

**RESEARCH PAPER**

Driving Forces of Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards China: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the driving forces that have influenced the Pakistan's foreign policy since the early post-independence years to the modern times with special reference to its strategic relations with China, the United States and the relationship with the neighbours in South and Central Asia. The foreign policy of Pakistan has traditionally been developed with the impact of active regional and international changes and is the demonstration of interrelation between security needs, economic interdependence and domestic political frameworks. Through analytical and historical approach, the paper brings together data of diplomatic archives, government documents and scholarly literature through the identification of patterns and continuities over decades. The results indicate that national security issues, in particular, the long-term rivalry with India is the most stable factor of the foreign policy orientation of Pakistan. At the same time, there has been an increase in economic incentives, including the right to foreign aid, diversification of trade, and investment in infrastructure, especially the introduction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The internal politics and civil-military relations, leadership changes, and the popular preferences also affect the priorities of policies and foreign alliances. The paper highlights the fact that the foreign policy of Pakistan is slowly shifting to a security-based paradigm to a more geo-economic model, which focuses on connectivity, regionalism and sustainable development. However, endemic difficulties, financial inconstancy, governance flaws and unstable regional contexts, still limit policy performances. It finds that an adaptive and balanced foreign policy based on economic resilience and institutional coherence is essential to protect the sovereignty of Pakistan and ensure the greatest strategic utility of this nation in an increasingly multipolar world system.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, Foreign Policy, CPEC, U.S Pakistan Relations, Belt and Road Initiatives, Global Power, New World Order

Introduction

According to Hill (2016), foreign policy is essentially the national, security and ideological requirements in the external sphere of a nation. The foreign policy of Pakistan, ever since the country came into being in 1947, has been one of the most contentious and dynamic issues of governance. Subsequently, foreign behavior has undergone changes due to evolving regional power dynamics, internal political changes, and global ideological shifts (Khan, 2019). Although Pakistan is located in a very strategic position that makes it a centre between South Asia and Central Asia and the Middle East. Therefore participation in global power games since the Cold War, and the post 9/11 counter-terrorism effort and currently the multipolar order (Rizvi, 2021; Muzaffar & Khan, 2021; Small, 2015).

From the early years of state formation, Pakistan's foreign policy orientation has been shaped by three interlinked dimensions: security imperatives, economic dependencies, and ideological and domestic politics (Sattar, 2018). The persistent rivalry with India and the unresolved Kashmir dispute have kept national security concerns at the

forefront of foreign policy decision-making (Haqqani, 2013). Economic vulnerabilities, including recurrent balance-of-payments crises and dependence on external aid, have driven Pakistan toward alliances with the United States, China, and multilateral financial institutions (Khan, 2019; Muzaffar, et. al., 2016). Over time, its relationship with China has deepened from limited strategic cooperation in the 1960s to a multifaceted partnership encompassing defense, trade, and infrastructure, symbolized by the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) launched in 2015 (Small, 2015; Wolf, 2019; Muzaffar, et. al., 2018). This progression illustrates a transition from a predominantly security-centric approach toward a geo-economic framework emphasizing connectivity, investment, and regional integration (Garlick, 2018).

Despite extensive literature, most studies analyze Pakistan's foreign policy through episodic or bilateral lenses, focusing on singular themes such as the Cold War, the Afghan conflict, or CPEC, without synthesizing the composite forces that have shaped its trajectory across decades (Javaid & Jahangir, 2020). This study seeks to bridge that gap by conducting an integrated analysis of the strategic, economic, and domestic drivers that collectively influence Pakistan's foreign policy from independence to the contemporary period. The guiding question is: *What are the principal forces that have shaped Pakistan's foreign policy orientation, and how have they evolved under changing regional and global dynamics?*

Using a qualitative and historical-analytical methodology, this paper draws on official documents, academic literature, and policy analyses to trace patterns of continuity and change. The aim is to clarify how Pakistan has balanced its security imperatives with economic and political constraints while redefining its position within a rapidly evolving global order (Malik, 2022). The paper is structured as follows: Section 1 discusses the analytical framework; Section 2 reviews the historical evolution of Pakistan's foreign policy; Section 3 examines strategic and security determinants; Section 4 addresses economic and domestic factors; Section 5 presents the case of CPEC as a turning point; and the final section outlines conclusions and policy recommendations.

Literature Review

Theories of foreign policy give a framework for explaining states' interactions with one another in the international system as well as their national goals. The literature on International Relations holds three theories: realism, liberalism and constructivism. Realists claim that states are rational entities which aim at safeguarding their national interest by ensuring their own power and survival. The focus of this approach is National security, sovereignty and military capability. Realist scholars argue that states care little about morality and cooperation. Instead, they practice self-help and balance-of-power strategies to secure power and influence. Pakistan's constant security fears vis-à-vis India and dependence on alliances to maintain peace in the region can be best explained using realism (Rizivi, 2021). According to the realist paradigm, Pakistan aligned itself with Western powers at the onset of the Cold War. Furthermore, it focuses on deterrence facilities and defense capabilities.

Liberalism meanwhile assumes that states get cooperation from interdependence, institutions, and mutual benefits from economic development (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Liberal theorists argue that trade and international organizations and support for democracy can reduce conflict. In Pakistan, liberal viewpoints draw attention to the capacity for economic integration and institutional cooperation, such as through SAARC or BRI, to spur stability and development (Wolf, 2019; Shahbaz & Muzaffar, 2025; Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Liberalism offers an explanation of the shift in Pakistan's foreign policy rhetoric from military alliances to economic diplomacy—especially in the context of the launch of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2015. Constructivism makes the argument about the social and ideas that state interests and identities are not given but constructed through interaction, norms and discourse (Wendt, 1999). As noted by Javaid & Jahangir

(2020), Pakistan's foreign policy will not be understood just from its material base but will also consider ideological and identity-based factors. Such factors include Islamic solidarity, nationalism, and status perceptions within the Ummah. A constructivist analysis helps explain the frequent articulation of Pakistan's external relations in terms of moral or civilizational elements. The country seeks to balance pragmatic strategic alliances with symbolic commitments to the ummah.

The three methods together will assist us in offering a multi-view theoretical platform upon which to examine Pakistan foreign policy. Realism clarifies the strategies of security-oriented; liberalism clarifies the growth in the economic and institutional cooperation; and constructivism clarifies the importance of ideology and identity in state action. The scholars who hold the view of balance of power would effectively balance the relations with both China and India.

Several researches have been performed concerning how the foreign policy of Pakistan evolved in different stages. Preliminary research Sattar (2018) and Rizvi (2021) present the picture according to which security is in the center of relationships between Pakistan/South Asia and China. It argues that these relations have evolved from an alliance during the Cold War to a strategic partnership today. Pakistan is situated at the crossroads of South Asia and Middle East as a beneficiary and victim of the geopolitical rivalries Sattar (2018). As noted by Rizvi (2021), Pakistan has relied on alliance politics first with the USA and later with China. Along this vein, the paper finds a consistent pattern of external dependence due to structural weaknesses.

According to Haqqani (2013) and Ahmed (2014), this dependency on aid has created a "security-aid nexus" which limits the policy autonomy of Pakistan. As per the Haqqani (2013), Pakistan's foreign policy has generally alternated between suffocation by strategic overreach and lack of resources, drawing the great powers from time to time. According to Small (2015) and Wolf (2019), the evolution of the China-Pakistan axis and the CPEC have re-established the foreign policy narrative of Pakistan from geo-strategy to geo-economics. The author Garlick (2018) similarly outlines the finding in regard to the BRI and the role of Pakistan and the wider region and how it offers opportunities as well as sovereignty challenges for China's economic footprint in Pakistan (Ain, et. al., 2024).

Domestic influences have also been studied by scholars. According to Rizvi (2021) and Malik (2022) civil-military relations, leadership transitions in Pakistan as well as ideological currents shape the external posture of Pakistan. According to Javaid and Jahangir (2020), foreign policy is the outcome of an interaction between institutional actors, particularly the military establishment, and changing political coalitions. The research studies conducted on Pakistan diplomacy advocate the fact that Pakistan diplomacy is not only a response to the outside world but is deeply rooted in the internal power configuration as well.

The contributions enhance understanding of Pakistan's foreign policy; however, a gap still exists. The majority of the works on Pakistan's relations with China focus either on a specific phase, like the Cold War; the post-9/11 or the CPEC era; or on a single determinant, like security or economy, among others. These works do not offer an integrated analysis. Studies linking strategic imperatives, economic dependencies, and domestic political now exist within the same analytical framework. As such, the existing literature does not provide a comprehensive model for continuity and change in Pakistan's foreign policy. This study tries to bridge that gap by formulating a combined analytical framework integrate multiple dimensions and capture the changing dynamics between security, economic and domestic drivers from 1947 till now.

In the current literature on the foreign policy determinants, three major categories of determinants may be identified, including security, economic, and domestic-political (Hill,

2016; Rosenau, 1980). The factors of security determination include the geographical position, military strength, regional insecurity, and alliances. In the case of states that have disputed borders, or states that have historically been adversaries, defense and deterrence prevail in the external behavior. According to such scholars like Waltz (1979) and Mearsheimer (2001), smaller or weak states prefer to form an alliance with a more powerful state and take advantage of the security imbalance, and this relationship is evident in the example of alliances that Pakistan formed with the United States and China in the past. The tradition of realism highlights that national survival instead of moral idealism tends to dominate the foreign policy decisions.

Economic determinants can be described as trade relations, resource requirements, aid dependence, and market availability on the international market. According to the complex interdependence theorists, the modern-day diplomacy is gradually being influenced by economic factors (Keohane and Nye, 1977). Foreign policy is used by the states to ensure development aid, investment and trade partners. In the case of developing economies such as Pakistan, the foreign economic relations are needed to support their growth and to deal with the fiscal deficits. The increased relevance of CPEC highlights the importance of geo-economics to the development of international alignments in Pakistan (Garlick, 2018).

Domestic determinants are concerned with the inner political systems, institutional structures, leadership relationships and the opinion of the people. According to Rosenau (1980) and Hudson (2014), domestic politics is a limitation and a driver in the foreign policy development. The situation in Pakistan is no exception, as the external orientations in the country have always been affected by civil-military relations, the changes in regimes, and the preferences of the elite (Haqqani, 2013). A governance structure within a state is critical towards defining its behavior in the outside world.

These three elements according to many scholars, work in agreement with each other. As an illustration, the economic orders under the public order exception may be affected by national security. Also, the strategic partnerships can be redefined as a result of domestic political pressure. Recent studies choose another way that recognizes their improvement instead of considering them as independent determinants. It is a vital framework that can be used to interpret the foreign policy of Pakistan in balancing the foreign relations, internal stability and add economic necessity.

Material and Methods

This paper adopts a qualitative, analytical and historical approach to probe the driving forces of Pakistan foreign policy for 1947-2025. A qualitative design is more appropriate study design as the research seeks to interpret non-unidirectional strong and weak political, economic and institutional relationships rather than quantifying the variable. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative inquiry allows for interpreting meaning of an event or a phenomenon within its context. Most importantly, it is useful in qualitative research to study the evolving behavior of certain policies. The analytical-historical method enables us to trace continuities and transformations in Pakistan's external relations across major historical phases, Cold War alliances, post-9/11 security realignments, and ongoing geo-economic transition. Based on the study, secondary data will be gathered from a variety of sources like academic literature, governmental archives etc. It will include data from institutions like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Economic Survey of Pakistan, and State Bank of Pakistan. To supplement this analysis, data from global organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD and think tanks like Carnegie Endowment, Wilson Center, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad was analyzed. The research strategy of the study is a documentary one. It is concentrated on critical analysis, thematic coding and integration of several bodies of evidence (Bowen, 2009). The strategy assists in aligning practical

historical processes on one hand with abstracted means on the other hand based on realism, liberalism and constructivism to offer conceptualization as well as empirical orientation.

The foreign policy in Pakistan is examined using the three aspects namely security, economic and domestic which are interlocked. The three-dimensional model that imagines the foreign policy as a result of the interaction between the forces of the international system and material capabilities and internal politics was modified as per Hill (2016) and Hudson (2014). The security dimension encompasses military equilibrium, alliances politics and threat perception which is primarily because of India-Pakistan enmity and general turmoil in the region (Rizvi, 2021). The economic aspect looks at the flow of trade, aid and invested money, and the transformational effect of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Wolf, 2019). Domestic dimension evaluates the civil-military relations, leadership patterns, and the masses as the factors leading to continuity or change in policies (Haqqani, 2013; Shah, et. al., 2020; Rahim et. al., 2018). It was decided to cover the years 1947-2025 because it would capture the full range of the arc of foreign policy development of Pakistan, between early alliances and the Bandung years and the current multipolar situation, where both stability and adaptation would be longitudinally interpreted. Though the study has admitted its intrinsic weaknesses, which include the use of secondary sources and the lack of first-hand interviews with the elite, the study has minimized bias by subjecting sources to triangulation, chronological cross tabulation and consultation of various scholarly opinion. Ethical standards have been maintained by ensuring accurate citation, intellectual honesty, and contextual neutrality. According to the (2020) American Political Science Association report, factional events of the past have been dealt with restraint of fact and balance. The method strengthens the results with proof and theory. It has provided evidence to understand the criminal justice reforms in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Results and Discussion

Strategic and Security Drivers

Pakistan's foreign policy has long been shaped mainly by strategic and security concerns owing to its long-standing rivalry with India, the vulnerabilities arising out of its geography, and the need for external partnerships and defense cooperation. The first India-Pakistan rivalry and subsequent alliance strategies are defense and post 9/11 realignment. China plays an important part in counterbalancing India. The military spending and arms import data represented in Table 1 contextualizes the analysis and shows the structural asymmetries faced by Pakistan.

The fact that India spends approximately eight to nine times as much on defense as Pakistan and has more significant force sizes, is a source of structural security pressure on Islamabad (South Asian Voices, 2025). In reaction, the factors of deterrence and external balancing drive a heavy influence on the strategic posture of Pakistan. Historical rationale of forming alliances (that of the United States during the Cold War, then shifting to that of China) can be realized in a realist perspective as an effort of compensating material disadvantage. The Pakistani military policy and position are still solidly rooted in the perceived danger of India and the disputable nature of Kashmir (Conflict Tracker).

The dependence on China as a main arms provider, as well as, on strategic partner has intensified in Pakistan. In the last five years, China has accounted to the imports of some 81 percent of the arms into Pakistan, and about 63 percent of the total arms exports of China have been into Pakistan (South China Morning Post). The reliance highlights an unequal partnership: Islamabad has been dependent on Beijing in the areas of both hardware and technology transfers, combined development (e.g., JF-17, missiles), as well as strategic support in regional forums (USIP report). Essentially, China is both a contender and an ally. Accordingly, China sees India as a weapon supplier and partner to hedge against Western

influence (difference between realists vs. nationalists, global security issues and specific regional challenges).

After September 11, there were both challenges and opportunities. Pakistan became part of the US-led War on Terror, which opened the way to huge amounts of security assistance. Almost certainly, Islamabad sacrificed a great deal of autonomy and faced some backlash at home. China becoming an up and coming power provided Pakistan with a second benefactor. Through a carefully structured adjustment, Islamabad succeeded in weakening Washington's coercive capacity and strengthening an already solid security collaboration with Beijing. Pakistan-China military cooperation has become institutionalized. The Shaheen air drills and AMAN naval exercises suffer from Chinese-lead naval diplomacy in the Indian Ocean region.

The other significance is adaptive hardware-software device, a specialized supply chain and logistics for the military. The Saudi-Pakistan Agreement of 2025 is not the first. Islamabad has been weaving together arrangement for mutual defense and promoting this pattern for the diversification of security quilt. The pact is very significant for India as it would probably have control over its use and other relevant rights. India's integrated missile defense systems prevented launch from Pakistan in border incidents, drone-missile incidents and the May 2025 incident. According to the statement published by The Stimson Center, the material superiority available to India makes converting strategies into effective deterrence difficult.

Ultimately, Pakistan is an asymmetric response of a classic disadvantaged state as indicated by its strategic and security drivers to the regional environment. India possesses a strategic asset with a strong position, enabling multiple mounting challenges against India and edging India to crisis action. In the following sections, the changing economic and domestic factors have greater impact than this fundamental dimension.

Economic Drivers

Pakistan's foreign policy posture is increasingly influenced by the modalities of foreign aid, trade, FDI and CPEC due to economic opportunities and constraints. This section first emphasizes on how external financial flows and trade pressures impacted Islamabad's decision making. It was later assessed how the geopolitics and geo-economics of external investment changed from 'anti-China' to 'pro-China'.

Pakistan's heavy reliance on Chinese-led FDI and infrastructure funding, and second, the structural trade imbalance with its largest economic partner. The influx in capital under CPEC of estimated approximately of US 62 billion by the year 2020 has reshaped the investment environment (United States Institute of Peace; World Bank analyses). Approximately 70 percent of CPEC funds are channeled through Chinese companies through direct infrastructure investment, which is strengthening the role of China in the development agenda of Pakistan (Shad, 2024). The China is not just a strategic, but an economic anchor.

Trade relations between China and Pakistan also highlight the asymmetry: in 2024, overall trade between China and Pakistan amounted to US\$ 23.1 billion, with Pakistan importing goods of about US \$ 20.2 billion and exporting only about US \$ 2.8 billion (China Briefing, 2025). This broad trade deficit is an indication of the low Pakistani export potentials to China, structural inefficiencies in manufacturing, and reliance on Chinese capital and input.

In addition, the trend in FDI demonstrates that the economy is reshaped due to infrastructure-led investment. Foreign investment inflows in other industries such as power, transport and telecommunications increased by up to 56 percent over the past few

years, much of which has been driven by CPEC projects (Farooq et al., 2022). Such inflows give Pakistan ways of accessing the funds it acutely requires but also gives rise to the effects of transfer and linkages of technology to the economy.

This implies that Pakistan is no longer after security alliances with China and Russia which are diametrically opposite to the west. Investment, infrastructure, and energy supply are some of the decisions made by Pakistan not on the basis of strategic threats only. This geo-economic strategy will facilitate the alignment of security relationships with China, a bonding between the foreign policy and economic objectives like trade, construction of the corridor and investment climate. However, the transition is not without tension. Even though CPEC and Chinese investments can deliver transformative benefits, Islamabad will have to deal with sovereign risk, debt overhang and local distributional equity. Our trade deficits with China have not budged due to diversification of exports. Pakistan should use diplomacy to signal power, negotiate better deals, reduce risk of dependency, and attract diversified investors.

Domestic Political Drivers

For quite some time, the domestic political dynamics have been influencing Pakistan's foreign policy. In contrast to other states where civilian control governs external relations, Pakistan's civil-military imbalance, changing political parties and use of foreign policy as a regime legitimizing tool influenced its policymaking. Understanding the internal dimension is essential to comprehend how the strategic and monetary decisions of Pakistan vary in the face of stable structural incentives.

Historically a military establishment acted to influence Pakistan's foreign relations policies. US Army analysts believe that the armed forces of a country tend to have a very narrow perspective when it comes to what is in the best interest of the nation. Instead, international relations mainly goal is for the defense establishment rather than to the internationally relations. Security based alliances have continued even after periods of civilian political power.

While foreign policy assists nations in combating threats abroad, it may do more to validate civilian governments that have recently been established. In the Islamic world, Pakistani leaders employ diplomacy to balance the demands of different ideologies and realization of the power politics situation, usually to the instances of these events. These symbolic changes help regimes to frame organizations of domestic people and justify some concessions.

Pakistan's relations with other countries are changed by opinion of the public and also by the media. Elite leaders have been influenced greatly by overseas media and foreign propaganda as well as a pride in their homeland. The Pulwama crisis makes it clear that populist attitudes can cause a strain and hinder a country's ability to de-escalate a situation economically smart.

Finally, communication between involved institutions results in confused and disorganized messages to the public. The prolonged heavy rain caused excess moisture in the soil which the infrastructure cannot handle. Domestic politics influence national economic goals and national security strategy in a nation. In this case, we will analyze Pakistan.

Interplay Among Drivers

Even though we discuss the strategic, economic, and domestic determinants separately, they are closely intertwined, which will be observed. The outcomes of foreign policies of Pakistan are a reflection of the crossings of the security needs and economic

collaborations the confines of national politics determines the scope of action of your strategic goals.

There is no driver who works in isolation. An illustration of one of these alliances with the Americans was in 1950s and early 2000s. Pakistan also received some utility benefits such as containment and counter-terrorism and numerous other economic benefits such as loans military and economic aid. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Partnership is not in conflict with economic interests but is planned and rational in terms of economic interests. Infrastructural corridors can provide logistic support for defense collaboration, according to World (2019). Domestic political actors can perform a mediating role in this triad. Political instability, governance issues, and regime change often disrupt long-term strategic continuity. Political discourse often shifts. "Security through Deterrence". "Peace through Trade". But bolts and nuts remain more or less unchanged. Unfortunately, I cannot paraphrase the sentence you provided further.

Likewise, through an early expansion of its PPP framework in the early twenty-first century, Pakistan could benefit from diversifying investments not only in human resources but also in physical infrastructure. The infrastructure corridors of CPEC are for the mobility of commerce and defense purposes. The Gulf states will enhance security cooperation with the cooperation of energy fields with Pakistan. Pakistan's engagement with multilateral lenders furthers its fiscal and diplomatic objectives at the same time. As the objectives of countries become more similar, the gap eyewitness between the so-called hard and soft power is becoming closer. This means that any sustainable reform in foreign policy must engage all three axes simultaneously. It is known that earning diversity is unsustainable without the stabilization of the budget; economic diplomacy is fragile without a domestic consensus; and internal reform is at risk of isolation without the external strategic balance. It is important to recognize the systemic link between the financial, economic and political domains and the order of the day.

Discussion

Pakistan's foreign policy shows imported balance of strategy, economics and rule. The interconnected relationship model of power capabilities and interests are the classical realism and complex interdependence theory. According to the findings, the focus of Pakistan's foreign policy remains primarily security-oriented, even though it is increasingly adjusted for economic and diplomatic diversification despite the episodic reforms and rhetorical changes. The continuity despite change mentioned earlier may be seen as proof of Sattar 2018 and Rizvi 2021 that Pakistan's diplomacy has always been under the sway of a domestic security dilemma with India and others. Nonetheless, the country's involvement in engagements such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) shows a growing trend of recasting strategic imperatives in geo-economic terms. According to Wolf (2019) and Garlick (2018), the gradual shift where infrastructure connectivity and investment diplomacy is positioned as a complement to defense ties is reflected in states like Pakistan.

It is mainly theorized that less powerful states ally themselves with a stronger power to counter their structural weakness (Waltz, 1979) which is plausible at least. The Cold War and post-9/11 alliances of Pakistan with the US are examples of classic balancing through dependency where economic aid was exchanged for security guarantees and strategic compliance. Yet, the findings also show that these alignments resulted in cycles of dependency rather than establishing sustainable autonomy. Thus, Haqqani (2013) is correct in that the 'security-aid nexus' entrenched this economic fragility and institutional overreach. Since 2010, Pakistan's pivot toward China is a recalibrated, but conceptually similar, logic whereby it is hedging against Indian dominance and U.S. unpredictability through military technology, loans, and infrastructure investments from Beijing. Hence, Pakistan policy evolution is not a departure of realism but a reformulation of realism's tenants under changing global conditions

When viewed through the lens of liberal and interdependence theories, Pakistan's increasing focus on economic integration, trade diplomacy and regional connectivity demonstrates a partial applicability of the liberalist explanation. The results show that the CPEC project has shifted Pakistan's foreign policy narrative towards cooperation and development. Notably, Keohane and Nye (1977) argue that economic interdependence reduces the incentive for conflict and creates vested interests in stability. Nonetheless, the asymmetric trade relationship characterized by much higher Chinese imports than Pakistani exports reveals limitations of liberal optimism. Structural inequality has been further enhanced in this context. Since both parties did not gain from the alliance, the stronger partner still has economic leverage. This pattern follows the claims of dependency theorists. The unequal economic connections between the partners reproduce inequality and do not reduce it. Pakistan's shift towards geo-economics is not an example of liberal cooperation as seen in Europe, but rather the illiberal adaptation of realist survival strategies in a rationally-globalized world.

The results showed that domestic institutions lessen international pressures when deciding (foreign) policy. Therefore, Hudson's (2014) argument, which decision-making structures and political culture are important in analyzing (foreign) policy, is strengthened. The relations between civilians and military are unstable in Pakistan which impacts its foreign behavior. The internal variables will explain the coexistence of the policy and the behavior inconsistency with continuity in strategic. For instance, military's paramountcy ensures long-term defense ties with China notwithstanding political fall-out, while the elected government making periodic attempts at rapprochement with India or diversification towards the Gulf states. Pakistan has been consistent while changing its diplomatic rhetoric. This dualism effort which Malik (2022) calls "the dual diplomacy paradox" in his work. It may also help explain the delays in external commitments like IMF programs or CPEC frameworks implementation when there is no domestic consensus. The external relations of a country cannot be separated from its internal governance.

Under the multipolar order of today, Pakistan's foreign policy seems to be changing with the times. The emergence of China, the coming back of Russia and a reevaluation of middle-power politics by the United States have created new possibilities in the middle-power politics. Pakistan is now functioning in a context of diversified relationships as opposed to binary alignment. The results reveal that Islamabad is increasingly practicing the multi-vector diplomacy, preserving the ties of military assistance with China, insignificant relations with Russia, reliant economically on the Gulf donors, as well as selective teams with Western nations. This pluralization corroborates the fact that small and middle states in a multipolar system are interested in flexible hedging and not strong alliances promoted in Hill (2016). Nevertheless, the ability of Pakistan to gain systematic benefits out of such diversification is limited by the internal economic vulnerability and institutional dispersion. Multipolarity has increased diplomatic alternatives as compared to strategic autonomy.

By comparison, the analysis also discerns several internal contradictions and policy gaps that make the transition of Pakistan towards geo-economics quite difficult. There exists a contradiction between maximizing security and economic sustainability. Despite maintaining defense spending of around 3.5 per cent of GDP, pressures on the fiscal balance limit investments towards export competitiveness and human capital. This will make the geo-economic agenda promoted by Islamabad suffer. The second contradiction pertains to interdependence vs. diversity. The government's policy rhetoric backs a theme of independence and multiple regionalism but structurally, Pakistan remains dependent on a narrow spectrum of external benefactors. These benefactors happen to be mainly China, the Gulf states and multilateral lenders. If the Western world relies too much on this eastern behemoth commodity, it will mean that it will rely on it to ensure that western dependencies will be replaced with eastern dependencies.

The institution's objectives may not always match the ability of the administration. CPEC-type initiatives move faster than our bureaucracy's coordination, according to the study. Consequently, there are delays in implementation, issue of transparency and inequality of provincial benefits. Pakistan has lost credibility as an economic partner due to governance challenges blunting its geo-economic pivot. Pakistan's experience hones realism and interdependence theory. In many developing countries today, security and economics are not competing foreign paradigms but overlapping strategies for regime survival. In line with this, the empirical literature suggests hybrid models of explanation. Specifically, Garlick (2018) and Wolf (2019) refer to strategic interdependencies. States form alliances for protection and economic networks for growth in the same way. According to the synthesis, vulnerabilities create exploitation that transforms a bipolar order into a multipolar one. Pakistan is a case in point. It will adjust its economic program by CPEC, IMF Projects. China, Gulf strategic ties will boost economy.

In conclusion, it can be said that Pakistan's foreign policy development has been more of continuity under constraint than change through choice. As per research studies on Pakistan which considered it a state split between the issue of strategic dependence and development which we helped it; the classification does feel justified up to an extent. However, there are opportunities to change in current multipolarity. As the changes take place, it may strengthen Pakistan's capacity to weather economic shocks and respond to shocks, said the report. If not taken, the state will continue to be stuck with strategic insularity but economic exposure. Pakistan must harness realism and its interdependence to ensure its survival and development. For a more powerful Pakistan, the realist and interdependence theories will have to complement each other.

Conclusion

Analysis of the trajectory of Pakistan's foreign policy since 1947 and until 2025 reveals that it is not a straight and rigid but a flexible walk because of the interplay of security imperatives, economic compulsions and internal political frameworks within Pakistan. Pakistan's diplomacy will be increasingly dictated by proximity to regional rivalries with India and structural economic vulnerabilities, the report on Pakistan's diplomacy stated. Also, Pakistan will develop more and more geo-economics. The changing context from the Cold War phase to twenty-first-century engagement with China through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has altered Islamabad's external posture: From Security Realist to Strategic Interdependence. Although it is not properly a revolution, it does improve the system parts greatly. While security characterizes Pakistan's identity for state as a generic term, it is now the economic imperatives, which define the means of such security. Alliances are now being made in terms of connectivity and investment which were earlier justified only as deterrent. Strategic depth has different reasons in the case of corridors and development partnership; they are not mutually exclusive. The combination of these gives expression to Wolf's observation and Garlick's observation on CPEC and BRR endeavor merging defence with development. The emergence of geoeconomics will be backed by CPEC with strong infrastructure and finance in the new age.

There are factors that have influenced the stability of Pakistan's foreign policy which include mobilization of the people, war-footing. (16 words) So the reason for the lack of institutional coordination and the politics of populism by the politicians has impacted stabilization too. The same internal dynamics also create flexibility for a rapid relearning of external pressures. According to the expert, Pakistan now has a limited range of international partners. Most countries cannot act as "marketable substitutes" for each other. All help each other save the country from slipping into the junk category. In the developing multipolar order, Pakistan's challenge should be to deliver a China plus other partner balance rather than choose sides. The main argument of this research is that Pakistan's foreign policy is shifting from security centric to geo-economic. Nonetheless, the transition remains incomplete and uneven. Pakistan needs to use economic diplomacy. It needs to be

transparent on its investment. It needs to build its domestic capacity. This will help Pakistan to turn any strategic partnerships. Without reforms, the old will become dependent on others to an extent when it comes to technology.

Policy Recommendations

Economic Diversification with non-conventional Partners: Pakistan needs to promote trade and investment with other countries other than China, USA and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Trading with developing countries like Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines, and the Central Asian republics will also help create more export markets and reduce concentration risk. The current trade measures do not provide Pakistan a level-playing field because the country could not diversify products. Pakistan can leverage its variety and negotiate strong economic treaties with multiple countries. Thus, it will not over-depend on any one partner.

Strengthen Institutional Coordination Between Civilian and Military Agencies: A wise foreign policy is a blend of defence, finance and diplomacy. Institutions of the National Security Committee can be set up at varying levels. The Pakistan Institute of National Security Studies could be tasked with scheduling and research. The fact that the Russians and the China are constantly being messaged indicates that the west's alliance has set objectives.

Ensure Transparent CPEC Governance and Debt Sustainability: The public and other stakeholders should be confident that a project's financing, procurement and debt obligation are transparent. According to an IMF report, the annual CPEC debt reports must be consistent with the data standards for debt of the IMF. The Auditor General will carry out strict auditing. The auditing will ensure that the benefit of the corridors is for every inch of the country and not only the land under the corridors. Corruption will have lesser opportunities because of the sector.

Promote Balanced Diplomacy Among Major Powers: Pakistan must adopt a balancing strategy that protects our sovereignty while seizing maximum opportunity with the emergence of multiple centers of power in the world. India and US must work together politically against terrorism and technology transfer. Through the cooperation with China in such spheres as infrastructure and energy, India will be able to approach its relations with Russia and the Gulf more strategically. It must remain unbiased against either of the superpowers.

Put Economic stability and export competitiveness First: the strategy of Pakistan must create a balance between protecting our sovereignty on one hand and accessing future opportunities. India needs to develop trade ties with the US, counter-terrorist efforts, and transfers of technology. Through the joint efforts with China in infrastructural and energy, India may have a better strategic strength with Russia and the Gulf. Pakistan can save itself from sanctions or threat by staying neutral.

Institutionalize Foreign Policy Evaluation Mechanisms: Every year, the impact of foreign policy should be analyzed economically as well as non-economically. It's not really worth the effort to try to assess whether alliances deliver quantifiable national benefits to delinked policy institutions that would be used in ad hoc decision-making.

The combined policies are aimed at safeguarding Pakistan's transition to geo-economics and strategic autonomy. Pakistan can align global governance with local policy through its executive policy. Pakistan can transform chronic dependency into structured interdependency; relations that are a source of vulnerability can now become an asset for the national development.

Future Research Directions

In any future research study, it is suggested that the geo-economic transition of Pakistan should be compared with the different countries of South Asia or Belt and Road. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Kazakhstan are a few examples. It may become apparent that the internal structure and joining compatibility differ and that there is a structural joining success. We will clarify the outcome of infrastructure-based diplomacy with a calculation of CPEC long-term revenue and employment impacts. Reviews that sees how foreign policy links through political economy and comes out of public administration can show how institutional capacity all link. To learn more, we will develop the policy thinking and theory of strategy that we need to cope with the multi-polarity of our world.

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