

PK Affairs-3

Q.No.1.

INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan's foreign policy landscape is intricate, influenced by regional dynamics and global power shifts. The quote "Domestic policy can only defeat us; foreign policy can kill us" underscores the critical role of foreign policy in the country's overall well-being. Since its inception, security has dominated Pakistan's foreign policy. Over the years it has shifted towards economic security. For most countries, their foreign policy is shaped by their unique domestic politics, historical experiences, cultural values and geopolitical consideration in addition to regional and global dynamics and emerging challenges such as terrorism, globalization and climate change. For Pakistan though, this has meant security, physical or economic.

CHALLENGES TO PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Pakistan has fashioned a foreign policy where it delves into a combination of critical issues such as Kashmir, Afghanistan, terrorism and other self-serving interests. Amid these issues, Pakistan's foreign policy faces several challenges that need to be addressed to effectively navigate the complex international landscape. Challenges include security concerns, Kashmir

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dispute, economic stability, balancing regional alliances, negative image perception and middle east dynamics-

1- Security Concerns

Pakistan has long been grappling with grave security concerns. This include terrorism domestically and from across its borders, along with regional conflicts. These security concerns not only impact domestic stability but also affect Pakistan's relations with other countries. Over the past 50 years, Pakistan has been embroiled either directly or indirectly in various conflicts, from Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the resulting rampant militancy, the ~~USA~~ United States war on terror and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11 attacks, all the while dealing with low intensity conflict with India on eastern borders and issues cropping up on its western border, with Iran. All of these significantly impacted Pakistan's foreign Policy-

In managing an effective response to terrorism, tackling militancy and protecting the global community's interest, Pakistan was almost driven to the brink of economic collapse. To tackle these continuing challenges, Pakistan needs to further enhance its counter-terrorism efforts, strengthen its intelligence capabilities and

actively engage with regional and international partners to promote peace and stability.

2. Economic Stability

During the ongoing fiscal year 2023-2024, Pakistan's fiscal deficit was around 6.5% of its total GDP. Pakistan's total Gross Domestic Product stands at around \$378 billion which is significantly lower compared to India whose current Gross Domestic Product is around \$3.6 trillion.

Throw in a balance of payment and devaluation of rupee crisis, and the entire country is engulfed by rampant inflation, widespread economic deterioration and rising unemployment. In order words, Pakistan is facing the worst economic recession of its short history. Naturally, much engagement between Pakistan and other nations diplomatically circles to economy as well. Economic stability is important for Pakistan's foreign policy to effectively engage with other nations. Pakistan must address economic challenges such as inflation, unemployment and low foreign direct investment (FDI).

Pakistan can strengthen its position in international community by implementing sound economic policies, attracting foreign direct investment, and promoting trade.

3. Kashmir Dispute:

The longstanding Kashmir dispute

between India and Pakistan remains a major challenge to Islamabad's foreign policy. The dispute over a region claimed by both India and Pakistan has been a central point of contention between the two hostile countries since the Partition in 1947. Pakistan has consistently advocated for the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir and has sought international support to resolve the issue.

Pakistan's foreign policy regarding Kashmir has typically focused on diplomatic efforts to raise awareness about the human rights violations perpetrated by India and vain efforts to seek a peaceful resolution through dialogue with New Delhi. Pakistan has sought international community's involvement, particularly United Nations, in mediating the Kashmir dispute. Islamabad has also highlighted the importance of implementing UN Security Council Resolutions on Kashmir, which calls for plebiscite to determine the region's future. In addition, Pakistan has supported the right of the Kashmiris to express their aspirations and has condemned any use of force or repression against them.

For Pakistan, resolving this critical issue is crucial to ensuring regional peace and stability. Pakistan should continue to engage bilaterally with India. It needs to engage multilaterally at international forums to find

peaceful solutions to the Kashmir conflict. While the Kashmir has been a key factor in Islamabad's foreign policy, its overall objectives extend beyond this dispute. Pakistan aims to obtain friendly relations with all countries and promote regional stability and pursue economic development and cooperation.

4. Balancing regional alliances.

Given the thrust of Pakistan's external posturing hinges acutely on geo-strategic location, Islamabad's foreign policy often tends to involve balancing alliances with different regional powers. However, its economic dependence and fragile democracy are among the key factors behind its dependence on power brokers such as neighbour China and western bloc lead by the United States. Pakistan cannot afford to annoy China for the sake of United States and vice versa. Pakistan is dependent on United States for loans and China for foreign direct investments in the form of CPEC. No doubt, maintaining a delicate balance between its relationship with China, and the United States and other regional actors is an inevitable challenge.

Pakistan needs to pursue a balanced approach based on its national interests while actively engaging with all regional stakeholders to promote peace, stability,

and economic cooperation. The changing regional security and strategic scenarios have always posed hurdles for Islamabad to shape cooperative and liberal foreign policy with a focus on bilateral and multilateral relations.

5. Image Perception

Pakistan often face negative perceptions and stereotypes in international community, significantly impacting its foreign policy objectives. Over the years, Pakistan has been blamed for various issues, from human rights violations within its borders, persecution of minorities, harboring militants, sponsoring the Afghan Taliban and hosting safe havens for AL-Qaeda and the Islamic militants.

Despite spending significant treasure, time and political capital combating religious militancy and supporting the international community in the fight against extremism and terrorism, the United States and the western world have always accused Pakistan of duplicity and terrorism.

Pakistan needs to effectively work on improving its image through effective communications strategies, promoting cultural diplomacy and highlighting its contributions to regional and global peace. It must enhance its soft power through smart diplomacy.

to improve its caricatured image on the regional and global hemispheres.

WAY FORWARD:

Pakistan needs to overcome the challenges and strength its foreign policy to ensure friendly and cooperative relations with countries and to foster economic development and growth.

i. Implementing foreign policy effectively

Pakistan must strengthen its institutions including the foreign office, intelligence agency and think tank to formulate and implement foreign policy effectively.

ii. Diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts

Islamabad should actively engage in diplomatic efforts including bilateral and multilateral dialogues to promote its interests and resolve conflicts. Pakistan should focus on economic diplomacy to attract foreign investment, expand trade relations and enhance economic cooperation with other countries.

iii. Liberal foreign policy to attract foreign direct investment.

A liberal foreign policy can attract

foreign investment and promote economic growth. By fostering a more open and inclusive environment, Pakistan can enhance its trade relations with other countries leading to increased exports, job creation and overall economic developments. Pakistan should build stronger diplomatic ties and foster cooperation with the international community. This can lead to collaborations in various fields such as ~~econ~~ technology, education, healthcare, agriculture which can contribute to the overall progress and development of the country.

iv- Promoting human rights to improve image
Pakistan should emphasize promoting and protecting human rights including freedom of speech, gender equality and religious freedom domestically to improve its image at the global level.

v- Earn supports from international community
Pakistan should improve and reimagine its foreign policy to improve international relations and reputation and demonstrate its commitment to democratic values. This will help the country earn support and respect from international community.

CONCLUSION:

Pakistan foreign policy challenges are

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multifaceted, encompassing security concerns, disputes, economic stability, negative image perception, and successful management of these by committing to democratic values, adopting liberal foreign policy in order to attract respect and economic support from international community can help Islamabad to shape its foreign policy and achieve its objective of friendly relations with all countries and pursuing economic development and cooperation.