

Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities

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Introduction

A country's foreign policy is the lens through which it sees the rest of the world. It is of crucial significance in correctly reflecting its ambitions, goals and apprehensions vis-à-vis its neighborhood as well as the regional and the international milieu. In order to maintain cordial and balanced relations in the international arena, states employ several different tactics and methods. In the course of achieving this, states face many hardships. In this paper, Pakistan's foreign policy will be analyzed to lay out the challenges it is facing currently and also the opportunities that are present for Pakistan to explore.

It is a well-known fact that Pakistan's foreign policy has undergone changes several times over the last few decades. Both military dictators and democratic leaders have shaped the country's foreign policy according to their governing styles, thought processes, political influences and their understanding of the country's security imperatives. Meanwhile, the external factors such as evolving regional, geo-political and global environment have played an equally critical role in shaping the foreign policy of Pakistan in different eras. Pakistan's foreign policy at any given time is a resultant of both these factors.

In achieving its foreign policy milestones, Pakistan has faced many challenges and experienced pressure from global and regional powers. The geo-political factors interplay with national imperatives, which leads to a bargain between the two, and adjustment of both domestic and foreign policy.

A country's foreign policy draws its strength from its domestic power potential, more commonly known as its national power.¹ The elements that combine to forge national power can vary from a country to country and are dependent on how the policy makers utilize them. Pakistan's strength lies in its geography, human resource, natural resources, military, technological base, and high morale of the population amongst others. Pakistan is situated in one of the most important regions of contemporary world and can be considered as a crossing point of world's major energy routes and economic linkages.² Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah appreciated Pakistan's geo-strategic importance and in an interview to an American journalist in September 1947, he said, "Pakistan is the pivot of the world, placed on the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves."³ Moreover, the situation in Afghanistan, China's interest in Pakistan, the rising strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pak nuclear stability-instability paradox mark Pakistan's importance in the international arena.

It is important to discuss the current situation in Pakistan – in light of the evolving geo-strategic environment – to understand the contours of Pakistan's foreign policy which are constantly being re-examined, re-organized, refined and redefined.⁴ Pakistan played an instrumental role against Soviet Union in Afghan War during 1980's and again in US invasion of Afghanistan post 9/11, which resulted in the reconfiguration of power quotient of stakeholders in Afghanistan. Moreover, the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 precipitated grave destabilization inside Pakistan. The current democratic situation in Pakistan is a result of the threats emanating from many different sources which include several non-state actors. The aftermath of the war in Afghanistan and India's use of non-state actors⁵ inside Pakistan has resulted in Pakistan incorporating an internal security model and a security setup that requires a strong injection of human resource and capital.

For Pakistan, fostering a strong economic and security relationship with a more powerful country is vital to its stability. Any compromise on the security of the state, internal or external, is out of question for any government in the country. Pakistan's economic and strategic imperatives are based on its national interest and whilst in the current day and age no country can progress in isolation, the essence of any policy is to ensure that it benefits the state itself. Pakistan's relations, bi-lateral or multi-lateral with other states, are based on how they can promote the Pakistani state.

Pakistan's internal and external security, cordial relations with all states, economic development human development, protection of overseas Pakistanis and projection of its soft image are some of the imperatives of Pakistan's foreign policy. Quaid-e-Azam's vision of Pakistan's foreign policy was laid out in these words,

Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed and suppressed peoples of the world, and in upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter.⁶

The official text on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) website lays out the objectives of Pakistan's Foreign Policy as:

- Promotion Pakistan as a dynamic, progressive, moderate, and democratic Islamic country.
- Developing friendly relations with all countries of the world, especially major powers and immediate neighbours.
- Safeguarding national security and geo-strategic interests, including Kashmir.

- Consolidating our commercial and economic cooperation with international community.
- Safeguarding the interests of Pakistani Diaspora abroad.
- Ensuring optimal utilization of national resources for regional and international cooperation.⁷

The current government of Pakistan has actively been trying to achieve these objectives through its different ministries and departments – all over the country; and embassies and offices – all over the world. Although there is much work to be done and many goals yet to be achieved, there are many milestones that Pakistan has achieved over the years.

Decision-making in Pakistan

In the years since its inception, the decision-making process vis-à-vis foreign policy in Pakistan has undergone several changes. The military dictators, at least in the early years, it can be argued, used the rational decision-making model⁸ which circumvented the bureaucracy and other legs of the decision-making process. Since the government was headed by a single person along with a small group of close aides, the role of other power centers or offices remained low. On the other hand, the civilian governments tend to arrive at decisions using up different models such as the organizational model or the governmental politics model. Nonetheless, even in democratic set-ups, the rational actor model (RAM) is often used to help explain the decisions. The tussle between different ministries, power centers and political parties has been a major challenge in Pakistan which can be explained through the organizational model.

In the last ten years, Pakistan is leaning towards an increasingly democratic set-up which is the first step in bringing in a foreign policy decision-making based on democratic values. The decision-making is a product of bargain and negotiation between internal

factors which include the political leadership, foreign ministry, military, and influential moulders of public opinion; and the external factors such as evolving geo-strategic environment, global economic trends, relations with a certain state or group of states and harmonization with the requirements set by international organizations.

With the third democratic government poised to set in after the 2018 elections, it is also likely that the institutions responsible for policy making will gain strength. This will have a two-pronged effect; one, that it would strengthen the democratic system, and two, it will foment an environment where decision-making becomes independent of personalities and instead draws strength from the institutional set-up.⁹ Currently the Foreign Office, Prime Minister's office and military play an important role in shaping up the country's foreign policy as all three offices have different angles and vantage points to assess the domestic and geo-political environments.

Regards to important foreign policy and national security matters, the Former Director General Inter-Services Intelligence Maj. General Ashraf Jahangir Qazi notes that the security agencies, primarily ISI in Pakistan, have a major impact on the formulation of foreign policy through briefing to the Prime Minister and cabinet; wherein regular reports to foreign office and communication between numerous levels of ISI and Foreign Affairs both at home and abroad – and input given to Joint Staff Head Quarters, Defence Council and Defence Committee of the Cabinet play a vital role.¹⁰ This information is provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which has the primary responsibility of formulating policies and keeping in view the foreign policy options based on various factors and in accordance with changing environment and requirements. The next step in the process is the policy draft being forwarded to the Cabinet of the Prime Minister which may approve or reject a policy recommendation. From here, if approved, it goes back to the Ministry of Foreign affairs which then supervises its execution and

implementation. The core intelligence input into the decision-making and formulation of foreign policy is provided by the intelligence agencies, and primarily by the ISI which conveys this information formally by three means:

1. Briefing to the Cabinet by DG ISI.
2. Regular reports to foreign office and interaction between various echelons of ISI and MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) both at home and abroad.
3. Briefing at JSHQ which the DG ISI gives to all the service chiefs. Similarly, DG ISI gives his input to Defence Council and Defence Committee of the Cabinet. Apart from this, informally the Prime Minister may ask for a paper on any topic to be formulated by the Intelligence or the Foreign Office can require any information from ISI.¹¹

In 2014, DCC was reconstituted into Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS) to focus on national security policies of the state.¹² It is headed by the Prime Minister, and its members include the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior and Finance, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chiefs of Staff of Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force. The committee meets to discuss national security and foreign policy challenges and uses the input from all concerned parts of the government. Upon the formation of CCNS, Prime Minister Khaqan Abbasi's office laid out its objectives as,

The Committee will focus on the national security agenda with the aim to formulate a national security policy that will become the guiding framework for its subsidiary policies – defence policy, foreign policy, internal security policy, and other policies affecting national security.¹³

In the process of decision-making it is critical to understand that Pakistan has a highly sensitized public ready to react to any adventurous foreign policy action that goes against the generally accepted norms and public opinion. Therefore, it is a difficult task

to drift away in a major way from the status-quo policies vis-à-vis certain states. For instance, Pakistanis have an affinity towards Muslim states, especially in the Middle East with Saudi Arabia and UAE particularly. The Pakistani government enjoys brotherly relations with both states; however, Pakistan decided to remain neutral in the Saudi-led intervention Yemen against Iranian back Houthis in 2015¹⁴ owing to its national security issues as well the problems associated with the intervention itself.¹⁵ This irked the majority of Pakistani public who fervently support Saudi Arabia's regime owing to its status as custodian of the two most holy places in the Islamic world. Similarly, Pakistan's relations with China are sacrosanct in both official and public domains. Therefore, the foreign office must exercise extra caution with regards to devising policies for these countries.

Overview of International Strategic Environment

A look at the international strategic milieu is a necessary constituent of a discussion of the foreign policy of Pakistan. It would be helpful in understanding how the relations and events are unfolding in the neighboring, regional and global regions. The interplay of regional and global power politics is also a factor and determinant in shaping the foreign policy of a state. Pakistan's position in the world in terms of its geography, geo-political position, military might, economic position and relations with other states are some of the elements that determine how it is seen in the world as well as affected by any transformations at regional and global level. A complement to this phenomenon is also the interest of different states in a region or a particular state.

It is important to see how Pakistan's relationship with US – a global power – and China, an economic powerhouse is shaping up. There are a few changing trends in the international system which directly affect Pakistan. A growing Indo-US relationship, the evolving situation in Afghanistan, and the overarching US-China and US-

Russia relationships are both directly and indirectly impact to how Pakistan pursues its foreign policy.

It can be seen that the US has an increasing tilt towards India. After signing the Indo-US Nuclear Deal in 2008,¹⁶ there is a visible alignment of goals by both states in South Asia and Indo-Pacific region. While the US might seek to maintain its influence in South Asia by empowering India and countering China, Indian objectives, however lie beyond South Asia to attain global rather than just regional relevance. The US policy in Afghanistan and its support to India's increasing economic activity in Afghanistan indicate the shift in US' Pakistan policy. President Trump's South Asia policy,¹⁷ again, lays out how its priorities in South Asia have evolved and the overall strategic goals that the US seeks to achieve.

The overall strategic environment is developing in the way that the US sees China's rise in terms of its economy and military revamping as a threat to its global dominance.¹⁸ It is also true that the US appreciates that China is beyond US' control and China's maneuvering, in complete contrast to that of the Soviet Union, has allowed it to cultivate economic, military and social links in many of its neighboring states which give it the space to exercise its muscle. China's One-Belt, One-Road Project, despite its apparent economic outlook is also seen as a status-quo challenge to the US. China's ambitious connectivity project circumvents any design to contain the country in anyway. Pak-China Economic Corridor becomes a factor of concerns for the US and India, as both view it as an effort to decrease US' influence in South Asia and other regions constraining Indian space from expanding its influence. The US has always been wary of Pak-China close relations¹⁹ and does not want China to be dominating the economic and political sphere in South Asia.

With Russia's entry into the global power politics, the US and its allies have termed it as a revisionist state. In the wake of the conflict in Syria, Russia has taken the forefront and challenged the military

might of the US and its allies' to keep Syria's president Bashar-ul-Assad in power.²⁰ A growing Russo-China nexus can also be seen with many joint economic projects worth billions of dollars. Both states decided to trade in their own currencies, which will lessen dollar's importance. In South Asia's context, as relations between India and US climb new highs, the relations between Pakistan and Russia also have witnessed a landmark change in energy and military domains.

While it is fairly reasonable to infer that Russia's warming up to Pakistan is linked to Russia trying to diversify the market for its oil and gas companies, defence production and securing new allies, it also signifies Pakistan's position in the regional context. Currently, Pakistan and Russia also have a convergence of interests in Afghanistan.

Challenges for Pakistan's foreign policy

Pakistan is currently at a juncture where policy-making and its implementation face immense challenges from both within and without the government system. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry has capable officials, who are well-versed in both diplomatic relations and crisis management, therefore, unwarranted, and excessive political interference may impede efficient policy implementation process. On the other hand, incapable political supervision is also responsible for many issues at the national and international levels. While the bureaucracy performs its daily duties and is headed by the foreign secretary who is a career diplomat, the political head of the ministry is the foreign minister who is responsible for the state's diplomacy. However, from 2013 to 2017, Pakistan did not have a Foreign Minister – the Prime Minister himself tended to Foreign Ministry business, which was an added responsibility for the country's leader.²¹ This approach had several problems, some of which include a passive foreign policy stance at many forums where the foreign minister's direct and personal involvement on

these occasions would have created greater impact.²² It was also the first time a democratically elected government had completed its tenure and transition of power had taken place to another democratically elected government. It was a time for Pakistan to celebrate and promote this newly achieved success by appointing a minister who could project Pakistan's soft-image all over the world.

Currently, Pakistan is facing an internal strife coupled with aggression from two of its four bordering states i.e. India and Afghanistan, and border force skirmishes with Iran. The internal dynamics of the country in terms of its economy and human development are also a downward trend. Pakistan's position in the global arena is in recent years losing its importance and has only been in the lime-light for all the wrong reasons. Despite meeting the same criterion as India on the Nuclear Supplier's Group, Pakistan's attempt to join the multilateral forum has failed to garner much support from the West. Moreover, Pakistan being put on the watchlist of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which is an intergovernmental body responsible for understanding terrorist financing risks, developing global standards, and evaluating countries' compliance is yet another failure on the foreign policy front.²³ Pakistan had previously been on the list until 2015,²⁴ however, the placement on it once again is a cause for concern for Pakistani experts on foreign policy and international law. It also underlines how Pakistan is losing ground at the international negotiation tables.²⁵

Moreover, it brings out a very important aspect of alliances and their limitations in international relations. Whilst Pakistan and China refer to each other as their iron-brother and each state supports the other at international and regional level, in the case of FATF, China too had to retract itself from voting in favor of Pakistan.²⁶ Similarly, Saudi Arabia, with which Pakistan enjoys brotherly relations, also pulled its support.²⁷ Such foreign policy failures have immense ramifications for the country's struggling financial markets and are bound to hurt the economic stability.

As the regional geo-strategic environment seems to be developing, a few points must be kept in mind. First and foremost, Pakistan is losing its importance vis-à-vis India at many international forums. Moreover, due to India's economic success, a well drafted foreign policy and an efficient highly visible overseas diaspora, it has succeeded in sidelining Pakistan. While it is true that India's rising importance is attributed to other factors such as the US seeking to contain China through India, it has also been immensely successful in setting up its own narrative. One example of acceptance by the global media and governments of India's version is the 'surgical strikes' episode in 2016.²⁸ While Pakistan invited the international media to conduct an independent survey of the area that India had claimed to have carried out the so called surgical strikes in, the Indian government refused to provide any proofs of these strikes. India's blatant refusal to allow the international media to verify Indian claims did not turn the West's view in Pakistan's favor either.

It also undermines a core objective of Pakistan's foreign policy – the issue of Kashmir. Pakistan wants to resolve the issue amicably as per the wishes of the people of Kashmir, however the Indian government has increasingly been employing military means to subjugate the protesting Kashmiri youth that does not want Kashmir's future to be linked to India.²⁹ India's use of Public Safety Act (PSA) and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has been instrumental in state-wide protests against Indian aggression.³⁰ The use of pellet guns which resulted in hundreds of people getting blinded, injured and killed,³¹ and using Kashmiris as human shields by the Indian Army³² have caused world-wide protests against India's tyranny in Kashmir.³³ Nonetheless, India has convinced the western countries that uprisings are instigated by Pakistan which uses non-state actors to arm rebels against the government.³⁴

As the US interests in the region evolve, Pakistan will find it increasingly difficult to deal with them. The growing Indo-US nexus will pose several more challenges for Pakistan amid China's rise and

the competition for power in the Indian Ocean Region. Pakistan's low economic growth and internal destabilization with sectarian, ethnic and political strife are only limiting the state's options at the international level.

Opportunities for Pakistan

In the current geo-political and geo-economic situation, Pakistan is fortunate to be at the crossroads where it can benefit from China's rise in both these dimensions. Pakistan's status as the flagship project in China's Belt and Road Initiative also known as One-Belt One Road (B&R/OBOR) bestows upon Pakistan immense opportunities. With an investment and loan facility being afforded to Pakistan by China in the form of Pak-China Economic Corridor (CPEC), it can bring in many opportunities for economic growth and internal economic consolidation in the long run. There is an immense break for Pakistani traders, farmers, and industrialists to use this upcoming avenue to reach out to new and diverse markets for their goods. At the government level, the trade route can be used to boost economic relations with central Asian, African, and European states as Pakistan provides the shortest route to China to China to reach Europe and Africa.³⁵ By making Pakistan an economic hub,³⁶ the country's image can be changed from a hardliner and extremist state to one of economic connectivity and development.

As the project materializes and progresses, it will make Pakistan an investment center. At this point, Pakistan needs to ensure it fosters an environment feasible for economic activity and regional connectivity by improving its security situation. It must be appreciated that China's resilience regarding this project is based on all-weather friendship with Pakistan as well as the benefits China hopes to reap from the CPEC initiative. However, other states would not indulge or follow suit if they get the impression that the security situation of the country has not improved. Pakistani armed

forces have worked tirelessly in the last decade to fight terrorists and has major successes to its credit. Operations against the militants are on going and most of the country is peaceful, barring a few occasional cases. This picture of peaceful Pakistan has to be disseminated to the rest of the world. Pakistan's diplomacy at the regional and international level can play a major role in promoting this change.

It is pertinent that Pakistan makes use of this opportunity. At a time when Pakistan is struggling to maintain its alliance with the US amidst changing geo-political environment, fighting off terrorism and militancy inside the country,³⁷ finding it difficult to keep a steady economic growth annually and facing international criticism on many fronts,³⁸ it is imperative that Pakistan does not forego the benefits of CPEC.

Similarly, the US long-term plan regarding Afghanistan can also provide Pakistan with more cards to play with on the table. It is mainly up to the United States to find a solution to the Afghan war and stabilize the country. Pakistan should play whatever role it can in achieving this goal but remain continually engaged with the US. Whilst Pakistan has been a strong proponent of dialogue with the Taliban³⁹, the Afghan authorities did not agree on the prospect of such talks. However, in a recent development, the Afghan government⁴⁰ has asked to hold dialogue with Taliban to resolve the issues. Pakistan, as before, can play a crucial role in facilitating these talks to help bring the conflict to an end. While it is difficult to postulate what the US endgame in Afghanistan is, Pakistan can reset its course more clearly once the peace-talks conclude. It will provide Pakistan with the leverage it needs in Pak-US relations and work well in Pakistan's interests.

In the wake of India's efforts to isolate Pakistan in 2016 post Uri attacks in Kashmir, the situation for Pakistan had changed cataclysmically. In the words of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "We will isolate you. I will work for that." Such rhetoric

emanating from none other than the Indian Prime Minister was serious for Pakistan to consider as it were essentially to translate into action. At the United National General Assembly in 2016 and 2017, India articulated its objectives of getting Pakistan labelled as a terrorist state. India's External Minister, Sushma Swaraj directed accusations at Pakistan of financing terrorism in South Asia.⁴¹ Naturally, this pushed Pakistan to defend itself against the charge-sheet presented by India and garner international support in its favor. Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations, Maleeha Lodhi responded to India's allegations and reminded the United Nations that it was in fact India that had illegally occupied Kashmir⁴² and that the UN resolution on Kashmir required due diligence as India's incessant human rights violations in Kashmir could no longer go unnoticed. Her speech included emphasis on the Kashmir issue in the following words,

We'll make sure that the international community knows where we are, and how the people of Kashmir look towards the UN to fulfil its long-standing obligations. This is an issue the PM would obviously raise with the Secretary-General. It is also an issue which we have been raising over the years — whenever we get an opportunity to speak about the right to self-determination.⁴³

The use of UNGA forum to raise and discuss the Kashmir issue is important because of the indifferent attitude India has adopted pertaining to the issue of Kashmir. India's nonchalant attitude regarding Kashmir and not agreeing to hold dialogues with Pakistan over it makes it even more crucial to bring it out on a global stage. With a well-researched and organized campaign based on facts, Pakistan can draft a working plan to advocate Kashmir case at the international forums. This will not only dispel misinformation regarding the issue but also educate other states about the atrocities being committed in the disputed region by India.

On the other hand, Russia's warming up to Pakistan has to be figured in both the success story for Pakistan as well as an appreciation of the evolving geo-political alliances in the region. In 2014, Russia lifted its arms embargo on Pakistan⁴⁴ which is a landmark change in the relations between the Cold War adversaries. Opening up a consulate in Peshawar,⁴⁵ Russia's military exercises with Pakistan army inside Pakistan,⁴⁶ and a visit to North and South Waziristan signify the beginning of a new era of friendship.⁴⁷ On the economic side, Russia has showed interest in improving economic ties with Pakistan.⁴⁸ With regards to foreign policy, Russia abstained from naming Pakistan at the BRICs summit in India and defended Pakistan against the Trump strategy in South Asia.⁴⁹ Russia has also said that it is not opposed to Pakistan joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which provides Pakistan with yet another international ally and supporter in its bid to become an NSG member.⁵⁰

The improvement in Pak-Iran relations came amid top level visits by Iran's Prime Minister Dr. Hassan Rouhani's visit to Pakistan in 2016⁵¹ followed by Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa's visit to Iran in 2017.⁵² It offers a renewed opportunity to both Pakistan and Iran. The border skirmishes and rumors of rift between Iran and Pakistan was put to rest by Iranian Foreign Minister's 3-day visit to Pakistan in March 2018.⁵³ His visit signifies the importance of Pak-Iran relations. As the Indian financed Chahbahar port is being developed,⁵⁴ its purported status as a rival to CPEC was a cause for concern for Pakistan. However, Iran dismissed Chahbahar as a rival to Gawadar and instead showed interest in joining CPEC.⁵⁵

Pakistan's decision to remain neutral in Yemen War, while a principled stance based on resolving internal security matters first, also resonated well in the Iranian decision-making echelons. Nonetheless, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a defence agreement wherein Pakistan has deployed a contingent of its forces in the Kingdom for training and advice missions.⁵⁶ It also means that Pak-

Saudi relations do not translate into a zero-sum game for Pak-Iran relations.

With the Iranian nuclear agreement also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) conducted in 2015,⁵⁷ some of the economic sanctions were lifted off Iran with more to be lifted as Iran achieves the milestones stipulated in the agreement. This development can benefit Pak-Iran relations with regards to the Iran-Pakistan pipeline, previously withheld due to international sanctions on Iran as well as political hurdles, which will help ameliorate Pakistan's energy situation. With sanctions lifted off, Iran's improving economy will also provide space for an increased trade between the two states. Moreover, an improved relation with Iran means Pakistan will have another ally on regional and international forums.

Conclusion

Pakistan's foreign policy is currently going through a change owing to many internal and external factors. It is a mix of Pakistan's security imperatives, national requirements, and international commitments. Simultaneously, Pakistan's foreign policy is based on the evolving regional and international geo-strategic environments. As any country in a globally integrated system, Pakistan's foreign policy cannot function without taking into account regional and international policy direction. It is important to appreciate Pakistan's status as a mid-range power with limited resources as well. Similarly, Pakistan's internal situation and its role in War on Terror has been a major factor in further limiting its resources. Nonetheless, there are many components of foreign policy making which can be improved upon and help foment a better policy.

Pakistan's decision-making apparatus requires both focus and personnel trained to understand the theoretical and practical sides of the foreign policy. It is vital that history is used as a guiding principal

to avoid past mistakes. In the process of decision-making, consideration must be given to the challenges that every opportunity brings with it so that contingency plans can be prepared. It is also important that long-term policies are not tampered with. Continuity and consistency of policies will help Pakistan's credibility in the international realm.

The list of internal and external challenges being faced by Pakistan are numerous. The internal destabilization inside Pakistan financed by India and routed through Afghanistan needs to be checked. At the same time, Pakistan must actively advocate its case regarding the matter of non-state actors being sponsored by India inside Balochistan and FATA region.

As India's increasingly powerful lobby in the US Congress has convinced the US that Pakistan is harboring non-state actors used to hurt US interests and developments in Afghanistan and terrorize India, it is crucial for Pakistan to be vigilant of further US actions against Pakistan. Aside from this, Pakistan must vindicate itself through diplomacy and provision of proof that it is rooting out all types and kinds of militants.

Moreover, while it is important to check and monitor India's foreign policy closely, Pakistan's policy needs to be independent of what India seeks to achieve. It is very important to analyze the imperatives of Pakistan's foreign policy considering what Pakistan can accomplish with a policy that is designed to achieve specific objectives. Generally, Pakistan's actions at the international forums are seen either as a response or in retaliation to India's statements and actions. This results in Pakistan's viewpoint or bid being ignored by major powers and international bodies. In order to achieve better results Pakistan needs to be more proactive at the international level.

Similarly, Indo-Afghan relations aimed at sidelining Pakistan also do not serve Pakistan's interests. Pakistan has played a positive role in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan and provided land and

sea routes to the US military to combat insurgent groups over the years. Moreover, despite Pakistan's role in peacebuilding efforts through facilitating talks with Taliban in the past in Afghanistan, both Afghanistan and the US ignore Pakistan's sacrifices and efforts.

Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, Pakistan has both capacity and ability to improve its image, relations, and position in the global arena. With new elections due in few months a new government will be formed in the center. The new incumbents in the office will likely pay more attention to achieving Pakistan's foreign policy goals to help it regain its rightful place internationally.

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Endnotes

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