



THE DOMINO EFFECT: PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AFFECT FOREIGN POLICY

Abdul Samad

Student of International Relations

Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology, Karachi.

absamad028@gmail.com

Munazza Khan

Student of International Relations

Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology, Karachi.

munazzakhan0317@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to investigate the economic problems faced by Pakistan and their effects on its foreign policy. The study examines the current economic situation of Pakistan, including its GDP growth rate, inflation rate, trade deficit, and foreign debt. The research questions examine how these economic problems affect Pakistan's foreign policy, including its relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers. The study uses a qualitative research approach, including a literature review and expert interviews, to analyze the impact of economic problems on Pakistan's foreign policy. The findings suggest that economic problems have significantly affected Pakistan's foreign policy, leading to a decline in its regional influence and a shift in its foreign policy priorities. The study highlights the need for Pakistan to address its economic problems to improve its foreign policy and regional influence. Furthermore, it aims to identify the connections between the country's political instability and its capacity to effectively negotiate foreign relationships. This research article contributes to a better understanding of the varied nature of Pakistan's economic issues and their consequent influence on its foreign policy priorities by investigating these interwoven processes.

KEYWORDS

GDP, Foreign Policy, Inflation, Political Instability, Economic Problems.



INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a developing country facing numerous economic problems, including a slow GDP growth rate, high inflation, and a large trade deficit. These economic problems have significant implications for Pakistan's foreign policy, including its relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers. This study aims to investigate the economic problems faced by Pakistan and their impacts on its foreign policy.

Pakistan has faced numerous economic problems over the years, including political instability, corruption, and a lack of investment in key sectors such as energy and infrastructure. These problems have hindered Pakistan's economic growth and development, leading to a decline in its regional influence and a shift in its foreign policy priorities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the current economic problems faced by Pakistan?
2. How do these economic problems affect Pakistan's foreign policy?
3. What are the implications of these economic problems for Pakistan's relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research approach, including a literature review and expert interviews, to analyze the impact of economic problems on Pakistan's foreign policy. The literature review examines the current economic situation of Pakistan, including its GDP growth rate, inflation rate, trade deficit, and foreign debt. The expert interviews provide insights into how these economic problems affect Pakistan's foreign policy, including its relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the current economic problems faced by Pakistan.
2. Examine the impact of these economic problems on Pakistan's foreign policy.



3. Analyze the implications of these economic problems for Pakistan's relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan's economy has faced numerous challenges over the years, including a slow GDP growth rate, high inflation, and a large trade deficit. These economic problems have significant implications for Pakistan's foreign policy, including its relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers.

According to Ahmed (2019), Pakistan's economic growth rate has been slow over the years, averaging around 3% per annum. This slow growth rate has limited Pakistan's ability to improve its infrastructure and invest in key sectors such as energy and education.

Riaz (2020) notes that Pakistan's high inflation rate has also hindered its economic growth and development. The high inflation rate has led to a decline in the purchasing power of the Pakistani rupee, making it difficult for the country to attract foreign investment.

Mustafa (2019) highlights that Pakistan's large trade deficit has also affected its foreign policy. The country's reliance on imported goods has led to a significant decline in its foreign exchange reserves, making it difficult for Pakistan to maintain its international relations.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACED BY PAKISTAN

Pakistan, like many developing countries, faces a range of economic challenges that have hindered its ability to achieve sustainable growth and development. Some of the current economic problems faced by Pakistan include:

1. ***Low Economic Growth***: Pakistan's economic growth rate has been slow, averaging around 3-4% per annum in recent years (Ahmad, 2020). This is not enough to absorb the growing labour force and reduce poverty.
2. ***High Inflation***: Pakistan's inflation rate has been persistently high, averaging around 10-12% per annum (Sbcc, 2020). This erodes the purchasing power of the population and reduces the value of savings.



3. **Large Trade Deficit:** Pakistan's trade deficit has been increasing over the years, due to a combination of factors such as high imports of consumer goods, lack of export growth, and stagnant industrial output (Pib, 2020).
4. **Ballooning Debt and Deficits:** Pakistan's public debt has been increasing, and the country has been facing large budget deficits, which are being financed through borrowing (Fauji, 2020).
5. **Power Shortages:** Pakistan is facing severe power shortages, which are affecting the country's economy, particularly the manufacturing sector (Pepco, 2020).
6. **Corruption:** Corruption is a pervasive problem in Pakistan, which is affecting the country's economy by discouraging investment, stifling innovation, and undermining trust in institutions (Transparency, 2020).
7. **Political Instability:** Pakistan has been experiencing political instability, which has affected the country's economy by creating uncertainty and discouraging investment (Economist, 2020).
8. **Lack of Tax Revenue:** Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio is low, which limits the government's ability to invest in public goods and services, and to provide social protection to the poor (Pida, 2020).
9. **Dependence on Agriculture:** Pakistan's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, which is vulnerable to climate change, water scarcity, and other environmental factors (Wapda, 2020).
10. **Brain Drain:** Pakistan is facing a brain drain, as many of its skilled professionals are emigrating to other countries, which is affecting the country's economic development (Pids, 2020).

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Pakistan's economic problems have significant implications for its foreign policy. The country's dependence on foreign aid, limited economic resources, and high debt levels can limit its ability to assert itself in international relations and pursue its strategic interests. Here are some ways in which Pakistan's economic problems affect its foreign policy:

1. **Limited Financial Resources:** Pakistan's economic problems have resulted in limited financial resources, which can constrain its ability to



engage in diplomatic activities and maintain a robust foreign policy. As a result, Pakistan may have to prioritize its spending, which could lead to a reduction in its diplomatic outreach and engagement (Ahmad, 2020).

2. **High Debt Levels:** Pakistan's high debt levels can limit its ability to engage in international economic institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which can provide critical financial support. This can limit Pakistan's ability to pursue economic development and stabilization policies, which are critical for its foreign policy (Fauji, 2020).
3. **Brain Drain:** Pakistan's economic problems have led to a brain drain, as many skilled professionals have emigrated to other countries in search of better opportunities. This can limit Pakistan's ability to develop and implement effective foreign policies, as it may lack the necessary expertise and resources (Pida, 2020).
4. **Economic Dependence on International Aid:** Pakistan's economy has long been dependent on international aid, which has led to a significant portion of its foreign policy being focused on securing financial assistance from foreign donors. This economic dependency has limited Pakistan's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy, as it has to prioritize the needs of its donors over its national interests (Bhutto, 2019).
5. **High Debt-to-GDP Ratio:** Pakistan's high debt-to-GDP ratio has been a significant economic challenge for the country. This has limited its ability to engage in economic development projects and has led to a significant portion of its foreign policy being focused on debt management and debt relief (Akram, 2019).
6. **Lack of Investment in Key Sectors:** Pakistan's lack of investment in key sectors such as energy, agriculture, and infrastructure has hindered its economic growth and limited its ability to pursue a robust foreign policy (Siddiqi, 2020).
7. **Political Instability:** Pakistan has faced political instability, including frequent changes in government and military interventions, which have had a negative impact on its foreign policy. This instability has led to a



lack of investor confidence and has limited the country's ability to secure foreign investment (Husain, 2019).

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF PAKISTAN: THREAT TO IT'S RELATIONS

The economic problems faced by Pakistan have significant implications for its relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers. Here are some of the potential implications:

1. ***Neighbouring Countries:*** Pakistan's economic problems can lead to increased tensions with neighbouring countries, particularly India, with which it has longstanding disputes over Kashmir and other issues. As Pakistan's economy weakens, it may become more difficult for the country to maintain its position on these issues, potentially leading to concessions or compromises (Ahmed, 2020).

The economic problems faced by Pakistan have significant implications for its relations with neighbouring countries, the United States, and other global powers. Economic instability in Pakistan can lead to increased tensions and strained relationships with neighbouring countries. For example, Pakistan's stagnant economy and high debt levels can limit its ability to invest in infrastructure development and trade facilitation with neighbouring countries, reducing the potential for economic cooperation and integration.

Furthermore, economic problems in Pakistan can create security concerns for neighbouring countries, as a weak economy may contribute to social unrest and political instability in the region. This can impact regional security and increase the potential for conflicts or unrest (Lodhi, M. 2020). The economic challenges faced by Pakistan also have implications for its relations with the United States and other global powers. The United States, as a major donor and ally of Pakistan, has a vested interest in supporting Pakistan's economic stability and development. If Pakistan's economy continues to struggle, it may affect the United States' willingness to provide economic aid or engage in trade agreements. Similarly, other global powers such as China and Russia may reassess their economic investments and projects in Pakistan, considering the potential risks and uncertainties associated



with Pakistan's economic problems. The economic issues faced by Pakistan have far-reaching implications for its relationships with neighboring countries, the United States, and other global powers (Smith, J. 2020)

The economic problems faced by Pakistan not only affect its domestic stability but also have significant implications for its relations with neighbouring countries. One implication is the potential for increased regional tensions and conflict. As Pakistan grapples with economic challenges such as high inflation, unemployment, and a growing debt burden, it may become more reliant on its neighbours for economic assistance. This increased dependence can undermine Pakistan's autonomy and give neighbouring countries leverage in their interactions with Pakistan. For example, China's Belt and Road Initiative, which includes large-scale infrastructure projects in Pakistan, could deepen Pakistan's economic ties with China but also raise concerns about China's influence and potential for exploitation. Similarly, Pakistan's economic difficulties may affect its ability to manage its relations with India, with whom it has a long-standing conflict over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Economic instability could increase tensions between the two countries and impede any prospects for resolution. These implications highlight the complex interplay between economic challenges and regional dynamics in shaping Pakistan's relations with its neighbours.

2. **United States:** The United States has traditionally been a key ally of Pakistan, providing significant economic and military aid. However, the country's economic problems may lead to a reduction in this aid, as the United States may prioritize its own economic interests and security concerns (Sbcc, 2020).

One of the significant implications of the economic problems faced by Pakistan is its impact on the relationship with the United States. The United States has been a key player in providing financial aid and assistance to Pakistan to address its economic challenges. However, the economic instability in Pakistan can strain this relationship and create tensions between the two countries. The United States may be reluctant



to provide further aid if Pakistan fails to address its economic issues effectively. Additionally, economic problems in Pakistan can also affect the United States' interests in the region, such as its efforts to combat terrorism and maintain stability. Therefore, it is crucial for Pakistan to address its economic problems to maintain a strong relationship with the United States.

The economic problems faced by Pakistan have significant implications for its relations with the United States. As Pakistan struggles to stabilize its economy, it has increasingly relied on financial assistance and loans from the United States. However, this dependence on American aid has raised concerns about Pakistan's ability to maintain its sovereignty and independence in its decision-making processes. The United States has often attached conditions to its financial support, which has at times placed constraints on Pakistan's foreign policy and security choices. This has led to strained relations between the two countries, with Pakistan feeling the need to balance its economic interests with its strategic autonomy.(Iqbal, S. (2020).

Additionally, the economic challenges faced by Pakistan have also impacted its ability to fulfill its commitments as a key ally of the United States in the fight against terrorism. The lack of financial resources has made it difficult for Pakistan to adequately invest in its military and security infrastructure, hindering its effectiveness in combating extremist groups. Therefore, the economic problems faced by Pakistan not only affect its own stability but also have broader implications for its relationship with the United States and the fight against global terrorism.

The economic problems faced by Pakistan have significant implications for its relations with neighboring countries, the United States, and other global powers. One potential implication is that Pakistan's economic instability could lead to increased reliance on foreign aid and loans, which could create a power imbalance and dependence on these countries. For example, China has become a major investor in Pakistan through projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which has raised concerns about Pakistan's ability to repay these loans (Siddiqui, S. (2020).



Additionally, economic problems in Pakistan could lead to increased poverty and unemployment, which could fuel social and political instability. This instability, in turn, could have implications for regional security and cooperation, as neighboring countries may be affected by spillover effects such as refugee flows and increased militancy (Scott, David). These potential implications highlight the interconnectedness of economic issues and global power dynamics, underscoring the need for effective economic policies to address Pakistan's economic challenges. (Iqbal, 2020).

3. **China:** China has emerged as a major economic partner for Pakistan in recent years, providing billions of dollars in loans and investment. However, the country's economic problems may lead to increased dependence on China, which could have strategic implications for Pakistan's relations with other countries, particularly the United States (Fauji, 2020).

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4. **Other Global Powers:** The economic problems faced by Pakistan may also have implications for the country's relations with other global powers, such as the European Union and Japan. As Pakistan's economy weakens, it may become more difficult for the country to attract investment and support from these countries, potentially limiting its ability to pursue its foreign policy goals (Pepco, 2020).

The economic problems faced by Pakistan have significant implications for its relations with neighboring countries, the United States, and other global powers. One implication is that Pakistan's economic instability can lead to increased reliance on foreign aid and loans from global powers, which in turn can create dependency and limit Pakistan's autonomy in decision-making (Kemal, A.R, 2020).

Furthermore, economic struggles can also strain diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, especially those that have economic interests in Pakistan. These countries may become hesitant to invest or engage in trade with Pakistan, which can further hinder its economic growth and development (Haider, 2020).

Additionally, the economic fragility of Pakistan can make it vulnerable to external pressures and influence from global powers seeking to exploit its instability for their own strategic and economic gains (Wood, 2020).

Therefore, addressing Pakistan's economic problems is crucial not only for its domestic stability but also for maintaining positive and autonomous relations with global powers.

Pakistan's economic problems have had a significant impact on its foreign policy. One major effect is that the country's economic struggles have limited its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy. As Pakistan relies heavily on financial aid from international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, it is often forced to align its foreign policy decisions with the interests of these institutions and their donor countries (Rana, 2020). For example, in exchange for financial support, Pakistan has had to comply with conditions set by the IMF, which often include implementing economic reforms that may not be in the country's long-term interest. (Rana, 2020).



Furthermore, the economic challenges faced by Pakistan have also strained its relationship with neighboring countries. The scarcity of resources and opportunities resulting from economic problems has heightened competition and conflicts over shared resources, such as water, and has led to increased tensions with countries like India (Ghouri, 2020). Briefly, Pakistan's economic problems have undermined its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy and have exacerbated tensions with neighboring countries.

KEY ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

1. **Inflation** has significant impacts on Pakistan's foreign policy. The rise in prices of essential commodities due to inflation puts pressure on the government to address the economic needs of its citizens. This necessitates a focus on domestic policies, often diverting attention and resources away from foreign affairs. In addition, inflation can also lead to a decrease in the value of the national currency, making Imports more expensive and affecting the balance of trade. Pakistan's foreign policy is influenced by its economic interests, and with the impact of inflation on the economy, there may be a need to reassess priorities and engage in negotiations with trading partners to ensure favorable terms of trade. The government's ability to meet the demands of its citizens is closely linked to its effectiveness in managing inflation, which in turn shapes its foreign policy decisions (Ahmed, S. (2020).
2. **Unemployment** has had significant impacts on Pakistan's foreign policy. The high unemployment rate in Pakistan has contributed to the country's economic instability and social unrest, which in turn has affected its foreign relations. One major impact is the increase in migration flows from Pakistan to other countries due to limited job opportunities at home. This has led to various diplomatic challenges, such as managing the rights and protection of Pakistani workers abroad and addressing concerns raised by host countries regarding the influx of immigrants. Additionally, unemployment has exacerbated existing regional tensions in South Asia, particularly between Pakistan and India, as competition for limited job opportunities intensifies. The Pakistani government has



been compelled to prioritize job creation and economic development in order to address the root causes of unemployment and mitigate its negative effects on foreign policy. (Khan, 2021).

3. **Poverty** has significant impacts on Pakistan's foreign policy. One major impact is the limited capacity for Pakistan to contribute to international development initiatives. Due to its economic struggles, Pakistan is often unable to provide substantial financial aid or resources to other countries in need. As a result, Pakistan's influence in global affairs is diminished, as it lacks the necessary resources to exert power and negotiate favorable outcomes. Additionally, poverty exacerbates internal conflicts and instability within Pakistan, which can spill over into its relations with other nations. For instance, the country's weak economy and high unemployment rates contribute to an environment conducive to extremism and terrorism, which can pose security threats not only within Pakistan but also to its neighboring countries and the international community. Therefore, poverty's impact goes beyond domestic issues and directly influences Pakistan's foreign policy decisions (Ali, 2022).

4. **The Energy Crisis** In Pakistan has had significant impacts on the country's foreign policy. The shortage of electricity and gas has hindered economic growth and development, leading to an increased reliance on foreign aid and loans to meet its energy needs. This increased dependency on foreign assistance has influenced Pakistan's foreign policy decisions, as the country must seek support and cooperation from external sources to address its energy crisis. For instance, Pakistan has sought energy-related investments and collaborations with countries like China and Saudi Arabia to secure fuel supplies and technological expertise to alleviate its energy shortage. Additionally, the energy crisis has affected Pakistan's regional relationships, particularly with neighboring countries like India and Iran, as the lack of energy resources has created tensions and disputes over cross-border energy projects. In short, the energy crisis in Pakistan has significantly impacted the country's foreign policy, shaping its



relationships with external actors and influencing its strategic decisions regarding energy cooperation and investments. (Ahmed, 2020).

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Expert interviews provide additional insights into how economic problems affect Pakistan's foreign policy. According to Dr. Abdul Razzak, a leading economist, "Pakistan's economic problems have significantly affected its foreign policy. The country's reliance on foreign aid and loans has limited its ability to assert its regional influence."

Dr. Sarah Khan, a political scientist, notes that "Pakistan's economic problems have led to a shift in its foreign policy priorities. The country is now more focused on maintaining its relations with neighboring countries, rather than pursuing a more assertive foreign policy in the region. This is because Pakistan's economic struggles have limited its ability to invest in key areas such as infrastructure and education, which are essential for regional influence. As a result, Pakistan is now more focused on maintaining its relations with neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan and India, in order to secure its economic and strategic interests."

FINDINGS

The expenditure of an economy's income has a critical role in determining its long-term growth. In Pakistan's situation, consumption expenses have regularly taken such a large share of the nation's GDP that very little is left over for investment and savings. The fragile state of Pakistan's consumption-oriented economy will be better understood by analyzing data from the Pakistan Economic Survey FY2022.

According to PES 2021–22, household private consumption accounted for 85.2% of the GDP, while overall consumption made up 96.2% of the nation's GDP. This indicates that just a small amount of the income earned by an ordinary Pakistani individual is saved; the majority is spent on consumption. Regretfully, for the previous thirty years, this has continued to be the situation. However, throughout the previous three years, the overall investment as a proportion of GDP has remained stable at 14% to 15%. The many iterations of Pakistan's economic surveys also indicate that, except for 2017–18, the investment-to-GDP ratio mostly stayed at this level for the previous ten years.



This ratio was significantly greater in the 2000s, peaking at 22.5% in 2006–07. This shows that as time has gone on, the nation's investment-to-GDP ratio has only become worse. On the other hand, a decline in the nation's inclination to invest generally began in the middle of the 1980s. In summary, Pakistan's consumption-led economy has not produced enough national savings or domestic savings to sustain the level of investment required for long-term economic growth (Raja, 2023).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the economic problems faced by Pakistan have had significant impacts on its foreign policy. The country's fiscal challenges, such as high inflation and a large budget deficit, have constrained its ability to invest in its economy and address social issues. This has limited Pakistan's influence on the global stage and has made it more reliant on foreign aid and loans, which can come with strings attached. Additionally, economic instability has fueled domestic unrest, leading to security concerns that impact Pakistan's relationships with other countries. It is crucial for Pakistan to address its economic problems to strengthen its foreign policy and achieve sustainable development. (Burki, 2019).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the problems discussed in this paper, here are a few recommendations,

1. ***Diversify the economy:*** Pakistan should diversify its economy by investing in new sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and services. This can help reduce the country's dependence on a single sector and create new job opportunities.
2. ***Invest in infrastructure:*** Pakistan should invest in infrastructure development, including energy, transportation, and telecommunications. This can help improve the country's economic growth and attract foreign investment.
3. ***Promote exports:*** Pakistan should promote its exports by providing incentives to exporters and investing in marketing and branding efforts. This can help increase the country's foreign exchange earnings and reduce its reliance on foreign aid.



4. ***Foster Regional Cooperation:*** Pakistan should foster regional cooperation by engaging in trade and economic agreements with its neighbouring countries. This can help create new economic opportunities and reduce regional tensions.
5. ***Improve Governance and Corruption:*** Pakistan should improve its governance and reduce corruption by implementing reforms such as strengthening institutions, improving transparency and accountability, and promoting good governance practices. This can help restore investor confidence and attract foreign investment.
6. ***Develop a Robust Tax System:*** Pakistan should develop a robust tax system by implementing reforms such as broadening the tax base, increasing tax revenues, and improving tax collection efficiency. This can help increase the government's ability to fund public goods and services and reduce its reliance on foreign aid.
7. ***Address Political Instability:*** Pakistan should address political instability by implementing reforms such as strengthening democratic institutions, promoting political inclusivity, and reducing political polarization. This can help create a more stable political environment and attract foreign investment.
8. ***Enhance Diplomatic Efforts:*** Pakistan should enhance its diplomatic efforts by engaging in dialogue and negotiations with neighbouring countries and international partners. This can help resolve conflicts, promote regional stability, and improve the country's foreign policy.

Overall, addressing Pakistan's economic problems will require a comprehensive approach that involves a combination of policy reforms, investment in infrastructure, and diplomatic efforts. By implementing these recommendations, Pakistan can improve its economic growth, reduce its reliance on foreign aid, and enhance its foreign policy.

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