. For instance, Pakistan's LNG deal with Qatar, reported by Bloomberg (Bloomberg, LNG Supply agreement, 2021), secures long-term energy supply, while foreign investments from China and the Gulf help stimulate the economy. Thus, aligning foreign policy with state interests ensures that Pakistan remains on track to meet its development goals.

Likewise, in response to the evolving global dynamics, Pakistan redefined its national security policy (NSP) in 2022 to address emerging threats beyond traditional military concerns. This policy broadens the definition of national security to include economic stability, human security, and environmental sustainability. According to UNDP, over 40% of Pakistan's population lives in multidimensional poverty, which underscores the need for a broader security framework (UNDP, Pakistan Multidimensional poverty report, 2021). Therefore, the redefined

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NSP positions Pakistan to effectively address modern challenges in an interconnected world.

In response to the evolving global power dynamics, Pakistan must strike a delicate balance between its long-standing ally, China, and the US, its largest export market. Maintaining strong ties with China, particularly through initiatives like the \$60 billion CPEC project, is essential for economic growth. However, the US remains crucial for trade and financial aid, contributing significantly to Pakistan's economic stability. Balancing these two relationships is vital to avoid over-reliance on any one power. Therefore, by maintaining diplomatic flexibility, Pakistan can protect its national interests.

In addition to balancing relations with major powers, Pakistan should adopt a neutral stance in global conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, to avoid becoming embroiled in external power struggles. This neutrality will allow Pakistan to focus its resources on domestic development and regional stability. By not aligning itself too closely with any major global conflict, Pakistan can maintain its peace-building efforts and promote economic growth without taking sides. Hence, neutrality serves as a prudent strategy.

allowing Pakistan to prioritize its national interests and reduce external pressure in an increasingly polarized world.

Moreover, in adopting a neutral stance, Pakistan can further secure its position by enhancing regional connectivity through initiatives like CPEC and forming partnerships with Central Asian countries.

CPEC, for instance, serves as key economic corridor that enhances trade routes, increasing energy access, and strengthens Pakistan's role as a regional trade hub. By improving infrastructure and regional cooperation, Pakistan can boost its economic prospects and create a favourable environment for foreign investments. Therefore, investing in regional connectivity will not only benefit Pakistan economically but also elevates its strategic importance in the region.

Furthermore, in line with its regional connectivity goals, Pakistan must project a positive soft image globally. This can be achieved by highlighting its cultural, technological and humanitarian contributions while combating negative stereotypes linked to extremism. Initiatives like the Kartarpur Corridor, which facilitates cross-border religious tourism and promotes peace, showcase Pakistan's commitment to tolerance and regional cooperation.

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Thus, fostering a positive global image will complement Pakistan's foreign policy objectives, enabling it to strengthen international relations and secure long-term benefits.

In conclusion, the changing world order presents Pakistan with both opportunities and challenges. By balancing the relations with major powers like China and the US, adopting a neutral stance on global conflicts, increase regional connectivity and projecting a positive image, Pakistan can effectively navigate this complex landscape. Therefore, with careful diplomacy, a focus on geo-economics, and strengthened international alliances, Pakistan can enhance its global position and secure its national interests in the evolving world order.