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PATHWAYS OF DIPLOMACY: CHARTING PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES IN A DYNAMIC GLOBAL ARENA

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ABSTRACT

“Pakistan's foreign policy landscape is pivotal in navigating its strategic and economic interests on the global stage. The significance of defining foreign policy priorities lies in the need to chart a coherent and effective course of action that advances national interests while fostering regional and international cooperation. Pakistan's foreign policy priorities are essential for navigating its strategic and economic interests in the global arena. This paper explores Pakistan's top three foreign policy priorities, advocating for robust relations with the United States, neighboring countries, and regional powers. It suggests adopting a strategy akin to the historical non-involvement approach of the United States to safeguard Pakistan's interests. Furthermore, active engagement in international organizations and collaborative conflict resolution efforts underscores Pakistan's commitment to global peace and prosperity. Through a win-win approach and diplomatic prowess, Pakistan aims to optimize its global standing and contribute constructively to international affairs.”

Keywords: Pakistan, foreign policy priorities, United States, neighboring countries, regional powers, international organizations, strategic interests, economic interests.

INTRODUCTION

In the complex tapestry of international relations, Pakistan's foreign policy choices wield significant influence, shaping its strategic engagements with neighboring countries, the United States, and regional powers. After the end of WWII, Pakistan emerged on the world map in an international system distinguished by the Cold War and bipolarity (Khan, 2019). This paper embarks on an extensive exploration of Pakistan's diplomatic endeavors, delving deep into its

multifaceted approach to fostering relationships and navigating geopolitical dynamics. Through meticulous analysis and nuanced narratives, it unveils Pakistan's commitment to fostering peace, stability, and cooperation while pursuing its strategic and economic interests on the global stage. Pakistan is currently experiencing what some analysts have labeled a "polycrisis," characterized by significant political unrest, an economic imbalance in its balance of payments, a resurgence of domestic security threats and terrorism, diminished diplomatic sway, and various other hurdles, notably in the realms of energy and climate. The people of Pakistan have continued to find themselves in a persistent, chronic and unending crisis that takes various forms (Rizvi, 2023). Furthermore, the nation grapples with persistent and severe human rights violations, with certain abuses officially prohibited by the government while others receive implicit endorsement.

PAKISTAN NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Pakistan's approach to nurturing relationships with neighboring countries is a cornerstone of its foreign policy strategy. Situated in a region characterized by complex geopolitical dynamics, Pakistan recognizes the importance of fostering constructive and mutually beneficial ties with its neighbors: India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China. Due to a hostile neighbourhood, the perpetual sense of insecurity of Pakistan is aptly explained by Kenneth N Waltz: "The web of social and political life is spun out of inclinations and incentives, deterrent threats and punishments. Eliminate the latter two and the ordering of the society depends entirely on the former - a utopian thought impractical this side of Eden." (Waltz, 1979). The relationship between Pakistan and India, its largest neighbor, has been marked by historical tensions and periodic conflicts, particularly over the disputed region of Kashmir. Indo-Pak relations have been defined by the violent partition of British India in 1947, the Jammu & Kashmir conflict and the numerous military conflicts fought between the two nations. (Efsas, 2022). Despite these challenges, Pakistan recognizes the significance of maintaining open channels of communication and pursuing dialogue to address outstanding issues and promote peace and stability in the region. India has pursued a policy of non-alignment with Soviet Union and United States since its independence (Johnson, 2023).

Afghanistan, another key neighbor, shares a long and porous border with Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan, two immediate Muslim neighbors, that not only share a common border but also have many other commonalities such as; linguistic, strong historical, ethnic, cultural, and religious ties (Ali & Safdar, 2020). Afghanistan and Pakistan are neighbors on a 2,640-kilometer border. While living on a geography demarcated by a line that passes through unnatural boundaries, two nations are connected with social, political, economical, demographical and cultural bonds (Cakir, 2023). The relationship between the two countries is multifaceted, with shared security concerns, economic interests, and historical ties. Pakistan acknowledges the importance of supporting Afghanistan's stability and development, including facilitating peace talks and promoting economic cooperation.

Iran, Pakistan's western neighbor, shares cultural, historical, and economic ties with Pakistan. While occasional tensions have arisen over issues such as border security and energy resources, both countries recognize the benefits of cooperation in areas such as trade, energy, and regional stability.

China, Pakistan's "all-weather" friend, holds a special significance in Pakistan's foreign policy calculus. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project that underscores the depth of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project is going to be a positive turn-around both for Pakistan and the western region of China (Rizvi, 2015). As far as the geo-economics of OBOR is concerned, as many as sixty countries would get connected to China through a network of roads, highways, railways, pipelines, grids and fibre optic. (Hussain, 2018). Pakistan values its strategic partnership with China and seeks to further strengthen economic, political, and security ties.

Pakistan's approach to nurturing relationships with neighboring countries emphasizes the importance of diplomacy, dialogue, and mutual respect. By promoting economic cooperation, facilitating people-to-people exchanges, and addressing common challenges, Pakistan aims to foster an environment of trust and cooperation in its immediate neighborhood.

PAKISTAN CULTIVATING CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

Relations between the U.S and Pakistan began prior to Pakistan's independence, as noted when the United States Secretary of State, George Marshall, sent a message to Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, extending best wishes on behalf of the United States. The message was mentioned in Jinnah's address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1947. (Pak-PAC, 2023). The United States was an early supporter of Pakistan, providing financial, military, and moral support, while Pakistan played a role in jumpstarting Sino-American relations. (Weinstein, 2023) Pakistan's relationship with the United States has been a significant factor in its foreign policy calculations for decades. The historical trajectory of Pakistan-U.S. relations has been characterized by periods of cooperation, strategic partnership, as well as challenges and tensions. The U.S.–Taliban agreement initiated an unprecedented dialogue between top Taliban leaders and U.S. officials, despite its limitations (Tariq, 2022).

The United States has been an important ally and partner for Pakistan in areas such as defense, security, and economic development. However, differences over issues such as counterterrorism efforts, nuclear proliferation, and human rights have strained relations at times.

Pakistan recognizes the importance of cultivating cordial relations with the United States to advance its strategic and economic interests. High-level dialogues, diplomatic exchanges, and cooperation on shared priorities such as counterterrorism and regional stability are essential for building trust and understanding between the two countries. U.S. recognize continued efforts of Pakistan on stability in the region (Miller, 2023)

While differences and disagreements may arise, Pakistan remains committed to engaging constructively with the United States based on principles of mutual respect, sovereignty, and cooperation. By fostering open communication channels and addressing concerns through diplomatic means, Pakistan aims to build a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership with the United States. Fortunately, people-to-people relations between the two nations have endured despite the fluctuating nature of official government relationships. Investing in areas that garner widespread support in Pakistan would be advantageous for both countries. (Chaudhry, 2023).

The prominent political scientists Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane, we can think of four different types of anti-Americanism in Pakistan: radical, socio-religious, sovereign-nationalist and liberal and joint efforts in required to stop the anti Americanism in Pakistan (Afzal, 2013).

PAKISTAN ENGAGING WITH REGIONAL POWERS

Pakistan's engagement with regional powers plays a pivotal role in shaping its foreign policy objectives and regional dynamics. As a key player in South Asia and the broader Middle East, Pakistan recognizes the importance of constructive engagement with regional powers such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.

China, Pakistan's "all-weather" friend and strategic partner, holds particular significance in Pakistan's regional calculus. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project that exemplifies the depth of bilateral cooperation and the potential for economic development and connectivity in the region.

Russia, with its historical ties to Pakistan and growing influence in the region, presents opportunities for enhanced cooperation in areas such as defense, energy, and regional stability. Pak-Russian relations have been marred by historical legacies, overemphasized western dependence and Pakistan's Indo-centric approach (Hussain, 2012). Strengthening ties with Russia diversifies Pakistan's diplomatic portfolio and contributes to a multipolar regional order.

Saudi Arabia, a key player in the Muslim world and an important economic partner, shares close ties with Pakistan. Pakistanis are spiritually attached to the land of Arabs because it is a birthplace of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Islam spread in the subcontinent due to the invasions of Arabs (Khan & Chawla, 2020). Cooperation in areas such as defense, energy, and religious affairs underpins the strategic partnership between the two countries.

Pakistan's engagement with regional powers is guided by principles of mutual respect, sovereignty, and shared interests. By promoting dialogue, cooperation, and understanding, Pakistan aims to foster an environment of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

In conclusion, Pakistan's approach to nurturing relationships with neighboring countries, cultivating cordial relations with the United States, and engaging with regional powers reflects its commitment to promoting peace, stability, and cooperation in the region and beyond. Through diplomacy, dialogue, and mutual respect, Pakistan seeks to advance its strategic and economic interests while contributing to regional and global peace and prosperity.

EMBRACING A NON-INVOLVEMENT APPROACH AND DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY

The adoption of a non-involvement approach and a nuanced diplomatic strategy is essential for safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty, promoting regional stability, and advancing its strategic interests. Drawing lessons from the U.S. pattern of non-involvement during the initial years of its independence, Pakistan can chart a course of diplomacy that prioritizes national interests while avoiding entanglements in external conflicts.

A non-involvement approach emphasizes prudent diplomacy, strategic restraint, and neutrality in regional and global disputes. By avoiding unnecessary entanglements and focusing on domestic development, Pakistan can channel its resources towards economic growth, social welfare, and nation-building initiatives.

Diplomacy plays a pivotal role in safeguarding Pakistan's economic and strategic interests on the global stage. Through constructive engagement, dialogue, and negotiation, Pakistan can foster mutually beneficial relationships with international partners while asserting its sovereign rights and interests.

Promoting peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution mechanisms is central to Pakistan's diplomatic agenda. By advocating for dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation, Pakistan can contribute to the resolution of regional conflicts, promote confidence-building measures, and mitigate tensions in conflict-prone areas. A multitude of factors have affected and will likely continue to affect how Pakistan will align with great powers in the developing multipolar competition (Harris, 2020).

Thus, embracing a non-involvement approach and adopting a pragmatic diplomatic strategy are imperative for Pakistan's foreign policy resilience and effectiveness. By prioritizing national interests, promoting regional stability, and advocating for peaceful resolution of disputes, Pakistan can enhance its standing in the international community and contribute to global peace and security.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Pakistan's active engagement in international organizations is instrumental in advancing its diplomatic objectives, promoting global cooperation, and addressing transnational challenges. As a member of various multilateral forums, including the United Nations, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, Pakistan leverages its participation to advocate for its interests and contribute to international development efforts.

The United Nations serves as a platform for Pakistan to address global issues, participate in peacekeeping missions, and advance its agenda on disarmament, human rights, and sustainable development. Pakistan's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions underscore its commitment to global peace and security. In the last 60 years, Pakistan has contributed 200,000 troops in 46 missions and 28 countries in virtually every continent. In the true spirit of duty and sacrifice, as many as 157 Pakistani peacekeepers have lost their lives, including 24 officers (Shah, 2020).

Membership in the World Trade Organization facilitates Pakistan's integration into the global economy, promotes trade liberalization, and enhances market access for Pakistani goods and services. By adhering to WTO rules and regulations, Pakistan can strengthen its economic competitiveness and attract foreign investment.

Collaboration with international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank enables Pakistan to access financial assistance, technical expertise, and

capacity-building support for economic development projects. By leveraging these partnerships, Pakistan can address economic challenges, promote inclusive growth, and reduce poverty.

Participation in regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), facilitates regional cooperation, fosters economic integration, and enhances diplomatic relations with neighboring countries.

STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan's strategic interests revolve around maintaining regional stability, securing its borders, and safeguarding its sovereignty. As a nuclear-armed nation situated in a volatile region, Pakistan faces numerous security challenges, including terrorism, insurgency, and geopolitical tensions. Strengthening its defense capabilities, enhancing border security, and fostering regional cooperation are essential for safeguarding Pakistan's strategic interests. Critical U.S. policy choices toward Pakistan must also be integrated with broader regional policies. South Asia has changed and so has the basis of U.S. (Hussain, 2005). The Pakistan army has concentrated on implementing structural changes and integrating niche technologies to enhance operational preparedness. Additionally, there is a focus on upgrading essential logistic infrastructure in response to emerging security imperatives (ISPR Press Release, 2023).

Economically, Pakistan seeks to promote sustainable development, attract foreign investment, and enhance its global competitiveness. Key priorities include promoting economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality, and addressing structural challenges such as energy shortages and infrastructure deficits. Pakistan's strategic location, abundant natural resources, and young demographic profile present significant opportunities for economic development and prosperity.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Pakistan must prioritize stability, security, and good governance to achieve its strategic and economic objectives. Investing in human capital, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and creating an enabling environment for business and investment are essential for driving economic growth and development. Furthermore, enhancing regional connectivity, expanding trade and investment linkages, and diversifying export markets can unlock Pakistan's economic potential and promote regional integration. Aligning Pakistan's foreign policy priorities with its strategic and economic interests is crucial for advancing its national agenda and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. By fostering robust diplomatic relations, promoting economic cooperation, and engaging constructively in regional and international affairs, Pakistan can maximize its global influence and contribute meaningfully to global peace and security.

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