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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## **Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Implications under PML (N) 2013-2018**

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**ABSTRACT**

Pakistan's foreign policy has been facing multiple challenges since its independence. The objective of this study is to find out the challenges and implications confronted by the government of PML (N) during 2013-2018. This government had to face several internal and external challenges mainly the political instability, weak security condition, civil-military tussle, uncertainty in Afghanistan, Yemen crisis and the materialization of CPEC project. These challenges also brought certain implications such as shrinking relations with the Gulf Countries, delay in implementation of CPEC project, mistrust in relations with India and USA. This government remained successful in some areas and also failed to address fundamental issues. Thus, national consensus, strengthening foreign office and establishment of effective security mechanism are recommended for vibrant foreign policy. In this study, qualitative research design to conduct interpretive and explanatory research is used. Secondary sources especially published books, journals, reports and newspapers, etc. are used in it.

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**Keywords:** Civil-Military Relations, CPEC, Foreign Policy, Security, Survival

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**Introduction**

Generally foreign policy is the aggregate of available opportunities and multiple course of action in a particular period in order to develop relations with other countries. 'A credible foreign policy depends on the political stability and economic development of a country and its positive relevance to the foreign states particularly the neighboring states' (Rizvi, 2016). It is formed generally by the political institutions of the state by following the historical experiences, norms and values and the pressure of the foreign states being asserted on it. So, it is primarily shaped by the realizing of the domestic, regional and international environment. Pakistan's foreign policy is also shaped by security and economic compulsions, various national, regional and international events, the policies of the major powers and the animosity of the neighboring countries especially the India (Muzaffar, et. al2016);Kazi. 1976:217). Moreover, Nisar (Friday Times, 2022)says that 'Pakistan's foreign policy is influenced by the aggregation of security apprehensions, diplomatic challenges and economic stability, so it must resolve these to go forwards. The main focus of Pakistan's foreign policy is to develop friendly relations with all the community of the world. Qaid-i-Azam said that the foreign policy of Pakistan would be friendship to all and enmity to none. However, soon after the creation, Pakistan had to confront multiple internal and external challenges. Since then, the major challenges being faced by Pakistan are the security and national survival. Major security threats emanate from the eastern and the western borders, Indian hostility from the eastern border, unsecured border from the western side and

uncertainty in Afghanistan. Domestic problems also influence foreign policy of Pakistan. Political instability, weak economy, polarization of society, tussle between the federating units due to certain unresolved issues and last but not the least the military interventions are the hurdles in the way of vibrant foreign policy of Pakistan.

According to constitution, the foreign policy making is the function of the President, Prime Minister and his cabinet, parliament and concerned committees, ministry of foreign affairs and various agencies particularly the military agencies. The informer factors such as the political parties, interest groups, public perceptions, media and propaganda also shape foreign policy of Pakistan. The role of military cannot be ruled out. Generally, foreign policy is formulated by the constitutional provisions and the Rule of the Business of the government. However, in the crises and extraordinary circumstances such as regarding the Kashmir and counterterrorism issues, and relations with India, Afghanistan, China, and USA; Army and the National Security Council dominate the external decisions. Nawaz Sharif came into power for the third time in 2013 after getting his party success in 2013 general elections. His government had to confront many internal and external challenges. The major internal challenges were the political instability, fragile state of security due to terrorism within the country and beyond the borders, and institutional imbalance due to civil-military tussle. The major external challenges were the uncertainty in Afghanistan, Yemen crises and to materialize CPEC project. (Rahim, et. al. 2018) His government tried to address these issues. But he remained failed in most of the areas because of civil-military tussle which resulted in the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif by the apex court on the account of panama papers, aqama and Dawn Leaks.

### **Literature Review**

Foreign policy of a state depends on well articulated and defined national interests in order to interact at national, regional and global level. Foreign policy highlights the domestic, regional and international realities. The main determinants of foreign policy are the political stability, economic development, country's size, geography and national interests. Flexibility in principles and values plays important role in promoting national interests. Foreign policy making process is not an easy task and the smooth working for the weak states like Pakistan where there is fragile economy, political upheavals and lack of social cohesion. In this gloomy scenario, Pakistan needs to formulate foreign policy which address geopolitical and geo-economic realities. He says that foreign policies are formulated by the Prime Minister and his cabinet, Foreign Minister and the Foreign Secretary, known as the troika. He further says the foreign policy is framed by the government after consulting all stakeholders including the military and secret agencies and taking the parliament into confidence.

According to the authors, Pakistan's foreign policy has been pursuing its national interests and struggling for survival since the independence. But it has been unable to attain it due to inefficiency of the policy makers and inadequate resources. Pakistan has been facing internal and external as well as traditional and non-traditional challenges. According to him, domestic politics and circumstances highly influence the foreign policy. During the period of the PML(n), tenure of 2013-2018, Pakistan's domestic condition was very deplorable due to political instability, fragile financial condition because of bad governance and corruption, estrange civil-military relations, and rising terrorism, sectarianism, narcotics, trafficking, climate change, etc. Externally, this government had to confront the challenges of uncertainty in Afghanistan, unending Kashmir Issue and strained relations with India, Geostrategic location of Pakistan and the epicenter of the world rivalries, and to develop balance between China and USA. They further explained that Pakistan had opportunities as well. Internally, democracy was growing gradually due to peaceful transfer of the civilians governments. Civilian government had more says in foreign policies though there were divergent of opinions between the military and the civilian institutions. Externally, relations further strengthened with China. China Pakistan Economic Corridor

was milestone in this regard. Relations with Russia also improved. SCO platform provided opportunities to Pakistan to strengthen relations with the member states. Pakistan's geostrategic locations had provided opportunities to develop cordial relations with the energy rich countries of CARs and Middle Eastern countries. Efforts for Afghan peace process were also a opportunity (Yousafzai, et al., 2019)

Hussain (2019) writes in his article 'Military and Foreign Policy in Pakistan' that Nawaz Sharif in this tenure was cautious regarding the military establishment. He wanted to control military on the one hand and followed the appeasement policy on the other hand. For appeasing the military, he agreed with military to establish National Security Council. He kept the portfolio of foreign policy with himself in order to directly control the foreign policy. By this way, civilian supremacy and leverage was witnessed. But it was not long lasted. He wanted cordial relations with the Indian government. Military establishment did not like this due to severe and unresolved issues and Indian hostility. The APS episode and the formulation of National Action Plan further deteriorated relations between civil-military institutions and strengthened the latter's control on the internal and external affairs. According to the author, CPEC was an opportunity for Pakistan in terms of economic development and relations with China. However, it became challenge for Pakistan as well. Internally, it created tussle between the civilian- military institutions on the issue of security regarding CPEC. (Muzaffar, et. al. 2018). Externally, it invited the harsh attitude of the USA due to Sino-USA rivalries due to multiple reasons. The Dawn leaks episode further deteriorated relations the Civil-military relations. So, these unharmonious civil military relations highly influenced the foreign policy of Pakistan.

Shah, et, al (2020) said that CPEC was a great opportunity for Pakistan in this regime of Nawaz Sharif. The Nawaz Sharif government came into being in 2013 after victory in the general elections of May 2013. The internal grave challenges confronting this government were the fragile economy and the energy crisis. CPEC emerged as a key opportunity for Pakistan. This was a huge investment of China in Pakistan. It had to strengthen infrastructure, energy, Gwadar Port, industries and cooperation in many other sectors as well. It further developed strategic cooperation between the both countries. It had to develop connectivity of the different regions of the country on the one hand and road network connectivity with the countries beyond the border on the other hand. It also reduced the energy shortage in Pakistan. Moreover, it increased economic activities which gave further boost to the economy of Pakistan. Though there were also internal and external challenges regarding it. The political instability due to the PTI's protests and the weak law and order situations were the internal challenges. The world rivalries and the USA reaction due to the Chinese increasing influence in the region and beyond the region were the external challenges.

Writer describes the multiple challenges and opportunities being faced by the Nawaz Sharif's Government (2013-2018). He also discussed certain achievements of him in his article. He says that internal environment such as political stability, strong economy with effective financial policies, visionary leadership, good governance, dynamic institutions and social harmony effects foreign policy. He further says that the biggest external challenge to the foreign policy of Pakistan is that Pakistan does not realign and change its foreign policy with the changing international environment and to meet the national interests. Moreover, the policy of not expanding to the neighboring states is also a weak point in terms of foreign policy. Relations with the Iranian government deteriorated during this tenure due to the Pakistan coming back on the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project. Nevertheless, this government had also implications. It's relations with the Saudi Arabia effected due to not involvement in Yemen crises. Relations improved with USA, Afghanistan, and China after CPEC, and Russia. Internally, economy improved due to effective management and foreign assistance. Law and order situation improved due to many operations launched against the terrorists (Iqbal, 2018).

Author says that Nawaz Sharif's Government had to face multiple internal and external challenges. Internally, it had to entertain the military institutions, the judiciary, curb political violence, manage public opinion and political parties and to identify other potential vulnerabilities. Externally, it had to lessen the public hatreds towards the USA and to carry smooth relations with the American government particularly after the withdrawal its forces from the Afghanistan. Moreover, wish for cordial relations with India due to many reasons and the military backlash was also a challenge for him. However, he had opportunities as well. He had good ties with the Saudi Arabian government and the Turkish government. The latter government supported economically this government. Soon after the formulation of this government, Saudi Arab gave huge economic assistance for increasing foreign reserves. (Grare, 2013). However, literature review extensively deals with the study, but it does not fill the gap. The vacuum will be filled by the research being done on it.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Foreign policy is also shaped by the domestic environment. In this regard civil-military relations and domestic political stability influence the external relations. In Pakistan, civil-military relations affect the policies. The theory of civil-military relation given by S.P. Huntington describes that how the adverse relationship between the civilian and military institutions impacts policies in the country. He says that military has specific mind set up of conservative realism. Military wants strong defensive capability. It has professional and efficient army that functions properly. He further says that civilian institutions should make political decisions whereas military formulates military plans. Moreover, politicians define strategic purposes for national defence without meddling in strategies. Military considers itself the savior in eternal and external calamities. That is why; military command is independent from the civilian institutions in key defence related domains. He suggests that civilian institutions are to be strengthened in order to stop the military intervention in politics. Similarly, Samuel E. Finer gives the civil-military theory regarding to assess civil military relation and military domination during the formulation of key policies. He says that military wants to grab powers by hook and by crook. After becoming powerful, it can easily influence the civilian institutions in formulating policies. Moreover, the 'theory of political stability' also relates to this article. The political stability theory is given by Samuel Huntington, G. Almond and Lucin W. Pye. This theory develops balanced relationship between the government's structure and its models. It further identifies various variables that influence political stability.

### **Methodology**

This study has used the qualitative research design to conduct interpretive and explanatory research. Through interpretive research technique, it is tried to understand the various challenges faced by the PML (N) government (2013-2018) and their relations with foreign policy of Pakistan. By explanatory research techniques, it is tried to understand that how these challenges influence the external relations of Pakistan in the coming years. Moreover, in data collection, secondary sources are used. They include published books, journals, reports, Newspapers, etc. Independent and dependent variables are used in this study. Political instability, weak state of security, civil-military relations, Yemen crises and uncertainty in Afghanistan are the independent variables. The outcomes (dependent variables) of these independent variables are the shrinking relations with the Gulf states particularly the Saudi Arabia, delay in implementing CPEC project and Chinese anxiety, mistrust in external relations with India and USA and positive outcome from the Afghanistan peace process.

## **Challenges to PML (N) During 2013-2018**

The Nawaz Sharif led PML (N) government had to confront certain internal and external challenges such as:-

### **Political Instability**

Nawaz Sharif's political party PML (N) won majority of seats in the general elections held in 2013. (Fareed, et. al. 2019). He succeeded to formulate government while making coalition with the small political parties such as MQM. PML (N) also formed provincial governments in the two provinces. In the Punjab province, it alone succeeded to form government whereas in Balochistan, it succeeded to make government with the alliances of the other political parties and the independent candidates. After lapsing of nearly one year, it had to confront the issue of political instability. PTI's leader Imran Khan did not accept the election results. He claimed that elections were rigged. He demanded reelection of the many constituencies. When his demands were not accepted, he launched country wide agitations and protests. When this strategy did not succeed, then he called all his followers to reach Islamabad and sat in D-Chowk which was called D-Chowkdharna. Meanwhile, Model Town incident also occurred in 2014. The police took operation on Minhajul Quran Mudrasa led by Dr. Tahir ulQadri. This incident resulted in many casualties. The Minhajul Quran movement started strike and protests across the country and demanded the accountability of the culprits. When their demands were not accepted, then they started protests across the country. After this, both, i.e. Imran Khan and Dr. Tahir ulQadri decided to pose dharna at D, Chowk. This dharna prolonged to several months. It ended with the incident of Army Public School, Peshawar. This politics of dharna posed political instability. Government tacit attitudes towards them further added fuel on the fire. All the state machinery became hostage. The other opposition parties such as the Pakistan's Peoples party also played role in developing political instability. They labeled this government as incompetent and corrupt. On the basis of Panama Papers, Nawaz Sharif had been disqualified by the Supreme Court. Bhatti (Dawn, July 28.2017) says that he was disqualified from office on accusation of moral misconduct through a judicial verdict. It further resulted in political instability.

### **Weak State of Security due to Terrorism**

Pakistan has been facing the menace of terrorism since the incidence of 9/11. Pakistan's involvement and becoming the partner of the West against the war on terrorism unleashed terrorism on Pakistan. The terrorists within the country and beyond the border targeted Pakistan. During the third tenure of the Nawaz Sharif's government, a new wave of terrorism emerged that had shaken the security walls of Pakistan. New terrorist incidences happened. In December 2014, terrorists targeted the Army Public School in Peshawar in which 149 casualties including the death of 132 children was happened. It was the black day in the history of Pakistan. It terrified the whole nation. Now, to combat this new type of terrorism, pose security threat to Pakistan. Resultantly and reactionary, government had to launch military operation in North Waziristan in 2014 which was known as Zarb -i-Azm operation. A military operation codenamed Operation Zarb-i-Azm was launched in 2014 and gained success in the operation (Amin, 2022:267). Military operations were also done at many other places to counter this new wave of terrorism and to ensure security. Moreover, military courts were also made in order to trail the terrorists and give them speedy and timely punishment. Hussain(2019:72) says that in January 2015, Nawaz Sharif besides with other parliamentarians enacted the military courts to counter terrorism. Furthermore, "under the National Action Plan, apex committees comprise of top civil-military representatives were established"(Waseem, Dawn, March 31, 2019). By this way, this government had succeeded to combat the terrorists and to restore security in Pakistan.

### **Civil- Military Relations**

Having the experience of adverse relation with the military, this time Nawaz Sharif followed dual policy in the context of relation with the military. On the one hand, he followed the policy of appeasement to the military and on the other side he kept the portfolio of minister of foreign affairs with himself in order to keep watch directly on the foreign policies and the military. Hussain (2013:72) says that Nawaz Sharif wished to control military on the one hand and showed in a way that he did not interfere in military's domains. In the beginning, the civil-military relations were harmonious. They were on the same page though book was different. But this harmonious relationship did not run for the long time. As per S.P. Huntington theory of civil-military relation, military reacts when the civilian institutions interfere in the domain of military such as defence, security, strategies and tactics and hence their relations become disruptive. Likewise, relations with the military deteriorated when the civilian governments interrupted in the domains of the military. Their relations deteriorated on the issue of handling terrorism. Nawaz Sharif wanted negotiations with the terrorists. He had soft corner with Islamist militants and hence opposed military solution to end terrorism (Amin, 2022:266). Whereas army wanted to took harsh policies to eradicate this menace. Eventually Nawaz Sharif left this policy when General Raheel Sharif pressed for military operation to eradicate the menace of terrorism in North Waziristan, the epicenter of extremism (Yaseen, et. al.2021). Moreover, Nawaz Sharif wanted to develop cordial relations with India. Amin (2022:269) says that the coming of Nawaz Sharif was envisaged that relations with India would be improved as Nawaz Sharif was known to develop cordial relation with India. It was witnessed when Nawaz Sharif was invited at the Modi's inauguration ceremony in 2014, meeting of the both at Urfa, Russia in July 2015 and Modi's unscheduled stopover in Lahore to attend the marriage ceremony of Sharif's family Whereas military did not want to do it until core issues were resolved. It did not like the Nawaz Sharif tilt to appease India, the hostile country towards Pakistan and that confronted Pakistan economically and diplomatically (Husain, 2019:72). So, Afzal (2018:146) says, "military did not respond kindly to Nawaz Sharif's overtures to India". Next confronting issue between the civil and military institutions was the provision of security to the CPEC project. Nawaz Sharif wanted to hand over the security of the CPEC project to the civilian agencies such as police whereas army wanted to handle it directly. Hussain (2019: 139) says that civilian government wanted to deploy civil law enforcement agencies to ensure law and order situation while military opposed this strategy and preferred armed forces to provide security in this deteriorating situation and finally succeeded to take the control of CPEC security. Likewise, Nawaz Sharif's proactive behavior to directly control external affairs particularly with China, Afghanistan, Iran and USA further enhanced the cleavages between the civil-military relationship. Moreover, the Dawn Leaks further added fuel on the fire. This animosity led to the removal of the Nawaz Sharif from the government on the issue of Aqama. "Military weakened the most powerful political party in Pakistan, and hence the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif will further strengthen the army" (Afzal, 2018; 146). Similarly, Cheema (2015) says 'military has been able to dominate the foreign ministry in the evolution of Pakistan's foreign relations due to the political misgivings of the various regimes'.

### **Uncertainty in Afghanistan**

During this period, new developments were occurring in Afghanistan. New wave of insurgencies was witnessed on the one side and the dialogue between the Taliban representatives and the Afghan government representatives under the umbrella of America was under process. The role of Pakistan was very critical at that juncture. It was test for the Nawaz Sharif government how to manage the situation. As it is in the interest of Pakistan to effort to bring peace in Afghanistan, Nawaz Sharif's government tried to enhance the peace efforts. Its government facilitated the peace process in multiple ways. It also brought the Taliban on the negotiating table. Even sometimes the Taliban leadership had been

pressurized to carry peace talks with the Afghan government. Sattar (2019:303) says that Pakistan brought the Afghan Taliban to Murree (Pakistan) to hold talks with the Afghan government in June 2015, but when these negotiations ended from the Taliban side then Pakistan warned the Taliban leaderships that they would banned the Quetta shura if they did not restore peace talks with the Afghan government.

### **Yemen Crises**

For a long time, Saudi Arabia and Iran have been engaging in containing each other in the Middle East particularly and in the beyond of Middle East generally. Iran supports the Shia ideology and its community whereas the Saudi Arabia backs the Sunni ideology. Likewise, Iran supported the Houthi rebel group in Yemen to topple the Saudi led existing government. This resulted in direct war between the Iran and the Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia also asked Pakistan to involve in this tussle. So, it was challenge for the government of Nawaz Sahrif either to join this war or kept aloofness. As Pakistan social fabric had already been polarized between shia and sunnis, it was difficult for this government to side anyone side. If Pakistan involved, then its shia community would turn against it and the government would be unable to tackle the situation. It might result in civil war in Pakistan. Public perceptions in Pakistan were also against this involvement and even the army and political parties were also against to intervene in this crisis (Amin, 2022:286). Moreover, Iran is a neighbor of Pakistan. Therefore, it was not in the interest of Pakistan to turn hostile its third neighbor besides its insecurity from the other two borders, i.e., eastern and western borders. Hussain (2019:73) says that Pakistan military had already been deploy on the eastern and western border, Pakistan was not in a position to fight another war and get its another border unsecured and this will further increase enemies instead of friends. However, it was the biggest challenge for PML (N) government what to do. It neither annoys the Saudi Arabia because of its kindness to Pakistan in dire needs and strategic and interest commonalities nor turn hostile the neighbor country, Iran. Finally, it was decided to take the matter to the parliament either to join war or not. "Nawaz Sharif himself thought to respond positively to the Saudi request but finally decided to pass the buck to the Parliament" (Amin, 2022:286). An executive discussion took place in parliament. It was decided that Pakistan would not become the part of it but it would protect the Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and Holy places in it. After a long discussions, a consensus decision was taken in the parliament to remain neutral in Yemen crises but the Pakistan's military commitment to support Saudi Arabia in case of invasion on itself was affirmed again ( Amin,2022:286). Basically, this government too wanted the shelter of the parliament and to show Saudi Arabia that we were ready to join war but it was the parliament that restrained us to do so. In that way, government solved this challenge.

### **Implications**

Challenges being faced by the government of PML (N) during 2013-2018 resulted in certain outcomes which were realized in the later time. Following were the implications of these challenges.

### **Relations Deteriorated with the Golf States**

Owing to Pakistan's non involvement directly in the Yemen crises, relations with the Golf states particularly with the Saudi Arabia became deteriorated. These states highly reacted the Pakistan's non-involvement decisions. The UAE, the close partner of Saudi Arabia, reacted angrily when Pakistan opted neutrality as its foreign affair minister, Dr. Anwar Mohammad Gargash issued a threat of dire consequences (Amin, 2022:286). They started to think to revisit their foreign policy with Pakistan. They too showed cold shoulder attitude to Pakistan. Even, they did not hesitate to build relations with the arch rival of Pakistan, India. Saudi Arabia invited the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to the official visits for Saudi Arabia. Modi was highly welcomed by the Saudi Arabia government. Amin

(2022:286) says that the warm welcome given to Modi in his visit to Saudi Arabia in April 2016 was a reaction against Pakistan. He was awarded the highest civilian award by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (Ibid). They signed a huge deal comprising of multiple areas. They signed five agreements including intelligence sharing, defence cooperation, provision of Indian labor and promotion of bilateral investment in the private sectors (Ibid). Their bilateral trade increased up to US \$39 billion in 2014 and Saudi Arabia became the largest oil supplier to the India (Ibid). Following Saudi Arabia, other Gulf states such as UAE also built cordial relations with the Indian government. It also gave warm welcome to Modi on his visit to UAE. They also increased their trade relations. UAE's trade with India became US\$ 60 billion annually (Amin, 2022:287). So, the warm welcome given to Modi was a tit-for-tat for Pakistan's unwillingness to support Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war (Ibid). However, it was set back to the diplomacy and foreign policy of Pakistan. Though Pakistan became the member of their military alliance and got the command of it while appointing General Raheel Sharif as its commander in Chief, yet relations with these states went to the lowest ebb.

### **CPEC and Relations with China**

Soon after assuming the charge of government, the government of Nawaz Sharif had to face the issue of political instability due to the sit ins (dharnas) led by the PTI under the leadership of Imran Khan and the Movement of Minhajul Quran under the leadership of Dr. Tahir ulQadri, CPEC project was not signed on time. It was delayed due to this political instability. "Political instability prevents the implementation and continuation of policies" (Jatoi, the Nation, July 17, 2022). Finally, CPEC project was signed between the both countries when Chinese President, Xi Jinping visited Pakistan in April 2015 (Hussain, 2017: 146). Later on it was signed but new issue emerge that which agency would provide security to it. There was friction between the civilian government and the military command about its security. Though military prevailed but it developed trust deficit among the institutions. This thing further caused delay in implementing this project and even Chinese government became nervous too. Relation with China further became slow soon after coming into power of the PTI's government. As there was political tussle and rivalry between the PML (N) and the PTI, the later considered that this project was made during the previous government and hence it would be revisited. The statement of the minister Dawood further created tension in relation with China. But later on due to General QamarJavedBajwa's mediation and interference trust deficit removed and relations improved with china. However, it is witnessed that how the domestic politic effected relations with China and the foreign policy of Pakistan.

### **Peace Process Started in Afghanistan**

It was challenge for Pakistan to facilitate the peace restoration in Afghanistan. The government of PML (N) tried its best to push all the stakeholders to together on the negotiation and resolved the solution of that quagmire. Hence, a political negotiated settlement is needed (Khalid, 2016:90). It even used the policy of carrot and stick on the Taliban. The Taliban high command was pressurized to become the part of negotiation. Doha talks round between the Taliban and the Afghan government was the result of it. Owing to this active participation of PML (N) government, the peace process for Afghanistan started. This slow and steady process resulted in withdraw of the NATO forces and handing over the Afghanistan affairs to the Taliban.

### **Trust Deficit in Foreign Relations**

The imbalance institutions and civil military relations resulted in trust deficit in foreign relations of Pakistan. It is because 'institutions are functioning as individual entities rather than as a cohesive whole' (Masood, 2016). Generally and constitutionally, civilian government formulates foreign policies. But in Pakistan, military dominates in the key areas



such as security issues, and foreign relations with India, Afghanistan, China and the USA. It dislikes the civil institutions when they think otherwise to the military (Hussain, 2019:73). Civilian government becomes the misnomer. 'Military has been become to institutionalize its role in political system' (Wolf, 2016). This environment has institutionalized role of military in the political system of Pakistan such as military courts and provincial apex committees as the symbol of mini martial law (The Express Tribune, January 19, 2015). Similar the case was with the Nawaz Sharif's government. Constitutionally, his government had to formulate policies. But in reality military led the front role in it. Indian Prime Minister was right when he told to the media that he wanted to resolve issues with Pakistan, but he would not know to talk with what, either with the civilian government or with the military establishment because both were on the different page. Similarly, in American high ups, it was considered to talk to military not the civilian in Pakistan regarding the key issues particularly the security and Afghanistan issue. Although, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif paid several visits to USA during 2013-2018 and failed to restore the tense relations between the both sates but a week long visits of General Raheel Sharif to America in November 2015 melted the ice (Iqbal, Dawn, November 2015). It is because military is the main driver in foreign policies in Pakistan. So, this thing developed trust deficit in building relations with India and America. Having hand cuffed regarding directly making relations with India and USA, cordial relations were not built with India particularly and the USA generally. There was trust deficit between Pakistan and them.

## Results and Discussion

Domestic, regional and international environment shape Pakistan's foreign policy. The PML (N) government (2013-2018) had to face some domestic, regional and international challenges that influenced foreign policy and also pose implications in the coming years. Political instability, fragile sate of security, civil-military imbalance, the uncertainty in Afghanistan and the Yemen crises were the major internal and external challenges to the foreign policy of Pakistan during the period of 2013-2018. This government tried to resolve those challenges. In some cases it remained successful and in some cases it remained failed. It succeeded to counter the new wave of terrorism that emerged after the incident of Army Public School, Peshawar. Military operations were started across the country to halt it. The operation of Zarb-e-Azm in North Waziristan was the major military operation that eliminated this menace. Political stability was also restored though it was for short time. Nawaz Sharif was disqualified and the temperature of the opposition parties turned cool down. This government also succeeded to not indulge in the Yemen crises. It got safe passage through the ruling of parliament in which it was decided that Pakistan would not become the part of war but would protect the sovereignty of Saudi Arabia. But the Golf states took it seriously; they revised their foreign policy and enhanced good relations with India in order to realize Pakistan to assess the cost of not becoming the part of their strategy. This government succeeded to carry the peace process in Afghanistan. It exerted pressure on the Taliban leadership to come to negotiating table. Finally these talks resulted in the withdrawal of the NATO forces in Afghanistan later on. Moreover, it failed to develop balance between civil-military institutions. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tried to control foreign policy through keeping the office of foreign ministry with himself. His ambition to monitor key security policies and relations with India particularly and relations with USA, China and Afghanistan generally invited the wrath of the military command. Military considered that these domains fall in its control. It envisaged that these were civilian interference in the military affairs. It disturbed civil-military relations. It further impacted the foreign policy of Pakistan. Foreign countries did not know to talk with either the military or the civil government. In short, this government had to face many challenges and fewer opportunities. These challenges influenced massively the foreign policy of Pakistan later on.

## Conclusion

The PML (N) government got majority in the general elections of 2013. It got majority of seats in the elections. It succeeded to formulate government in the centre, Punjab province and a coalitional government in Baluchistan. This time too administering the affairs of the states was not a bed of roses. It had to confront several internal and external challenges. Internally, it faced the challenges of political instability, weak security situation, and imbalance in civil-military relations. Externally, it faced the challenges of the Yemen crises, uncertainty in Afghanistan, and trust deficit in external relations particularly with India and USA. As domestic and international environment influence foreign policy, so these factors also influenced the foreign policy of Pakistan. The implications of these challenges have been witnessed in the later years. Owing to these challenges, Pakistan's external relations became disturbed. Relations weakened with the Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States due to Pakistan's neutrality in the Yemen crises. They enhance relations with the India, the most hostile country towards Pakistan. Slow implementation and materialization of CPEC project due to rivalries between and among the political parties and political instability also developed anxiety in the Chinese government. The PTI government in its beginning days also showed cold shoulder to CPEC project though later on the visits of General Bajwa remove the mistrust and anxiety. The imbalance and distrust in civil-military relations also impacted the foreign policy of Pakistan. The foreign states were in confusion whether to discuss matter with the civilian government or the military. Relations with USA and especially with India did not improve due to trust deficit. However, some improvements in the Afghanistan peace process had been observed. Both the civilian and the military establishment influenced the Afghan peace process as they exerted pressure on the Taliban leadership to come to talk. In net shell, the government of PML (N) is folded both success and failure in its third government.

## Recommendations

Following recommendations will keep Pakistan from this quagmire situation:-

- To build national consensus on all the issues whether they are related to domestic politics or the foreign policy of Pakistan. The entire stake holder including the civilian and the military are to be taken into confidence.
- To establish effective security mechanism and forum that effectively address the security issues whether they are internal or external security challenges.
- To activate the standing committees of parliament to monitor the key issues of the foreign policy of Pakistan.
- To strengthen the foreign office in order to play vibrant role in formulating and implementing foreign policy of Pakistan, and
- Last but not the least, to develop responsive feedback system in order to materialize policies with changing scenario.

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