

## The Role of Domestic Factors in the Formulation of Foreign Policy of Pakistan (From 2000-2019)



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**Abstract** *The foreign policy process involves many internal and external factors. This paper is mainly focusing on some important domestic factors in the formulation of Foreign Policy of Pakistan. Due to Parliamentary form of government, Prime Minister plays a significant role at home and abroad. However, due to the complexity of the foreign policy formulation it also involves President, Foreign Minister, and Parliament along with Prime Minister. However, the role of public opinion and media is also important in this regard. Moreover, foreign policy decisions are also influenced and affected by the responses of public and media. Islamic Republic of Pakistan is an ideological State and ideology also plays a key role in the formulation of the foreign policy. The Islamic ideology provides the foundations of foreign policy of Pakistan since independence.*

**Key Words:** Foreign Policy, Prime Minister, Public Opinion, Parliament, Bureaucracy, Media

### Introduction

State is a key political unit; it comprises of population, territory, government and sovereignty. According to the positive school of international law; “state is a legal and political entity with the attributes of population, territory and autonomous government and is willing and able to meet fundamental international responsibilities. Foreign policy of is a mean to make achieve its goals and to safeguard the national interest of a State. A State has to maintain its relations with rest of the countries. Moreover, the globalization has intensified the nature of transnational activities. Therefore, now a State has to manage its relations in a broader platform. Foreign policy is a tool which helps a State to deal with external world in diverse areas which includes trade, technology, economic, defence, security, development and culture etc. Since the Treaty of West Phalia, the international relations has evolved and as a result now states have to conduct, manage and formulate their foreign policy according to the changing scenarios as well.

Foreign policy is policy which involves the foreign relations of a State. However, foreign policy is always a combination of numerous factors such as historical, ideological, socio-economic and political factors. Foreign policy of Pakistan is also a product of such numerous factors. The founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah said on February 1948 that; “Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill to-wards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principal 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

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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.” According to [Modelski \(1962\)](#), the system of International relations works through the wheel of foreign policy. A state has to secure and safeguard its national interest via maintain relations with other States. Foreign policy helps a State to protect its national interest, satisfy its public concerns and obtain a legal place in this global arena. Modelski further says that, “foreign policy would live as long as independent states work in international circle.” According to Prof. Joseph Frankel says that “foreign policy consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others.

Hugh Gibson argues that foreign policy is based on experience, proficient knowledge, and inclusive plan of a state to conduct its relations with the other states. The protection and promotion of national interest is amongst the key objective of a state’s foreign policy. It helps in the clear understanding of ‘what’, ‘whose’ interests and how to achieve these goals. Anything less than this falls short of being a national foreign policy. [Padelford & Lincoln \(1962\)](#) analyze that, foreign policy helps a state to achieve its objectives and adopt certain course of actions to accomplish these goals and protect its national interest.

According to another scholar, foreign policy reflects that how state manage its economic, political, social and military relations with other countries. Gross states that, “foreign policy comprises of accomplishing the nationwide purposes through the accessible National means by interfacing with other states.” The primary focus of all states is their national interest while maintain their foreign relations. According to a scholar, nothing is permanent in foreign policy of state neither friendship nor enmity but the national interest and it is the prime responsibility of a State to protect its national interest.

The 1973’s constitution of Pakistan also highlights the key principles of foreign policy of Pakistan. According to Article 40 of the constitution; “The State shall endeavour to preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic unity, support the common interests of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America, promote international peace and security, foster goodwill and friendly relations among all the nations and encourage the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.

### Analysis of Foreign Policy of Pakistan through Constructivism Approach

In this article, the constructivism approach is used to analyze the role of domestic factors in the formulation of foreign policy behaviour of Pakistan. Alexander Wendt in his work, “Social Theory of International Politics (1979),” provides a comprehensive analysis of constructivism approach. He highlights the role of norms and ideas in the shaping of behaviour of a state. According to constructivism; history, culture and social norms and belief plays significant role in the formulation of state’s behaviour and foreign policy.

Moreover, constructivism also believes that global institutions and organizations also play key role in the framing of foreign policy behaviour of a state. For instance; Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan highlighted Pak-India tensions and Indian aggression in Kashmir while addressing at the session of General Assembly of United Nations. Previously, UN was involved to solve the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. Furthermore, institutions like Amnesty International can purse different states to solve their conflict via lobbying.

According to Steve Smith, “Foreign policy is what states make of it.” Nuclear weapons of India, China, and Pakistan are destructive but they have different meanings for each state. Like India perceives the nuclear arsenals of Pakistan as an immediate threat for their security and national interest. Similarly, policy makers in Pakistan also see the nuclear weapons of China differently from India because of numerous factors. The role of social beliefs and norms is important in this regard and constructivism helps to understand these factors in the shaping of foreign policy of Pakistan and other countries as well.

Constructivism emphasizes on the role of norms, values, ideas and perceptions. The perceptions of political leadership are important in the shaping of foreign policy of a state. The perceptions are ingrained in “national history and myth, changing slowly over time as political leaders reinterpret them and external and internal developments reshape them.” For instance; how the leaders of Pakistan perceive Iran, Saudi Arabia. It reflects through the foreign policy behaviour of different leaders. Mian Nawaz Sharif has maintained close relations with Saudi Arabia. However, Pakistan People Party (PPP) always tries to improve foreign relations of Pakistan with Iran. The interpretation of ‘Power, security threats, national interest, domestic challenges vary from one state to another. Especially, national interest and power depends on the role and perceptions of political leadership. For instance; the national interest of Pakistan is different from Indian national interest. The concept of ‘power’ is different for China as compare to Pakistan. Therefore, the interpretation of different ideas also plays vital role in the formulation of foreign policy. In addition, historical experiences of a state also play key role in the shaping of these ideas and perception. For instance; Pakistan-India fought four wars, and due to Kashmir issue both States could not establish trustworthy relations. Therefore, either its cooperative ties (like between Pakistan and China) or conflict (Like Pak-India relations) the role of history matters in the formulation of foreign policy. Constructivism highlights that Social and cognitive processes reflect the foreign policy of a state through which political leaders comprehend the reality.

The success of foreign policy of a state also depends on the beliefs of common national identity. Therefore, identities play vital role in the formulation of foreign policy. According to Aggestam, “The identity in politics refers to a particular set of ideas about political community that policymakers use and draw on to mobilise a sense of cohesion and solidarity to legitimate the general thrust of foreign policy.” For this purpose, political, leaders use media as a tool to create common national identity among Pakistani public. In the case of Pakistan, the Islamic ideology plays important role in the creation of common identity among public and it helps political leaders to create harmony at home.

Moreover, at foreign front, the role of Islamic ideology also plays key role. For instance, Pakistan always tries to play positive role for peace in the Muslim world. Pakistan is enjoying good relations with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey etc. Pakistan also offers to play role to reduce tensions between Tehran and Riyadh. The key foundation of all these efforts of peace among Muslim states is the religious ideology of Pakistan. Moreover, the public is also supportive of such efforts of Imran Khan's government at foreign front. Constructivists often find it useful to examine the historical construction of “national interests.”

## **The Role of Domestic Factors and Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

### **Religious Ideology**

Ideology provides a purpose for human beings to plan their future according to it. The role of ideology is vital in the formulation of foreign policy of Pakistan. The Islamic ideology was the foundation of the creation of Pakistan. The ideology of Pakistan is the ideology of Islam as Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a Muslim State. Therefore; the religious ideology is one of the key determinant factors in the formulation of foreign policy of Pakistan. The teaching of Holy Quran and the orders of *Sunnah* are providing the guideline for not only for socio-political, economic, cultural aspect but also for foreign relations. Therefore, policy makers cannot ignore these basic principles while formulating the foreign policy of Pakistan. One key example is to maintain good relations with Muslim Countries remains the key priority of all governments in Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan did not recognise Israel which was established on the basis of Jewish ideology. Moreover, Pakistan always shows concerns regarding the rights of the people of Palestine. One of the key reasons behind Pakistan's close relations with Saudi Arabia is also the religious ideology and affiliation with *Mecca* and *Madina*.

## The Influence of Leadership, Political Parties and Foreign Policy of Pakistan

The individuals such as high government officials, especially the leaders play a key role in foreign policy formulation and decisions. The world we are living is also shaped by these individuals. Many books also focus on the role of such individuals in foreign policy process. For instance; 'The Best and the Brightest by Halberstam (1972),' and Isaacson and Thomas 'The wise men (1986),' and many other memoirs, biographies also highlight the significance of the behaviours of the leaders and high-level officials. Without understanding the role and influence of these individuals, we cannot analyze the foreign policy of any country. The role of leaders is important as a leader has to perform at two level; firstly, at domestic level and secondly at external level. According to Neack, "the head of the government in any kind of political system is motivated by two similar goals: retain political power and build and maintain policy coalitions."

The leaders have the ability to influence the domestic politics of their State in many ways. For instance, leaders can use foreign policy to achieve domestic goals and sometimes, the leaders do not affect their domestic agendas with their foreign policy decisions. The domestic environment of Pakistan also influenced the foreign policy. In this regard, the role of different leadership also remained significant. For instance, during the era of President Pervaiz Musharraf, Pakistan has joined US 'war on terror.' It further resulted in economic grant from US which enabled President Musharraf to sustain with domestic pressure as many people were criticizing his foreign policy decisions.

Moreover, President Musharraf had tried to improve Pakistan's relations with India. The meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on July, 2001, start of bus service from Lahore to Dehli and encouraging people to people contacts were also a part of such efforts to improve bilateral terms between the two states. Pakistan's People Party (PPP) came in to power after Musharraf. The key foreign policy objectives of PPP leadership were improvement in relations with Afghanistan, normalize its relations with India, strengthen Pakistan's relations with China, and deepen relations with Russia and working relations with US. It also includes good relations with the Middle Eastern countries. However, PPP leadership also lack to achieve these foreign policy goals. As a result, Pakistan has faced serious challenges during that era. From 2013 to 2018, PML (N) under Mian Nawaz Sharif was in power. The foreign policy objectives during Mian Nawaz Sharif era were maintaining good relations with Muslim world, GCC states (particularly Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar) and Iran, CPEC, good relations with Russia, mutuality in Pak-US relations, resolving the Kashmir issue, good ties with India and support for peace in Afghanistan. However, there was no roadmap that how PMLN government will achieve these objectives of their foreign policy. Quite interestingly, there was no foreign minister till 2017. Consequently; Pakistan has faced crucial challenges at foreign policy front. During that time, Pakistan experienced tension in the neighbouring countries Afghanistan and India. Moreover, Pakistan-US relations also remained strained. However, Pakistan had improved its relations with Russia and continued the CPEC project with China.

Imran Khan came into power in 2018 and he mainly relies on diplomatic tools rather than military specially to solve Kashmir issue. "Prime Minister Imran said the Kashmir issue could be resolved through dialogue as the war could not be a solution to any problem and those looking for that option were fools." Imran Khan is using speech diplomacy at regional and global platforms to highlight the tensions between India and Pakistan particularly the Kashmir conflict. He is also trying to balance Pakistan's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia. He clearly said that, "Pakistan is ready to play its role for peace but it can never again be the part of any war." He also emphasize on normal relations between Taliban-US and Iran-US. Moreover, Kartar Pur Corridor is also a key example of the use of soft power by Imran Khan. Therefore, leaders have the ability to influence the foreign policy of a state.

## **The Role of Foreign Minister in Foreign Policy**

The role of foreign ministry is vital in the formulation of foreign policy of Pakistan. It also includes experts, high-government officials and specialists of foreign policy. Their main responsibility is to formulate foreign policy according to the national interest, goals and standards. However, it is also their responsibility to coordinate and cooperate with Troika for the preparation of foreign policy. The foreign Minister is the head of Ministry of foreign affairs and he/she has to coordinate with Prime Minister regarding foreign policy decisions and matters. Moreover, the foreign minister is responsible to issue the statements for media and public. He has to defend the foreign policy decisions in the parliament. Moreover, the personality, qualities and expertise of a foreign minister also plays significant role in this regard. Previously, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto played important role when he was the foreign Minister of Pakistan under the President Ayub Khan (from 1963-1966). Now Shah Mahmood Qureshi is actively playing a role as Foreign Minister of Pakistan under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Previously he served as Minister for Foreign Affairs; from 2008 – 2011 and currently, since August 2018. The role of foreign minister is important to protect, project and safeguard of the national interest through foreign policy. For instance, to enhance the bilateral ties between China and Pakistan, Shah Qureshi met with Chinese foreign Minister on a number of occasions. Shah Mahmood Qureshi has attended the first session of Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue in March, 2019. He went Beijing in April, 2019 to join the 2nd Belt and Road Forum and in August, 2019 Shah Mahmood Qureshi met with Wang Yi.

## **Role of Media**

Media has become an important instrument to pursue the national interests outlined in the foreign policy. Michael Brecher provides a comprehensive analysis of foreign policy decision making. He explains explicitly of media as a network of communication that works within a political system. It enables "the flow of information about the operational environment to the incumbent elite." According to Brecher, the foreign policy comprises a particular environment or setting. The foreign policy decisions are defined and taken in operational environment. The notion of setting includes numerous factors and conditions that affect the behaviour of a State at external level. The policy makers have to work within the parameters set by the operational environment.

Mass media could be defined as "devices for moving messages across distances or time to accomplish mass communication." In this regard, the role of media is also important and complex as well. Media also set an environment within which policy makers have to take their foreign policy decisions. Moreover, media influence the political leaders and foreign policy decisions. Media is also a source of communication between government and public. Media also provides information about national and international events, news etc. Therefore, the role of media has been increased due to easy access to all happenings throughout the world. According to Cohen media have three primary roles in the foreign policy process; communication, interpretation and advocacy.

Today's world is completely different from previous centuries due to technology and advancement. The power of technology is visible in all fields of life including politics. Electronic media, print media and now social media is also playing significant role. Media in Pakistan also highlights not only domestic issues but foreign policy as well. Sometimes, it also depends how media frame the foreign policy decisions. For instance, media frame differently Sino-Pak relations, India-Pak relations, Saudi-Pak relations and Pak-US relations. Moreover, Sino-Pak relations are always highlighted as trustworthy friends by media in Pakistan. Similarly, media also project CPEC as series of this all-weather friendship. Media also interpret the foreign policy and it affects not only decision makers but also the audience at home. Like Pak-Turkey relationship has strengthened since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assumed power. Previously, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and now Imran Khan also continued the support for Pak-Turkey friendly ties. Media also project Pak-Turkey relationship positively and recently President Erdogan

visited Pakistan on February, 2020. President Erdogan also addressed the joint session of the Parliament of Pakistan.

This visit was highlighted by Pakistani media as good move at foreign policy front. Similarly, media also plays vital role to reflect Pakistan's foreign policy towards India especially about Kashmir issue. The leaders and foreign policy decision makers are also aware of this reality. For instance, Palwama incident of February 14, 2019 intensified the tensions between Pakistan and India. India blamed Pakistan for Palwama attack while Prime Minister Imran Khan denied such allegations and said "India should stop blaming Pakistan without any evidence." All these statements were highlighted by media to show the world that Pakistani leadership is concerned about peace and stability of this region. Furthermore, such kind of statements by Imran Khan also satisfied the public at home that government is dealing with all the challenges posed by India. Therefore, media always plays important role not during peace time or war time but during all kind of situations. For instance, currently media is creating awareness about COVID-19 among general public and also highlighting the efforts of different states to control the spread of the Virus.

### **The Role of Parliament in Foreign Policy Decisions**

Pakistan has parliamentary form of government; in Parliament form of government, the foreign affairs Ministry usually formulates the foreign policy according to the direction of executive and then present it to parliament for approval. Mostly, the Parliament gives approval after some discussion and debate on it or it may refer some changes in it. In the Parliament, opposition can criticise the foreign policy decisions of ruling party and can ask questions related with the policy. According to Sampson, "Statement issued by the President, Prime Minister, or Foreign Ministers about the external affairs are included in the debate of the parliament in which the honourable members can express their feelings and also the opinion of the people." Since last few years, the interaction between foreign office and the parliament of Pakistan has been increased.

One of the key purposes of the foreign policy is to secure maximum benefits and safeguard the national interest at the foreign front. Sometimes, debates and discussions inside the Parliament on foreign policy help to take a good decision. The open discussions, debate and criticism of opposition can be fruitful in this regard. Previously, the Parliament of Pakistan helped PMLN government to take a rational decision. For instance, Saudi Arabia asked Pakistan to join their coalition against Houthis in Yemen. However, this issue was taken to the Parliament of Pakistan by PMLN government. Pakistan's parliament has unanimously passed a resolution affirming the country's neutrality in the Yemen conflict. Pakistan is facing many challenges from regional and global states. Therefore, taking some important foreign policy issues in Parliament may help the government and foreign office. However, the role of Parliament on foreign policy related decisions is limited in Pakistan.

### **The Role of Military and Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

In Pakistan, Administrative Troika (President, Prime Minister and Chief of Army Staff) plays a vital role in the formulation of foreign policy. These officials can approve, disapprove and can make changes in the foreign policy of Pakistan. However, all governments usually preferred to continue with the commitments of previous governments.

### **The Influence of Public Opinion on Foreign Policy Decisions**

Public opinion always affects the decisions of the government not only at domestic level but also external level. Pakistan is a democratic state and political leaders are also concerned about the responses of public on certain foreign policy decisions. Previously, President Pervaiz Musharraf who was a dictator but he allowed the freedom of media. Since 2002, media in



Pakistan is actively playing role, keeping an eye on all decisions of government and also creating awareness among public regarding the policies and decisions of our policy makers.

In this regard, the role of leadership and media is also significant as both have the capability to influence the public opinion. However, sometimes political leaders can create environment to get public support on their foreign policy decisions. For instance, the people in Pakistan are quite concerned about the foreign policy towards India especially on Kashmir. So due to historical, emotional, ideological factors public is always ready to support the government decisions to deal with Indian threat. Sometimes, leaders create favourable environment at home to achieve the foreign policy goals. Leaders can frame issues in certain ways to convince their public to support their foreign policy decisions. For instance, after 9/11 President Musharraf has decided to join WOT and create certain kind of environment at home and tried to get the support of general public. Though, short-term and long-run consequences were more visible with the passage of time. Moreover, Prime Minister Imran Khan always says that Pakistan wants to promote peaceful relations among all the Muslim states.

There is a direct link between what public think and what leaders do. For instance, On October, 2019 Prime Minister Imran Khan visited Iran and Saudi Arabia to mediate between them. However, Ministry of foreign affairs of Pakistan has issued a statement on January 5, 2020 that, "Pakistan will not "let its soil be used against any other state," and will not become part of "any regional conflict." One key reason behind neutrality is *Sunni* population in Pakistan has affiliation with Saudi Arabia and *Shiia* community has religious affiliation with Iran. Therefore, foreign policy decisions regarding Iran and Saudi Arabia can escalate extremism in Pakistani society. As a result, such kind of mediation offers by Imran Khan is also supported by the general public.

## Recommendations

- The government should ensure economic development by promoting trade openness and international cooperation. This will further help the government to strengthen its foreign policy stance through the effective projection of national interest. Hence, economic development should be the main focus of all governments as it is prerequisite for the success of foreign policy.
- The role of Islamic ideology is vital in the formulation of foreign policy of Pakistan. Therefore, all governments should continue their efforts to play constructive role for peace and stability among Muslim world. The Islamic ideology is a key tool to create unity among Muslim states.
- Political stability is another factor which can affect the foreign policy of any state. Therefore, more active participation on the part of all agents including political parties and establishment is required ensuring the political stability in Pakistan. It will also help in the formulation of a unanimous foreign policy.
- Media in Pakistan is not yet playing active role to portray the effectiveness of foreign policy. The government and the owners of private channels should conduct training sessions for media persons to learn expertise that they should know how to promote the stance of Pakistan effectively at national and international level.
- General public in Pakistan does not actively participate when it comes to foreign policy goals of Pakistan. The government should create awareness among public about the achievements, objectives and goals at foreign front. However, again media can help the government to create that awareness among common citizens about the success, failures and weaknesses of foreign policy of our governments.
- The government should engage Foreign Ministry actively in case of any issue as protection of National interest and image abroad is the one of the main responsibilities of a government. Therefore, there should be a separate department under Foreign Minister rather than keeping such important department under the control of one person. Like previously, Mian Nawaz Sharif did.

## Conclusion

The domestic environment of a State always affects its foreign policy. Pakistan's foreign policy formulation and decisions are also affecting by internal environment. In this regard the role of leadership is most important. However, foreign policy formulation is a complex process and it also involves President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and the Parliament. Moreover, the role of media and public opinion is also important as foreign policy decision can be influenced by the responses of general public. Media has the ability to build a narrative on all kind of foreign policy decisions of a government. Therefore, the foreign policy of Pakistan is also shaped by many domestic factors.

Pakistan is facing many challenges at home and abroad. However, political stability and economic progress will be helpful to formulate an independent foreign policy. In Pakistan, political parties include ideal foreign policy objectives in their manifesto but when they came into power, they do not pursue these goals. However, Prime Minister Imran Khan is highlighting that Pakistan wants peace with neighbouring countries (like India and Afghanistan) on one hand. On the other hand, Pakistan is supporting peace among Muslim world. Moreover, Pakistan is supporting dialogues to reduce tensions among all the states; it's US-Iran conflict, Taliban-US or Iran-Saudi Arabia tensions.



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