
PHASES OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's foreign policy (FP) has gone through multiple eras, each impacted by its geopolitical relevance, regional dynamics, global power movements, and internal security issues. Pakistan's FP has consistently sought to balance competing interests while ensuring security and protecting national interests, from its founding principles of peaceful coexistence, non-aggression, and adherence to the United Nations Charter to its participation in Cold War alliances, non-alignment, and also the post-9/11 counter-terrorism era.

This paper gives a complete overview of these eras, examining how domestic stability, economic development, and the changing regional security scenario continue to impact Islamabad's FP. Pakistan has remained committed to security and strategic balance despite evolving global paradigms. By learning from its past, strengthening its economy, and enhancing its adaptability, Pakistan can navigate the complex international landscape and make optimal FP decisions to secure its future prosperity.

KEYWORDS

Pakistan, Foreign Policy, Geopolitical, Geostrategic, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Given Pakistan's favourable geopolitical and geostrategic position, it is necessary to comprehensively review the literature on Pakistan's Foreign

Policy (FP). This review can offer valuable insights into the current phase of FP, allow for comparisons with previous policies, and aid in predicting Pakistan's dynamics with other states, particularly the major powers, without disregarding the influences of political religiosity and the Kashmir conundrum. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the first "Governor-General of Pakistan" or the head of state, laid the foundation of the principles of Pakistan's FP. He had faith in human rationality and thus idealistically envisioned establishing friendly relations with all states, including India, which he termed a "sisterly nation." Other principles involve non-aggression towards any state, support for legitimate causes of people, "upholding the principles of United Nations Charter," "live in peace and let others live in peace," and building Pakistan as per its "own lights without outside interference."

Phase-1 (1947-1962): Exploration Ended in Western Alignment

From Jinnah to next-in-line, Pakistani leaders opposed the Soviets' expansion policy. So does Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister (PM), who categorically declared the "policy of Non-Alignment." Nevertheless, it was realised that Pakistan desperately needs to make alliances owing to the security threats since its birth. When China's Communists held their reign in 1949, the "United States" (US) did not recognise it; instead, it prevented many states from recognising communist regimes. Pakistan, however, recognised China in 1950 and became the "first Muslim country" to do so. It also initiated "diplomatic relations" with the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" (USSR) in 1948. However, later, on the PM's visit to the US in 1950, he mentioned a potential threat from the USSR, which the leftists in Pakistan strongly criticised. Nonetheless, relations remained neutral with the Soviets until the first US-Pakistan agreement in 1954, i.e., after the demise of L. A. Khan. The US further apprised Pakistan about the Soviet's drives to "warm waters" in the following years. Before strengthening ties with Islamabad, the US also conciliated India not to misunderstand US-Pak nearness as an anti-India alliance; instead, it is an anti-communism game (Sattar, 2017).

While India remained present in global politics without joining blocs under its "Non-Alignment Movement" (NAM) of "PanchSheel Doctrine" – "peaceful coexistence" (Fani, 2009), Pakistan was compelled to join US-led four alliances, i.e., the 1954 "Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement", the 1954 "Southeast Asia Treaty Organization" (SEATO), the 1955 "Baghdad

Pact,” and the 1959 “Bilateral Defence Cooperation Agreement.” “SEATO” was unlike the “North Atlantic Treaty Organization” (NATO) alliance, which acknowledges the attack on one member as an attack on all, but these pacts aimed “against communist aggression.” Pakistan also agreed to give access to the “US aircraft to use the Peshawar airbase” at “Badaber near Peshawar” to monitor the Soviets. It was used for “photographic intelligence by high-level U-2 spy in the sky.” Pakistan later discovered “that the facility was also used for the same purpose against China.” Alliances are based on reciprocated dependency, which supposedly entails “mutual goodwill and respect for equity and justice.” However, in reality, the powerful ally attempted, and still attempts, to dominate by compelling the weaker party to abide by the unilateral preferences that suit the stronger. Islamabad wanted to avoid getting involved in an ideological contest of blocs, but the fears of its fragility, security dilemmas in the region, and existential threat forced it to join a bloc to balance power with its hostile neighbour, India. In other words, Pakistan picked a bad choice from the worst options available. Joining the US and Western bloc created shaky relations with those states supporting the USSR, such as Egypt. The rise of Arab nationalism also left Pakistan out of the fraternal league. Other than the Baghdad Pact, Pakistan reverting from its informal stance of supporting Suez’s cause in 1956 while formally casting its vote against Egypt had also raged the Arabs. The absence of flattering relations with Muslim states created dubiousness in their future dealings. However, over time, they strengthened ties with Pakistan.

Relations also remained cold with Afghanistan, even though their economic interests are “intertwined” because Pakistan provides sea access while Afghanistan is a gateway to Central Asia (CA). Boundary agreement with the British government (Anglo-Afghan Treaty 1893 “signed by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and reconfirmed in Anglo-Afghan treaties of 1905, 1919, and 1921”), called the “Durand Line,” was never accepted by Afghanistan. They ditched the old agreement with the British and asked for a new one because it deprived them of sea access. Briefly, they wished the then “North-West Frontier Province” (NWFP) province (renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) to join Afghanistan. British discredited this irrational claim by responding, “If the historical argument was pushed back chronologically, it could justify India’s claiming Afghanistan!” Separate activists “Khudai Khidmatgar leader and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan” were backed by “Mahatma Gandhi” to choose a free Pathan state. Finally, Afghanistan went against Pakistan in

the UN, sowing the seed of conflicted relations and future policies based on mistrust (Sattar, 2017).

Phase-2 (1963-1971): “Transition” Sandwiched Between the Two Wars

“Iran, Pakistan and Turkey” initiated a “Regional Cooperation for Development” (RCD) in 1964 comprising of “Central Treaty Organization” (CENTO) allies for enhanced “socio-economic development.” Pakistan also desired improved relations with the USSR; therefore, the “President of Pakistan, Ayyub Khan” visited Moscow in 1965. Beijing has always supported Islamabad despite it joined the US bloc and went against the Soviets and Chinese communism, mainly through joining SEATO – a flop organisation that even failed to “meet for consultation.” Pakistan has clarified its stance of never being against China, but joining Western organisations was because of its frail situation, which it gracefully accepted, unlike the Soviets, who kept a grudge and wanted to “punish Pakistan.” Moreover, China endorses Indian bullying in “Indian-occupied Kashmir” (IOK), stands by Pakistan’s stance and asks for the “right of self-determination.” It also had a “boundary treaty” in 1963 with Pakistan on Gilgit and Baltistan (GB). Their relations, therefore, remained firm due to their cooperation in several domains, e.g., the “highest highway in the world”, Karakorum Highway, established in the 1960s and “reviving the ancient Silk Route.”

In the April 1965 Indo-Pak war, India raised objections against Pakistan for using US weapons, upon which the US “announced an embargo on the further supply of arms or spare parts,” though India itself used both American and Soviet weapons. Since then, the US has been endeavouring to end Indian neutrality and join its bloc to compete with China for the Asian leadership, whereas Islamabad condemned US actions, e.g., “Ayub exploded on the US calling Americans power-drunk.” Although 1959’s “bilateral defence agreement” assured assistance to Pakistan in case of external aggression – a clause that was invoked in the Pak-Indo 1965 “Rann of Kutch crisis,” the US stayed defensive and retorted that it was limited to “communist aggression.” Since the “alliance lacked the bond of a common adversary,” the US did not throw its weight for the settlement of Kashmir and detested Pakistan’s attempts to “cultivate new friends,” particularly with its rival states, i.e., Russia and China.

The Pakistan Army aimed at the covert infiltration in the IOK to foment “Guerrillas” in August 1965 through “Operation Gibraltar.” It turned into a

fiasco because India launched an offensive on the ceasefire line and “occupied a large territory in the Kargil area.” On 6 September 1965, India extended its offensive on the international border to capture Lahore (Sattar). After the “largest tank battles” of “Kursk” between the Soviets and Nazi Germany during “World War II,” the second Pak-Indian war on Kashmir records another history of the largest tank battle – namely the “Battle of Chawinda” (Ali, 2016). Despite Pakistan capturing more lands compared to India, the war ended as a “stalemate” (no winner). USSR, China, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, and even Egypt did not appreciate Indians crossing the border, but Pakistan’s ally – the US, considered Pakistan to have provoked the war. In 1966, Pakistan-India signed the “Tashkent Declaration” – “a peace agreement” to resolve the 1965 war.

After the US embargo of military hardware to Pakistan, China supplied it with defence equipment, whereas the USSR committed to a loan on soft terms. Pakistan’s enhanced relations with the Soviets and Chinese irritated the US and the United Kingdom (UK). Considering this, Ayyub informed the USSR that the US base lease would not be renewed. However, during the Nixon period in 1969, the relations between Pakistan and the US improved. Pakistan reappraised its FP after being disappointed by the “Western alliance” during the 1965 war, to remain low during the Cold War, set up bilateral ties with the three big powers (USA, USSR, and China), and avoid getting wrangled between them. The policy of segregating Pakistan’s interests from the changing interests of the big powers is termed “bilateralism” by President Ayub. President Yahya Khan continued this policy.

Then, Pakistan established a breakthrough channel with the US-Sino by hosting “a secret visit” in July 1971. Both states hailed Pakistan’s role, but the Soviets were infuriated after knowing and assured that Pakistan would be punished “for meddling in the triangular power politics.” Moscow rushed to sign an “Indo-USSR Peace, Friendship & Cooperation treaty” in 1971, which secured India against the fear of Chinese intervention. It fulfilled the Soviet’s “twin objectives”: first, bringing India under its umbrella to maintain the balance of power against Beijing, and second, “punishing Pakistan for meddling in relations among great powers.” With such a history, a trust deficit lingers between the two states.

Meanwhile, since East Pakistan was the marginalised part of Pakistan and lacked defence capabilities, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was voicing on behalf of East Pakistan as a politician, but in 1969, Ayub Khan initiated a “treason”

case against him. Later, the same year, General Yahya assumed power as “Chief Martial Law Administrator” (CMLA). He announced elections in 1970 that remained unsettled, resulting in East Pakistan’s division. Amid Pakistan’s vulnerability, India, while having the support of the USSR, launched an all-out offensive on 21 November 1971. On 2 December 1971, Yahya attempted to invoke the 1959 agreement with the US, but in vain. However, it went for “a resolution for a ceasefire” and withdrawal of troops on 4 December 1971, but the USSR vetoed it. A “Polish resolution” was offered to Foreign Minister (FM) Z.A. Bhutto in the “United Nations Security Council” (UNSC), which urged “troop withdrawals,” “ceasefire,” and reinstatement of the East Pakistani government. He tore the resolution into pieces; consequently, the request for a “ceasefire” was converted into a disgraceful surrender of over 90,000 Pakistani troops on 16 December 1971. After Pakistan’s dismemberment, Bhutto assumed power as president and signed a “peace treaty,” the “Simla Agreement,” with India in 1972 (Sattar, 2017).

Phase-3 (1972-1979): From Bilateralism, Eating Grass to a Short-Lived NAM

There is a difference between “Bilateralism” and the NAM. The former policy looked to the East to locate new friends without offending the existing ones. In other words, Pakistan did not practice “Non-Alignment” during “Bilateralism” as it continued its membership in SEATO, CENTO and 1959’s US agreement. However, it withdrew from SEATO in 1973 and the “Commonwealth” in 1972 but re-joined the latter in 1989. Many developments occurred in 1974, e.g., Pakistan hosted the “Islamic summit conference in Lahore,” spoke for Palestinians, amplified Muslim cooperation, and recognised Bangladesh as a state in the same year. Another adverse development of 1974 was the Indian nuclear test code named “Smiling Buddha.” It is then Bhutto famously said: “We will eat grass, even go hungry, but we will have our own,” referring to attaining nuclear weapons.

Pakistan signed an agreement with France for the supply of a “nuclear reactor” in 1973, but the US tried to halt it by offering aircraft if the deal was cancelled. After experiencing isolation on the battlefield, Pakistan was sure not to buy US offers. Washington also kept pressurising France until the nuclear reactor deal was cancelled in 1978. Other events, such as the imposition of the Zia in 1977, the execution of Bhutto in 1979, and the

burning of the US embassy by a mob of students on a report of the US occupation of the Holy Kaaba, further isolated Pakistan. On Pakistan's west-north theatre, in 1973, Mohammad Daoud, who was also known as "Pakistan-baiter" for fanning the Pashtunistan movement, established relations with the Soviets to protect his regime against domestic revolts, but soon he "realised that the Soviets had an agenda of their own." Hence, he tried to restore relations with "Pakistan, Iran and other Muslim countries." His embarked efforts irked Moscow and the "revolutionary People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)."

Daoud and several other leaders of the Afghan government were murdered "by a clique of communist intellectuals." Then, a Musical chair of the Afghan regime went on between PDPA, "Pushto-speaking Khalq and Persian-speaking Parcham factions." On 24 December 1979, the USSR militarily intervened, allegedly in a quest for warm waters, and installed the leader of the Parcham faction (Babrak Karmal) as the president. Soviet intervention could easily be traced back to 1968's "Brezhnev Doctrine," which allowed them to "intervene" by all means they had in those states where communism was under duress. The Soviet's involvement in the region was frightening Pakistan. The anxiety rose to its peak when the superpower reached closer to Pakistan's borders. "The security strategists believed that if allowed to consolidate its hold, the Soviets could later leap down the Bolan and Khyber pass to fulfil the historical czarist ambition for access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea."

Pakistan attended the "non-alignment summit as an observer" in 1976 until it formally joined its membership in 1979, a few months after withdrawing from CENTO. It left CENTO after 1979's "The Iranian Revolution." Pakistan preferred NAM after developing dire relations with the US for getting unfairly imposed by sanctions in 1979. Nonetheless, fearing the USSR and Indian ambitions, it had to revive the American alliance. Throughout this phase, Pak-Afghan relations remained under strain, yet the "Afghan government did not exploit Pakistan's vulnerability" during the 1965 and 1971 wars with India. It was a difficult decision for Pakistan to adopt a NAM policy as it had CMLA; Bhutto blamed the US for his removal from power, he was then hanged, and the Muslim states were disappointed by Pakistan, leaving it almost entirely isolated (Sattar).

Phase-4 (1980-1990): The Foreign War Imbroglia

In 1980, India adopted a pro-Soviet stance, whereas the “Organisation of Islamic Cooperation” (OIC) declared its “solidarity with the struggle of the Afghan people to safeguard their faith” and “national independence.” “Central Intelligence Agency” (CIA) and Pakistan discreetly assisted Afghan Mujahedeen in the initial stages. Then, the US reviewed its policy towards Pakistan and announced \$400mn economic aid, which President Zia turned down scornfully, calling the aid “peanuts.” When “Ronald Regan” assumed power in 1981, Washington revived ties with Islamabad. The US downplayed Pakistan’s nuclear programme for the sake of the CIA to jointly work with the “Inter-Services Intelligence” (ISI) in supporting Mujahedeen. Arab volunteers also joined Afghan Mujahedeen in fighting the Soviets. In 1983, the nuclear bomb was ready (Sattar), but in 1985, the “Pressler Amendment was passed by the US Congress” to ban Pakistan’s “economic and military assistance” unless it proves to be free of any “nuclear explosive device” (Rabia, 2017).

On the other hand, Mikhail Gorbachev officially regarded Afghanistan as a “bleeding wound” and announced the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. Though the fight was not between Pakistan and Afghanistan, they signed the “Geneva Accord” in 1988 for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, which was completed in 1989. Mujahedeen were not included, while the US and USSR stood as guarantors. The US and Pakistan underlined the right of Afghan citizens “to self-determination” and that the USSR forces were occupying forces in Afghanistan. Besides, the Soviets and the “Democratic Republic of Afghanistan” (DRA) asserted that the Soviet forces had entered Afghanistan to protect the Afghan regime from the intervention of foreign forces, i.e., Pakistan. Other events during this phase include India occupying Siachen in 1984, the “Highest battleground in the world” and a place unfeasible for humans to survive. In April of 1988, the “Ojhri Camp disaster” took place, a military ammunition depot centre for the Afghan Mujahedeen fighting against the Soviets, whereas Zia was mysteriously killed in an air crash the same year. The sum of this phase is that Pakistan drew closer to the US and Muslim states owing to the Afghan war. It also received scores of financial support for settling refugees (Sattar, 2017).

Phase-5 (1991-2001): Turning Nuclear Amid the Post-Cold War Era

Since Pakistan played the key role in shifting the world order from “bipolar” to “unipolar,” the US turned amiable towards Islamabad, yet it also lost its strategic importance to Washington. Henceforth, it blamed Pakistan for

sheltering the militant Islamic groups and the Afghan mujahedeen, also known as Pakistan's "strategic assets." In parallel, the US established cordial relations with India, whereas the Taliban governed Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and named it the "Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan" – a period also termed a "civil war" in Afghanistan until the 9/11 catastrophe. They were also engaged in insurgencies in Indian-held Kashmir. Besides, Pakistan recognised the Taliban regime in 1997 till the 9/11 incident, succeeded by the KSA and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) despite it being infamous for gender-based discriminatory policies. Pakistan also assisted the Taliban's quest for recognition in the UN for its seat, which also ruined its reputation.

Al-Qaeda also recognised the Taliban regime, which was established in Afghanistan in 1988 by Osama bin Laden (OBL). It was designated as a "terrorist group" by the UNSC, NATO, and the "European Union" (EU). At the time of the 9/11 episode, the Taliban government was led by "Mullah Omer." The US was irked by Pakistan when it endeavoured to install a pro-Taliban Mujahedeen government in Kabul, though it failed, and when Pakistan supported the "Taliban movement" that surfaced in 1994. The destabilised government in Afghanistan destabilised the region. Even CA could not develop a meaningful economic bond with Pakistan owing to the Taliban factor that is cultivating linkages with the Islamic dissident elements in their states.

After defeat in the Sino-Indo war, the Indian nuclear programme gained momentum, leading towards successful detonations on 11 May 1998. India did not skip to verbally intimidate Pakistan into turning nuclear. Pakistan's nuclear programme was already accelerated after the first Indian nuclear test in 1976. Therefore, in response to five Indian nuclear explosions, Pakistan declared itself a nuclear power and conducted six explosions on the 28 and 30 of May (Sattar). Controversial nuclear tests of Pakistan and India threatened the security environment in South Asia. Both states faced severe criticism and sanctions from the international community, but Pakistan was overtly discriminated against, perhaps due to the myth of an "Islamic programme." Thus, the course of the policies between the two regional nuclear rivals concerned the US and the international community. Besides having the Indo-Pak arms race, the region bears another arms race between China and India, with the US nexus sponsoring the latter (Fani, 2009).

The Indian PM visited Pakistan at the invitation of the Pakistani PM through the "Wagah border" on a bus service inaugurated from Delhi to Lahore to

shed off the shared adversative relations. The “Lahore Declaration,” a process to peace, was signed in 1998 by both PMs. However, after one and a half months, the Kargil incident followed the peace process, which General Musharraf initiated to internationalise the Kashmir issue. Pakistani troops (initially called mujahedeen) occupied peaks, but it was earlier agreed upon by both armies that either side would not occupy these posts from 15 September to 15 April every year. This incident caused a rift in Pakistan’s civil-military relations, resulting in a takeover by Gen. Musharraf in 1999. The international community did not support martial law, pushing Pakistan back to isolation. However, the “world patterns” were changed after the 9/11 attacks on the “World Trade Centre” and “Pentagon” “by hijacked aircraft.” The US blamed Al-Qaeda for the attack and was looking for complete compliance from Pakistan to meet its needs, but whenever the latter needed genuine support during its hardships, “the US adopted a neutral – hands-off stance.”

Pakistan feared getting bracketed with the Taliban and getting attacked by the coalition forces of the US. Besides, in a bid to label the “Kashmiri freedom struggle” as “terrorists” or “insurgents,” “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” (AJK) might be attacked under the garb of eliminating terrorists. Henceforth, Pakistan received monetary support, being an ally of the US and had to agree to join the 2001 “war on terror” as a front-line state to stay on a safer side and avoid getting targeted. Nevertheless, the religious parties in Pakistan did not support Pakistan’s stance, but they were intelligently handled (Sattar, 2017). The US also changed its policies towards India by removing sanctions imposed upon it for testing nuclear. For instance, without even signing the “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” (NPT), India was given unlawful privileges in the nuclear domain, though that would be under the “International Atomic Energy Agency” (IAEA) watch. On the other hand, Pakistan asked for its nuclear use for peaceful purposes, but the US denied it but removed sanctions on Pakistan and improved relations based on its national interests. The US preferred India despite Pakistan suffering a lot in a war in which it had nothing to do (Fani, 2009).

Phase-6 (2002 to 2017): Incessant Security Dilemma and Countering Terrorism

In 2004, Pakistan was termed a “Nuclear Walmart” for allegedly exporting nuclear proliferation by its founding father “A.Q. Khan” to a Saudi rival,

Iran, along with “Libya and North Korea” (Blank, 2015). However, after his release, he categorically denied it and dropped the blame on the intense pressure built by the Bush administration over the Pakistani dictatorship in a bid to defame Pakistan. He adds, “There was no truth in the allegations just like there was no truth in allegations against Iraq” (‘Pakistan’s Khan Now Denies Selling Nuclear Weapons Technology’, 2009).

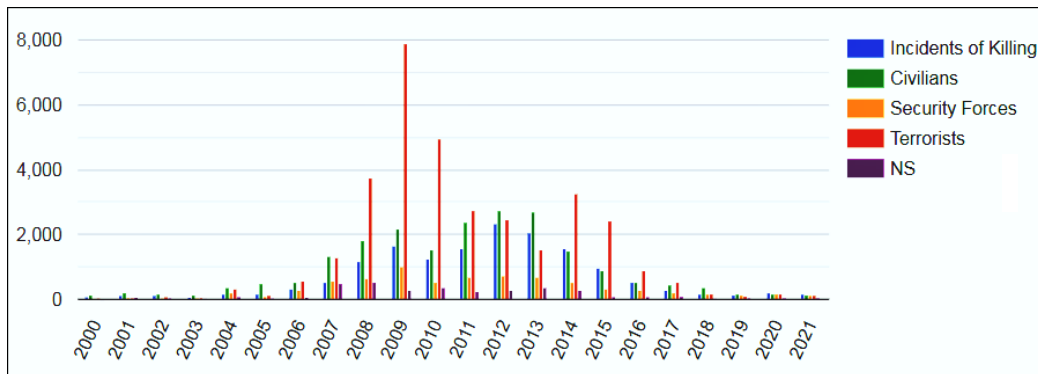
Moreover, in 2004, Pakistan was given the “status of a non-NATO ally” for joining the coalition forces against the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Taliban, in return, initiated a series of “guerrilla warfare” and terrorist activities. Suicidal attacks were targeted in Afghanistan, following Pakistan, and then the rest of the world. Terrorism massively affected Islamabad socially, politically, and economically, e.g., in the spectrum of tourism, investments, and trade. Major terrorist attacks include the “Siege of Lal Masjid” and Benazir Bhutto’s assassination in 2007, the attack on Pakistan’s “General Headquarters” (GHQ) in 2009 and the “attack on the Sri Lankan team” the same year, “PNS Mehran attack” and killing of OBL in 2011, “Kamra airbase” attack in 2012 and an attack on children at the “Army Public School” (APS) in 2014 (Sattar, 2017).

“Zarb-e Azab,” an operation which “refers to one of the seven swords of the Holy Prophet (PBUH),” was initiated in 2014 after the “Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan” (TTP) (Ghazanfar, 2016) attacked the Karachi airport (‘As It Happened: Karachi Airport Attack’, 2014) and the massacre of “132” students in APS (‘Pakistan Remembers School Attack’, 2015). The operations were launched following the government’s “National Action Plan” (NAP) (National Action Plan, 2014). Pakistan’s dilemma also continued in maintaining a balance between the KSA, Iran and Qatar. It also dealt with atrocities in the IOK, the regional rivalry in the “Indian Ocean” between India and China, the US policy of “shifting the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem,” and the US empowering India in Afghanistan.

However, China-Pakistan deepened its “Strategic cooperation,” such as “infrastructure facilities and defence production industries to promote self-reliance.” “Economic cooperation” involves Chinese investments in different projects and its skilled workers for project completion, e.g., “Gwadar harbour and Ghazi Barotha on the Indus River are among the largest projects built with Chinese cooperation.” Other constructive interactions between them involve the “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Good Neighbourly Relations” of 2005, which ensures collaboration in promoting “peace, security and stability of the two countries and the

region,” and “Shanghai Cooperation Organization” (SCO), which aimed to collaborate “against terrorism, separatism, extremism, and cross-border during crimes” (Sattar, 2017). Therefore, Pakistan-India officially joined SCO in 2017 (Michel, 2017) and “Anti-Terrorism Cooperation” to avoid attacks on “Chinese workers” working on different projects.

Most importantly, the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC) of 2015 proves an enduring Pakistan-China entente. Despite delays in developmental projects owing to the rise of terrorism in Pakistan, the edifice of their perpetual friendship is due to “mutual interests and principled policies,” which is disliked by the US and India (Sattar, 2017). To eliminate the militant groups, another phase of a military operation called “Radd-ul-Fasaad,” meaning “elimination of discord,” was initiated in 2017 (‘Pakistan Army Launches “Operation Radd-Ul-Fasaad” across the Country’, 2017). “Pakistan army introduced a “de-weaponisation” campaign in North Waziristan and registered approximately 3,000 tribesmen under the campaign.” Data presented in Figure 1 “endorses the unparalleled success of the operation” (Ghazanfar, 2016).



Source: “South Asia Terrorism Portal” (SATP) (Terrorism in Pakistan - Yearly Fatalities, n.d.)

*NS stands for “Not Specified”

Figure 1 – “Yearly Fatalities” of “Terrorism in Pakistan”

The Bush regime foresaw China as “a strategic competitor rather than a strategic partner,” India was the only option because of its large territory and population, allowing it to compete with giant China. India and Japan also allied, seeing China’s rise. Irrefutably, the Asian hegemonic race for leading the 21st century is perceptible in this phase. As aforesaid, since

Pakistan has been providing China with a route to Gwadar since 2015, China trading in Yuan will directly hit the US dollar in the global marketplace; hence, the US is strengthening India in return. Washington realises it has to do more; therefore, other than advocating India's permanent membership in UNSC, "G-8," "The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation" (APEC), and "The International Energy Agency" (IEA), the US is also providing India economically and militarily to challenge China.

The US being lenient with India over its nuclear tests also raises questions on the US non-proliferation seriousness and how the US thwarts the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (Fani, 2009) known as the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance, 2021). Washington has taken a dangerous step because it could cause the global threat of nuclear spread. Who knows, tomorrow, China may sell reactors to Pakistan, North Korea, or Iran; why not if the US can do so? Hence, preferring India to provide war technologies is widening the security dilemma for Pakistan, ultimately widening the arms race. Analysts claim that the US is playing in the region by generating an arms race setting, e.g., supplying F-16 to Pakistan to compel India to buy better American products (Fani, 2009).

Either way, it is discernible that India and the US have created a nexus for convergence based on their national interests in the region, including containing China and filling the vacuum created in Afghanistan. Islamabad is getting encircled diplomatically and through the media to achieve the former goal. It is labelled as a regional black sheep for providing safe havens to terrorist organisations and getting involved in Afghanistan's internal affairs. India, concurrently, is engaged in a blame game against Pakistan and propagates false operations, e.g., 2016's "Pathankot, Uri," and 2008's "Mumbai attacks." However, Kalbushan Jadhav, who was arrested in 2016, proves the "Research and Analysis Wing" (RAW)'s involvement in destabilising Pakistan. Also, India keenly observes Baluchistan through 13 Indian consulates near the "Durand Line" (Amjad & Mustafa, 2019).

Phase-7 (2018 to date): Resisting and Changing Bloc Inclinations to Reverting to a Compliant Stance

Under the Imran Khan administration, Pakistan attempted to shift blocs by strengthening ties with China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Malaysia. Nevertheless, it has no leverage in doing so without its economic progression, e.g., a weak economy led Islamabad to miss the Malaysia-led

“Kuala Lumpur” (KL) summit (The Star, 2020). This explains why PM Khan visited the KSA in 2018 (S. Khan, 2018), shortly after Jamal Khashoggi’s murder in October, when Mohammad Bin Salman (MbS) was facing global backlash for approving the murder. He was already a conflicted figure for lacking “the legitimacy of his predecessors” in acquiring the throne; therefore, “his ability to rule the country is very much tied to his acceptability in the West” (A. I. Khan, 2018).

PM Khan also visited the Kingdom in 2019 to discuss “the Kashmir issue” before attending “the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly” (UNGA) (Ahmed, 2019). MbS insisted Khan should fly on his “special aircraft” for being a “special guest” (‘You Are Our Special Guest’, 2019). Later reports claimed that he called back his “private jet” for getting miffed over the PM for drawing closer to Turkish, Malaysian, and Iranian leadership “without his explicit approval.” Together with Turkey and Malaysia, they planned “to jointly represent the Islamic bloc.” Islamabad officially rubbished this report by terming it a “political vendetta” and conversely asserted that the PM returned with the plane because it “developed a technical glitch” (‘Pakistan Magazine Claims MBS Called Back Imran Khan’s Plane’, 2019).

In 2019, “Khan’s desire to stay away from Western aid” (Afzal, 2019) led his administration to invite MbS to Pakistan. Islamabad arranged a grand “red carpet welcome” for him upon his arrival, even before the Saudi royal plane’s landing. “JF-17 thunder jets and F-16 fighter jets had escorted the plane” “after its entry into the Pakistani airspace.” He was also “given a 21-gun salute, chauffeured by the PM and “presented a guard of honour.” Several MoUs were signed (‘Saudi Crown Prince Arrives in Pakistan amid Fanfare, Received by PM Khan on Red Carpet’, 2019), e.g., “USD 20bn” promising investments, including the “oil refinery and a petrochemical complex in Gwadar port city” (Jawaid, 2020). Nevertheless, later, when Pakistan brusquely delivered a message on Kashmir that challenged the KSA, MbS snubbed meeting the “Army Chief, Qamar Javed Bajwa,” who visited the Kingdom to patch up the damages caused by FM Qureshi’s statements (‘Saudi Snubs Pakistan’s Efforts to Mend Relations’, 2020). The KSA also took punitive actions against Pakistan by denying to “renew a USD 3.2bn oil credit facility” and recalling “a USD 1bn interest-free loan (part of a USD 3bn loan), which was given to “stabilise Pakistan’s balance of payments deficit” (Jawaid, 2020).

During this phase, Islamabad also rebuffed agreeing on foreign terms, e.g., offering bases to the US ('Pakistan Will "Absolutely Not" Allow Bases to the US for Action in Afghanistan', 2021) and recognising Israel ('Is Saudi Arabia Pressing Pakistan to Recognise Israel?', 2020). Therefore, the Khan administration did not go well with Joe Biden's administration; unlike the previous American regime, Donald Trump offered to mediate the Kashmir crisis (Buncombe, 2019). Besides, Pakistan traditionally sought better relations with Afghanistan by attaining the "strategic depth" policy (Amjad & Mustafa, 2019). However, Khan's regime announced that it was no longer looking for a "friendly government" in Kabul because it had changed its "decades-long" "strategic depth" policy for the sake of Afghan peace (Peshimam, 2021). However, following the ousting of Khan from office, allegedly "because of his stance on the war in Ukraine," Islamabad realigned its FP orientation back towards the US. He "is currently jailed" (Did the U.S. Push Imran Khan from Power? 2023).

RECENT INDIAN ENCIRCLEMENT

Pakistan associates Baluch secessionists with India; thus, when the "Baluch Liberation Army" (BLA) attacked the Karachi "stock exchange" in 2020, PM Khan blamed Delhi, saying, "For the last two months, my Cabinet knew [that there would be an attack]. I had informed my minister. All our agencies were on high alert." However, India "denied any involvement in the attack" ('Pakistan's Imran Khan Blames India for Stock Exchange Attack', 2020). In 2021, "The Islamic State" in Khorasan (ISIS-K) killed eleven "coal miners" of "the Hazara" minority of the "Shia community" after kidnapping them. Khan "condemned the attack" and called it an "inhumane act of terrorism" ('Pakistan Coal Miners Kidnapped and Killed in IS Attack', 2021). He directly laid the blame again on India, who perpetrated the attack "to create disharmony and sectarian strife" in Pakistan ('PM Meets Slain Miners' Heirs, Blames India for Terrorist Acts', 2021).

Similarly, Pakistan faced a "Financial Action Task Force" (FATF) brawl. Islamabad is concerned that it operates as a "political forum" rather than "a technical one." To evade the FATF grey list, Pakistan has constructively strived to counter terrorism financing since 2018. Nevertheless, India confessed "To retain Pakistan on its grey list despite the country meeting 26 of the 27 conditions." Paradoxically, the Indian RAW is involved in terror activities in Pakistan, upon which Islamabad expresses "confidence" that India would be held accountable for its actions without any "dual standards"

from the regulative bodies ('India Admits It "ensured" Pakistan Remains on Grey List', 2021). It is instructive to note that under Pakistan's previous regime, "only Turkey" supported Islamabad on FATF for its efforts in fighting against "terrorism financing," whilst the KSA and China opposed doing so (A. I. Khan, 2018). Beijing delivered a message to Pakistan that "it should not expect China's blanket support at any forum" if its "economic or security interests" are at stake (Jamal, 2018).

Gwadar-Chabahar Contest is also on the rise. "China is investing in the world's most extensive infrastructure program—the ambitious, \$900 billion New Silk Road, which connects China, CA, Europe, and the Middle East." It connects to Pakistan's Gwadar city as "the largest port on the Arabian Sea" through the CPEC. India is proactively working on Pakistan's encirclement strategy by heavily investing in Afghanistan's infrastructural developments. It is intended to link with Iran's Chabahar port, "only 56 miles from the Chinese-sponsored Gwadar port in Pakistan" (Huda & Chisholm, 2020). New Delhi is "likely to start full operations at Chabahar port by end of May" ('India Likely to Start Full Operations at Chabahar Port by End of May 2021). Therefore, Pakistan's security uncertainty cannot be ignored, forcing it to rely on Beijing to secure the Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Even the limited involvement of China in the security domain is seen as a major threat to the US-Indian nexus; particularly, India objects to the CPEC project over territorial disputes with Pakistan (Marwat, 2020). Keeping in view Blackwater (the American security apparatus) (Saleem, 2009), Islamabad should never fully rely on Chinese security.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan's FP has constantly evolved due to regional dynamics, global power shifts, and internal security concerns. Throughout each phase, from its initial exploration to Cold War alliances, non-alignment, and the post-9/11 era of countering terrorism, including resistance and re-engagement, there has been one thing in common, i.e., seeking security and protecting national interests while balancing competing interests. Therefore, Pakistan's FP is more likely to continue to be shaped by interstate and intrastate factors, including domestic stability, economic development, and the evolving regional security landscape. Islamabad can only navigate these challenges and ensure its security and prosperity by making its economy sound and enhancing its capacity to adapt and learn from the lessons of its past FP

phases to make the optimum FP decisions in the future amid the complex international landscape.

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