

Comparative and Performance Analysis of Diplomacy by India and Pakistan: Lessons for Pakistan

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Abstract:

The term "diplomacy" has evolved from its ancient Greek origins to its modern-day interpretation as the peaceful conduct of international relations. Traditionally, diplomacy involved non-violent means and official, communicative functions. However, technological advancements and the rise of non-state actors have transformed diplomacy, expanding its scope to include various activities by state and non-state entities. Pakistan's foreign policy, historically centered on geo-strategic concerns, is now shifting towards geo-economic diplomacy. Despite significant internal and external challenges, Pakistan seeks to project a positive global image and enhance its influence through robust foreign policy and economic diplomacy. Recommendations for strengthening Pakistan's diplomacy include enhancing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focusing on bilateral and geo-economic diplomacy, investing in human resources and public diplomacy, and maintaining consistent policies. Addressing these areas is essential for Pakistan to emerge as a key regional and international player.

Key words:

Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Geo-economics, Pakistan, International Relations

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Introduction

The term "diplomacy" is derived from the ancient Greek word *diploun* (meaning twofold or double), used in connection with diplomas – special documents carried by religious envoys to ensure a safe journey. In the 16th century, the term “diplomatic” came to refer to the science of codifying handwriting necessary to authenticate the validity of diplomas issued by religious authorities. Gradually, diplomacy in theory and practice began to be understood as the peaceful conduct of relations between different sovereignties. In fact, the practice of state diplomacy led to its theory.

Traditionally, diplomacy focuses on the peaceful execution of relations by specially authorized personnel, employing means short of physical force. Due to its non-violent character, diplomacy is considered “the most important institution of the society of states.” Accordingly, diplomacy's characteristics are non-violent means, official character, and representative and communicative functions.

During and after the Cold War between the USA and USSR, diplomacy did not act to prevent war but to continue it in other forms. Technological advancements, developments in communication, access to information, and the increasing acknowledgment of the importance of non-state actors have reduced the prerogative of state-led diplomacy as the main mediator in international relations. Conceptually, diplomacy has evolved into an umbrella term describing a wide range of activities undertaken by state and non-state actors, including businesses, civil society groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and supranational institutions (Lohman, 2017).

A country's foreign policy reflects its internal conditions and is neither fixed nor rigid. Pakistan's diplomacy has long been based on securing national interests, initially focusing on protecting the country's geographical borders. Recently, the country's leadership has shifted its focus from geo-strategic to geo-economic diplomacy. Historically, Pakistan has always been in the international limelight for various reasons. Its nuclear weapons, complicated relations with India, and growing strategic engagements with China mean that Pakistan will continue to garner global attention. Consequently, Pakistan has maintained its relevance due to issues like strategic stability, the Afghan imbroglio, counterterrorism, and the brewing Sino-US rivalry, which affect or are linked to the country. However, Pakistan seeks for the world to perceive and discuss it differently.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, India is being viewed as the next superpower in the region. To achieve this perception, India has successfully capitalized on its strengths and effectively used its diplomatic strategies. From being a reluctant

international player to becoming a candidate for regional superpower, India has come a long way. Pakistan too has made some achievements, but there is still much to be accomplished and learned. The aim of this research study is to review India's diplomatic success through transformations in its policies on national, regional, and global levels and to explore how Pakistan can review its national interests, goals, and priorities with an overall adjustment and readjustment of its foreign policy to cope with the opportunities and challenges that await.

Significance and Scope of the Research

Foreign policy and diplomacy are often believed to be synonymous. However, in reality, diplomacy is one of the many means that a state employs to achieve its foreign policy objectives, meaning that diplomacy is a means to an end and not an end in itself. With the increasing cost of conventional wars, massive developments in communication, and the increasing ease of access to information, diplomacy is the only way to secure one's national interests without damaging those of others.

The topic of research is too wide to be contained and discussed within the short time span and word count limitations. Hence, the scope of this study is limited to the practice of diplomacy, in various forms, by both India and Pakistan. The diplomatic practices of both countries will be critically analyzed with a view to proposing practical policy recommendations for Pakistan.

Review of the Literature

A considerable amount of literature is available, enabling us to understand Pakistan's diplomacy, the factors that shaped Pakistan's diplomatic practices in different eras, and the ways and means to maximize Pakistan's gains in international relations. The literature also helps us understand the good practices and innovations employed by India to capitalize on its strengths and achieve the status of regional leader.

In the age of globalization and digitalization, more areas of national, regional, and global relations fall within the ambit of diplomacy. Terms like cultural diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, commercial diplomacy, defense diplomacy, digital diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and regional diplomacy are now considered part and parcel of foreign policy. This is coupled with a variety of methods employed to practice diplomacy, such as hard power, soft power, and smart power.

In international relations, there are no permanent friends or foes, which means that foreign policy changes in nature, scope, and orientation over time according to a country's objectives, national interest, and the changing domestic and international environment. Moreover, states do not operate in a vacuum; rather, they function as members of a larger community of states with international obligations. In today's world, advancements in

information and communication technology have affected foreign policy formulation, which in turn has significantly impacted the conduct of diplomacy (Ali, 2015).

These developments present a wide range of opportunities as well as challenges for diplomatic activities. Countries cannot afford to be left behind in this era of digital diplomacy, as they can greatly benefit from these emerging diplomatic trends. By adopting a futuristic approach and keeping the national interest of Pakistan at the center of discussion, Pakistan can develop several policy responses and alternatives that may be helpful in the formulation of its foreign policy in the future.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research method has been used, and data has been taken from secondary sources, including various articles and research papers available online. Inputs have also been taken from Foreign Service officers who have either worked in Pakistan's diplomatic mission in New Delhi or have headed the India directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad. The questionnaire shared with the above-mentioned officers is placed in Annex I.

Historical Perspective of Diplomacy by Pakistan and India

The foreign policy of Pakistan is guided by the vision and principles set forth by the founding father of the country, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who stated: "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."

Article 40 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan also outlines principles that shall guide Pakistan's foreign policy for all time to come. This article states that "the State shall endeavor 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 nations, and encourage the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means." Thus, Quaid's vision and Article 40 of the Constitution outline the guiding principles of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Through the years, the basic principles of Pakistan's foreign policy have generally remained unchanged, but the goals kept changing according to

emerging international scenarios—social, political, and economic—and Pakistan's internal dynamics.

The diplomatic history of Pakistan is composed of many successes and challenges. Pakistan had to face many challenges right from its inception. With very limited resources, the government of the newly born state of Pakistan had a daunting task at hand. Initially, to start the government machinery, the Government of India Act 1935 was amended according to domestic needs and used until the promulgation of a formal constitution. In the early few decades since independence, Pakistan's diplomacy was at its best. All the big powers of the world wanted to establish close ties with Pakistan. It was in those decades that Pakistan received and sent high-level delegations around the world. Pakistan opened its diplomatic missions in several countries of the world and vice versa. Pakistan forged amicable relations with the newly established Muslim countries and supported the freedom movements of Indonesia, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Eritrea against Western colonial powers, leading to the regional identification of Pakistan. Even during the Cold War period, Pakistan's diplomacy was brilliant in pursuing a special relationship with China, even though it was a signatory of America's anti-communist alliances. It became a bridge between the US and China and facilitated secret diplomacy between the two (Mohan, 2021).

Both India and Pakistan had sufficient reasons to choose different foreign policy paths after independence. While India believed that it had no external threats and was utterly confident about its ability to navigate the world on its own, Pakistan's difficult relations with its neighbors made it look for alliances. Pakistan, thus, signed a bilateral security treaty with the US and joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the mid-1950s. Later, during the 1965 war between Pakistan and India, when the US did not extend any help to Pakistan, it left both SEATO and CENTO. The aim of joining SEATO and CENTO was not to fight communism, as opposed to the US, but to balance India. And that is why communist China came close to Pakistan.

The period from independence till the USSR invasion of Afghanistan was generally a period of great diplomatic activity and successes for Pakistan. When the USSR attacked Afghanistan, Pakistan opened its doors for the Afghan people, and hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees fled to Pakistan. The government of Pakistan declared "jihad" against the Soviet attack, which led to the madrassa system, Kalashnikov culture, heroin and opium production, Al-Qaeda, 9/11, and the post-9/11 War Against Terrorism, resulting in the loss of precious lives and property worth millions of dollars. The aftermath of all these events changed international geopolitics, Pakistan's image in the world, and Pakistan's diplomacy for good.

One of the greatest diplomatic victories of Pakistan historically is tying its nuclear program to that of India. India and Pakistan have not signed the Non-

Proliferation Treaty (NPT). India started developing its nuclear program in 1962, and to safeguard its geographical boundaries and national interests, Pakistan began to prioritize its nuclear program after the Indo-Pak war of 1971. In May 1998, India tested six bombs over the course of three days. Three weeks later, Pakistan detonated five bombs in a single day and a sixth three days later. The West wanted to impose sanctions against Pakistan for its nuclear tests, but Pakistan managed to convince world powers that due to the historical rivalry between the two countries and to address the existential threat Pakistan faced after India's nuclear tests, Pakistan was forced to conduct nuclear tests after India. Hence, any sanctions imposed against Pakistan were also imposed against India, and when the US wanted to lift the sanctions against India, those against Pakistan were also lifted.

After the 9/11 attacks, the US and Pakistan reconnected in 2001 as the US needed physical access and intelligence support to sustain its intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan, although it received billions of dollars in terms of financial aid for its assistance in the War on Terror, became unnecessarily involved in a foreign war that caused huge losses of precious lives and infrastructure. An even greater loss is the perception of the West about Pakistan, which will take several decades to change (Mohan, 2021).

India, on the other hand, has come a long way in transitioning itself from a non-player in international politics to a regional power. This elevation of India's status in the international system is mainly accredited to its remarkable success in dealing with the complexities of the international system. India was also confronted with several challenges as a new state, but those challenges were largely addressed by focusing on how India could get more dividends in terms of its recognition in international affairs. In that regard, India took three important decisions that shaped its international relations and economy for several decades to come (Mohan, 2021).

1. **Non-alignment:** When the rest of the world was either joining the capitalist bloc led by the United States or the communist bloc led by the former Soviet Union in the bipolar nature of the international system after the Second World War, India chose the path of non-alignment and reflected the willingness to assume the leadership role for the newly emerged nations of Asia and Africa. But diplomatically, it lacked strategic vision, and in the process of arguing against colonialism, India completely annoyed the United States. The nations that had emerged in Asia and Africa had become independent politically, but economically they became part of "neo-colonialism," which emerged as an instrument of promoting the foreign policy interests of the two power blocs.
2. **Socialist economy:** Besides non-alignment, India adopted a "socialistic pattern of society with a mixed economy," in contradiction with the rest of the world, which was adopting either capitalism or communism. India's economy was closed for several years, and its diplomatic maneuvering was not mature enough to understand the pulse of the

international system and the global economy. Its GDP was higher than that of China, but it could not keep up with the pace despite the evolving dynamics of geo-economics. India learned lessons from its mistakes and adopted economic liberalization in 1991.

3. **Secularism:** The third critical decision was to follow secularism. Although there are numerous contradictions in India's stated policy of secularism and its practice in Indian society, India has nonetheless managed the situation.

These decisions had a bearing on India's diplomacy. Though India remained instrumental in sharing a number of ideas and resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), it was never paid adequate attention to and could not get sufficient support to universalize its ideas. India's relations with its immediate neighbors also did not prove to be of greater value diplomatically. Even a small country like Nepal was difficult to manage on several occasions in the past. Dealing with China has always been difficult for India. India, to date, also faces a number of irritants from Bangladesh, including the refugee problem. Even Afghanistan remained part of the problem for regional peace and stability. India's relations with its extended neighborhood, such as Southeast Asia and West Asia, could also not gain much momentum in the past, and so are India's relations with Israel, Iran, and the GCC, which did not build much dividend until a few years ago (Mohan, 2021).

Modern Day Diplomacy by Pakistan and India Traditional Diplomacy

As discussed in the previous section, in the initial few decades after independence, India's diplomacy lacked vibrancy and strategic depth compared to Pakistan's. Hence, India's diplomacy needed a new look, particularly in terms of reflecting India's strengths and demonstrating its capacity to lead global affairs. Learning from past mistakes, India adopted new strategies for its diplomatic practices. Today, India does not follow a single model for conducting its relations with all countries. In the South Asian region, India employs a model of coercive diplomacy. However, with China, the EU, the US, and Japan, it might use a model combining both open and secret diplomacy mixed with soft power. In South Asia, India's model is based on its self-image as a hegemonic power. India is rapidly becoming a part of the agenda-setting for the international system. The changing dimensions of India's diplomacy indicate that India will never align with one pole of the international system. It has successfully demonstrated strategic autonomy in decision-making, even in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, by working with all major poles of the international system without angering any of them.

Today, India is one of the few countries showing a high degree of responsibility and maturity in its diplomatic practices. Unlike in the past, India has been well heard in recent years. For its relations with larger powers

and countries beyond its neighbors, India employs "smart power," maintaining political differences without compromising economic interests, creating win-win situations. India has also shown it will not work under any pressures, a departure from past practices.

In the case of its neighbors, a significant shift in India's diplomatic practices in recent years has been assertive, coercive, and bold actions like the so-called drama of surgical strikes, the attack against Pakistan on February 26, 2019, and the continued purchase of crude oil from Moscow despite Western sanctions against Russia due to the Ukraine war. The following factors caused this:

- i. The rise of China led Western capitals to consider Delhi a counterweight against Beijing within the Quad or without the Quad.
- ii. The fluidity of the international system following the relative decline of the US and its decisions to withdraw from Afghanistan and Iraq and NATO/West's hesitation to engage in the Ukraine war. This fluidity gave regional powers like India more space and confidence in the international system.
- iii. India's economic growth also made it more confident and assertive in its relations with other states.

India's connection with the rest of the world has shown its larger diplomatic success, where the rest of the world, especially major powers like the US, Russia, Japan, and China, are witnessing India's growing role in global affairs with greater interest. India has been successful in maintaining political differences with major powers without compromising its economic interests. India's recent diplomatic achievements include:

- i. The civil nuclear deal with the US in 2005 and its subsequent finalization.
- ii. Finding a role in the Quad, G-20, and frequent victories in various UN bodies like the Security Council.
- iii. Improving relations with Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- iv. Retaining strategic autonomy by not following the dictates of any one grouping like the Western powers or their opponents (e.g., Russia).
- v. Trading US\$115 billion with China despite recent border disputes, showcasing the strength of its diplomatic process.
- vi. Using information power for diplomatic purposes through credible media and propaganda via fake news, fake think tanks, NGOs, and ghost writers. For example, their success in equating the legitimate struggle of Kashmiris with terrorism due to a combination of their information power, economic power, diplomatic advocacy, and the coincidence of 9/11.

- vii. Exaggerating its present economic strengths and projecting its IT sector's future potential, utilized by its diplomats during negotiations.
- viii. Sustained outreach and enhanced engagements with Africa, Latin America, West Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Pakistan started off well. In the 1950s, Pakistan's prospects seemed much better than many nations in East Asia and the Middle East. However, neglecting economic development, letting obsessions cloud common sense, and privileging feudal and pre-modern ideologies have caused Pakistan to fall rapidly behind its peers.

International relations of Pakistan have been in melancholy and doldrums due to several factors, primarily its foreign policy not being on the right track. Our governments never prioritized foreign policy. However, things have changed now. Pakistan has begun to realize that globalization, enhanced connectivity, and increasing interdependence of states require a vibrant foreign policy. Pakistani officials are now linking the country's foreign policy with economic connectivity and integration.

Pakistan's troubled relations with most of its neighbors are an open secret. However, in the past few years, Pakistan has started giving due attention to its relations with its neighbors, resulting in some achievements. For example, a border cease-fire with New Delhi last year, reducing tensions that nearly led to war in 2019; improved relations with Bangladesh leading to a telephone call between the premiers of the two countries and subsequent exchanged letters; the call of the Pakistani High Commissioner on the Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina in 2021, the first in several years; and Pakistan's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's visit to Sri Lanka last year to enhance commercial relations with Colombo (Kugelman, 2021). Further, Pakistani interlocutors have repeatedly stressed that peace in Afghanistan is critical to enhancing regional connectivity.

Pakistan is also deepening its engagements with energy-rich Central Asia. In February 2021, Pakistan signed an accord with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan for a trans-Afghan railroad. Similarly, in July 2021, an agreement was reached between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States focusing on stability and connectivity.

Through proactive diplomatic and political outreach, Pakistan has showcased its regional convening power. In February 2021, its navy hosted a five-day exercise AMAN-21 in the Arabian Sea with 45 countries from the region and beyond (Kugelman, 2021).

The US troops withdrew from Afghanistan abruptly after 20 years, and the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in mid-August. The sudden withdrawal led to chaos and put the country on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe due to the suspension of billions of dollars. A large number of people became stranded in Afghanistan, and Pakistan came to their rescue. Thousands of

people were airlifted from the country, with Pakistan facilitating the evacuation of 16,000 diplomats, foreigners, aid workers, journalists, and vulnerable Afghans on its national flag carrier flights and through its land borders (Shahkar, 2022).

Pakistan also revised its visa policy for Afghan people who had their loved ones either stuck in Afghanistan or fled from Afghanistan into Pakistan, and for journalists who wanted to visit and report about Afghanistan. A large number of visas were issued within a short period. The evacuation efforts and Pakistan's humanitarian support for its war-battered neighbor have earned appreciation from the international community, as Islamabad made addressing the crisis one of the main points of its foreign policy and held several high-level international meetings with regional countries and the world's superpowers, including an extraordinary moot of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Pakistan also renewed its relations with Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) announced a generous financial package of \$4.2 billion to help address the depleting foreign reserves (Shahkar, 2022).

The Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai received over 550,000 visitors and led to the signing of dozens of investment and cooperation agreements related to infrastructure, housing, water management, waste management, and trade in goods and services.

Several bilateral visits to Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, and Iran, were undertaken in 2021. After the visit of Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Ahmed Nasser Al-Sabah, to Islamabad in March, Kuwait eased visa restrictions for Pakistani nationals, in place since 2011. Moreover, under a G2G arrangement, around 1,800 healthcare professionals have already traveled to Kuwait (Shahkar, 2022).

Last but not least, the visit of Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, was the highest level visit from the UK in several years. This was covered by all the leading foreign media and generated a soft image of Pakistan in the rest of the world.

Major diverging points between India and Pakistan's diplomacy include:

- i. Economic performance and its impact on diplomacy since the 1990s.
- ii. Market size.
- iii. India's role as a counterweight to China and Pakistan's role as an "iron brother" to China.
- iv. India's economic capacity that enables it to play the West against Russia/China and Pakistan's lack of capacity to do so.

Economic Diplomacy

One of the notable successes of India's diplomacy is witnessed in the economic sphere. There is a shift in India's approach from political diplomacy to economic diplomacy. At the end of the Cold War, India started changing according to the changing global dynamics and introduced economic reforms that put the nation on a high-growth trajectory, exemplified by its growing economic and military might. India's foreign policy challenge in the early 1990s was as profound as its economic one. The world had suddenly become unipolar with the Soviet Union virtually disappearing from the world map. New Delhi had to link its economic policy with foreign policy more effectively. It was at that time that India started increasing its engagements with the rest of the world, including Iran, China, Israel, ASEAN, and the Middle East. The reforms quickly bore fruit in the form of economic growth and transformed the way the world perceived India. From climate change and maritime security to emerging technologies and globalization, India is articulating a new role for itself, largely derived from its economic success (Pant, 2021).

As the global order changes and economies face fragmentation, India stands at the center of most of these debates. "A democratic India trying to move towards an ambitious target of a US\$5 trillion economy is a tribute Modern Day Diplomacy by Pakistan and India

Key Economic Diplomacy Initiatives/Drives of India in the Last Five Years

Three central ministries handle India's economic engagement: the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

- i. **Development Partnerships:** India has forged partnerships in South Asia and beyond. Given its significance, the Development Partnership Administration Division has been created within MEA as a nodal agency for implementing development projects abroad. India has provided 232.4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to about 100 countries through grants and commercial orders. India's diverse diaspora of around 32 million across the world plays a key role in deepening partnerships with host countries.
- ii. **Multilateral Trade Diplomacy:** A crucial component of economic diplomacy is effectively managing relationships with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and multilateral forums. India proactively initiates measures that garner support from developing countries and position India as a spokesperson for the Global South. In 2020, India and South Africa proposed a waiver of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to enable adequate supplies and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, medicines, and tests.

- iii. **Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs):** India has signed BITs with 83 countries, 74 of which are in force.

As discussed, the global order is changing rapidly. With this shift, the concept of national security has also evolved, now encompassing human security. According to UN reports, every element of human security—economic, health, food, environmental, personal, community, and political security— affects national security. Pakistan faces nearly all these challenges to its national security. Since 2018, efforts have been made to readjust Pakistan's national policy from geopolitics to geo-economics. Pakistan's first National Security Policy (2022-2026) greatly emphasizes harnessing Pakistan's geo-economic location for trade, investment, and connectivity.

Two factors have led to the shift in Pakistan's foreign policy focus. The first is to boost Pakistan's economy by creating more markets and trade partners and reducing regional tensions that distract from economic development. The second is to change how the world perceives Pakistan by demonstrating that it is a responsible neighbor, not a regional pariah notorious for harboring terrorists (Kugelman, 2021).

Pakistan's uncomfortable engagements with successive IMF programs, inherent fault lines in the economic sphere, decreasing forex reserves, and bleeding external accounts have contributed to this shift. Pakistan's grey listing by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) added to the already ailing economy.

Key Economic Diplomacy Initiatives/Drives of Pakistan in the Last Five Years

- i. **Economic Outreach Initiative (EOI):** Launched in 2020, EOI was established to reposition Pakistan internationally through a 'paradigm shift' in foreign policy narrative from security/political issues to the country's economic potential, aiming to increase trade, tourism, and foreign investment. A high-level economic coordination forum was set up under the EOI.
- ii. **Economic Outreach Apex Committee:** Chaired by the National Security Advisor, this committee was established under the EOI to promote economic diplomacy, improve bilateral relations, and attract greater foreign investment. The committee also aims to enhance coordination between the ministries responsible for economic diplomacy.
- iii. **National Development Council (NDC):** Established in June 2019, the NDC was mandated to set policies and development strategies, achieve accelerated economic growth, and provide regional cooperation guidelines. A significant achievement was securing the suspension of Pakistan's debt repayments of \$1.7 billion from 19

creditors under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) announced by G20 countries.

- iv. **Roshan Digital Account (RDA):** Launched in September 2020, this initiative provided banking facilities to over 8.8 million non-resident Pakistanis, enabling them to undertake banking, payment, and investment activities in Pakistan. Inflows under the RDA reached \$4.356 billion in May 2022.
- v. **Multilateral Trade Diplomacy:** Pakistan has the weakest representation in international financial institutions, including the WTO and other multilateral forums. Factors behind poor performance include a lack of trade specialists, delayed key appointments, and a reactionary approach to significant commercial events worldwide.
- vi. **Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs):** Pakistan has 53 BITs with 48 countries, but many are ineffective. Due to heavy costs incurred from arbitration penalties, Pakistan has decided to negotiate all new BIT templates. Under the revised template, disputes will now be remedied through local arbitration to minimize the risk and cost of international arbitration.

Comparison of Economic Diplomacy of Pakistan & India Internationally

i. Neighborhood:

India: Soon after PM Modi assumed office, he introduced the "Neighborhood First" policy. However, despite continued engagement with all South Asian countries except Pakistan, India does not have significant trade with them.

Pakistan: Regional exports account for only 14.21%. Political disputes, security issues, and trade barriers have hampered regional trade integration. Pakistan doesn't enjoy comfortable trade relations with any South Asian nation except Sri Lanka.

ii. African Continent

India: India expanded its footprint in Africa by opening 18 new diplomatic missions, totaling 47 Indian missions in Africa. During the pandemic, India gifted 150 tons of medical aid and 37.59 million doses of vaccines to several African countries.

Pakistan: The "Look Africa Policy" was launched in 2017/18 to increase Pakistan's economic presence in Africa. Ten African countries were selected for trade promotion, with the goal of doubling trade by 2025. Pakistan's exports to Africa increased by 12% during July-March FY2022. In January 2020, Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce held a Trade and Development Conference in Nairobi. In November 2021, Pakistan announced the establishment of five new diplomatic missions in Africa.

iii. China

Pakistan: The Pakistan-China Strategic Cooperative Partnership includes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has entered its second phase, focusing on industrial development. The Pak-China Relations Steering Committee was established in 2021 to supervise economic diplomacy with China and address operational issues hindering CPEC implementation. The China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA-II) significantly improved Pakistani exporters' access to the \$2 trillion Chinese import market.

India: Despite tensions, India's trade with China was \$125 billion in 2021, and the economic relationship is growing steadily. India's largest cement producer, UltraTech Cement, is importing Russian coal and paying in Chinese yuan.

iv. Russian Federation:

Pakistan: Despite warming ties, Russia is not among Pakistan's top 10 export destinations. Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Russia was around \$978 million in 2020, with exports at \$279 million and imports at \$699 million.

India: Indian exports to Russia were \$2.6 billion, while imports were \$5.48 billion. Bilateral trade during April 2020-March 2021 stood at \$8.1 billion. Russian investment in India reached \$18 billion in 2017, and India's total investment in Russia stands at \$13 billion.

v. European Union:

India: The India-EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025, agreed upon during the 2020 India-EU summit, primarily focuses on economic cooperation. Over 6,000 EU companies operate in India, employing over six million people. An investment facilitation mechanism for EU investments in India was established in 2017 to ease doing business for EU investors.

Pakistan: The economic relationship between Pakistan and the EU remains fundamentally centered around development aid. However, the GSP Plus Scheme has played a vital role in doubling Pakistan's trade with EU countries in the last five years.

vi. Middle East & Gulf:

Pakistan: Pakistan primarily exports human resources to these countries.

India: India is rapidly transforming its relationship with Gulf countries through connectivity projects and FTAs. India signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE in February 2022, expected to increase bilateral trade in goods to over \$100 billion and in services to over \$15 billion within five years.

India is also establishing an arc of connectivity from India to Greece, including:

- Rail connection from the UAE through Saudi Arabia and Jordan to the Port of Haifa on Israel's Mediterranean coast.
- Trans-Mediterranean maritime link from Haifa to the European mainland via the major transshipment port in Greece.

Public Diplomacy

Modern diplomacy relies less on traditional practices, such as coercive or hard power diplomacy, and more on projecting soft power through cultural and public diplomacy initiatives. This shift is due to the importance of soft power in building influence and pursuing national interests in the contemporary era. In many cases, it is even more crucial than hard power. A clear example of the significance of public diplomacy is American global dominance since World War II. Although the Soviet Union was nearly as powerful militarily as the US, it was American soft power that ultimately won the Cold War.

With the widespread use of social media and advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), perceptions play a crucial role in assessing a country's standing. These perceptions include films, literature, music, technological prowess, cuisine, and educational projects. A favorable perception can lead to increased trade and investment opportunities and strengthen tourism.

Public diplomacy can be categorized into two types: branding or cultural communication and political advocacy. Branding focuses on building a country's international image, while political advocacy aims to garner international support for pressing issues or policy goals.

Pakistan recognized the importance of public diplomacy and soft power only relatively recently. Unfortunately, an overemphasis on conflict-centered diplomacy allowed India to leverage the soft power that Pakistan's rich cultural heritage could have provided. Often, Pakistani music, dance, and fashion are mistakenly labeled as Indian. Pakistani cuisine is frequently marketed as Indian food worldwide. Despite inheriting a significant portion of Punjab, Punjabi traditions like Bhangra are recognized as Indian, and the Mughal heritage is also often labeled as Indian despite Pakistan's considerable architectural gems. India's branding and marketing strategies contributed more to its global outreach than its diplomatic efforts ever could (Hassan, 2021).

Pakistan's public diplomacy objectives are as follows:

- Project Pakistan's foreign policy abroad.
- Promote the country's national interests.
- Build Pakistan's positive image internationally.

- Build relationships with foreign opinion leaders and policymakers.

Recent Pakistani governments have come to understand the significance of narrative building, soft power projection, and propaganda in advancing their objectives.

A critical aspect of public diplomacy is the use of social media and digital tools, known as “digital diplomacy.” Digital diplomacy is increasingly replacing traditional diplomacy among scholars of Mass Communication, Peace and Conflict Studies, and International Affairs. Social media and new technologies provide new avenues for governments, individuals, and organizations to engage with foreign audiences. According to the Twiplomacy study (2018), 97% of United Nations member states have an official presence on Twitter. Digital platforms allow officials to connect directly with global audiences, gather feedback, and adjust policies. Twitter and Facebook, being the most used social networks among governments, diplomats, and institutions, play a significant role in this regard (Ittefaq, 2019).

Today, nearly all Pakistani government entities have a robust social media presence to project Pakistan positively and counter negative propaganda. Pakistani missions abroad maintain verified accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and some even on YouTube.

In the digital age, the importance of digital tools for achieving foreign policy objectives cannot be overstated. The power of social media as a soft power tool is unique and undisputed. Recognizing the value of public diplomacy and its outreach, the Strategic Communications Division (SCD) has been established at Pakistan’s Foreign Office to project the country’s soft power. In 2020, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister established a Public Diplomacy Consultative Group comprising former ambassadors, field specialists, and scholars. This group is tasked with drafting recommendations and best practices for the Foreign Office. As part of public diplomacy reform, Vision Foreign Office and the FM Direct app were launched in 2019. These reforms aim to update the PD division and enhance interdepartmental coordination, especially between the Public Diplomacy division in the Foreign Office and the External Publicity Wing in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Azka Gul, 2020).

The initiatives under this division have significantly showcased Pakistan’s exceptional cultural and historical heritage. Collaborations include the Foreign Service Academy (FSA) and think tanks such as the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), which provide young diplomats with skills for digital diplomacy. Partnerships with popular forums like Coke Studio highlight Pakistan’s music and culture, while the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) promotes “mango diplomacy,” allowing global audiences to enjoy Pakistan’s renowned mangoes.

In recent months, the SCD has undertaken more activities to project Pakistan's soft power than any previous government. A dedicated social media team at the Foreign Office counters false propaganda, promotes Pakistan's history, culture, cuisine, and landscape, and highlights the achievements of Pakistanis globally.

Pakistan introduced a new visa policy in January 2019 to revitalize its tourism industry. This policy offers e-visa and visa-on-arrival facilities to many countries and expedites visa processing for work and business applicants.

Additionally, Pakistan has started promoting non-governmental platforms such as travel bloggers and vloggers to endorse the country's tourism sector. In recent years, international travel vloggers and food bloggers have showcased Pakistan as an attractive tourist destination. Improved security has positively impacted the nation's branding.

For the first time, both government and private entities in Pakistan are equally contributing to showcasing the country through culture and media. The introduction of the Women Leader Awards in Pakistan, celebrating the success of women alongside internationally iconic figures, has presented a positive image of Pakistan globally.

Religious tourism, long overlooked by successive Pakistani governments, is now being addressed through recent public diplomacy initiatives. Notable actions include the inauguration of the Kartarpur Corridor in November 2019, allowing Sikh pilgrims to visit a revered religious site. Similarly, efforts to promote religious tourism and interfaith harmony have been emphasized. The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) is actively involved in enhancing religious tourism and collaborating with provincial governments to improve services (Azka Gul, 2020).

Pakistan was once a preferred destination for sporting events, hosting cricket and hockey world cups, the Commonwealth Games, and South Asian Federation (SAF) Games. However, a terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team, attributed to India, led to a decline in international sporting events in Pakistan. Nevertheless, with consistent government efforts, Pakistani missions abroad, and the Pakistan Cricket Board's initiatives, several top cricketing teams have visited Pakistan in recent years, with more tours planned. The Pakistan Super League (PSL) has become an annual event, attracting top global players.

In today's world, narrative wars have replaced wars of tanks and guns. Pakistan needs to foster creativity, initiative, strategic thinking, and a strong focus on public diplomacy. Achieving this requires media-savvy envoys who can effectively build and project Pakistan's soft power (Hassan, 2021).

Narrative building is costly. During FY 2016–2017, India spent US\$3 million on Public Diplomacy, US\$1 million on Press and Media Relations, about US\$27.5 million on ICCR, and around US\$1.5 million on ICWA (Mazumdar,

2020). In contrast, Pakistan's spending on public diplomacy and propaganda campaigns remains minimal.

Public Diplomacy of India

India has given significant importance to public diplomacy from the beginning, with a special focus on its extensive soft power, cultural heritage, and growing diasporas. In 1948, the Ministry of External Affairs established the External Publicity Division to share India's rich culture, history, and heritage with the world. This Division concentrated on cultural programs to enhance the country's image. In 2006, inspired by the US State Department's Public Diplomacy division, India established its own Public Diplomacy Division within the Ministry of External Affairs. A Public Diplomacy Website was launched in 2012. In 2014, the External Publicity Division and the Public Diplomacy Division were merged into a single entity known as the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division (XPD). While the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Commerce undertake activities that fall under the broad definition of public diplomacy, XPD is the main entity responsible for formulating and implementing India's public diplomacy strategies.

The activities of the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division (XPD) include:

- Outreach campaigns to improve understanding of India and its policies both domestically and internationally.
- Collaboration with Indian and foreign universities, chambers of commerce, and research organizations.
- Arranging delegations from foreign countries to provide influential foreign citizens with firsthand experiences of Indian culture.
- Publicizing India's development aid programs and economic initiatives abroad.
- Producing audio and video materials for foreign missions to use for presentations and broadcasting on host countries' media.
- Managing the Ministry of External Affairs' digital diplomacy efforts.

A unique aspect of India's public diplomacy is its focus on the Indian diaspora. Various outreach campaigns, such as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and the Know India program, effectively engage influential Indians living abroad. An example of successful diaspora engagement is the collaboration between the US-India Business Council, USINPAC, and the US-India Friendship Council to promote the US-India Nuclear Agreement to US lawmakers and the public.

Indian media plays a highly effective role in advancing the Indian government's national interests. While Indian media often critiques domestic issues, it generally supports the government on foreign policy matters. The

proliferation of Indian newspapers and channels in English provides unparalleled informational power. Similarly, the large English-speaking middle class projects the Indian perspective in the digital space through social media. Numerous think tanks produce reports on various issues from an Indian perspective in international languages, and their agencies use social media to effectively protect their interests.

Following the model of the British Council and the American Center, India established the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) under the Ministry of External Affairs. The ICCR plays a central role in cultural and academic relations, with twenty-four centers in major capitals worldwide. These centers facilitate the Indian diaspora and arrange activities such as art and literature exhibitions, book fairs, cinema and dance festivals to promote Indian culture. The ICCR also manages student exchange programs, providing scholarships to over three thousand foreign students. Thirty Indian scholars are invited to hold the Indian Chair at overseas universities for both long-term and short-term periods. The Indian Chairs facilitate the study of Hindi and other Indian languages as well as Indian history.

The Institute of Cost and Works Accountants (ICWA) supports the academic aspect of India's public diplomacy. It conducts and communicates research on foreign affairs, organizes conferences and seminars, publishes briefing papers, and manages a journal called *India Quarterly*. The ICWA facilitates Track II diplomacy between academics and government officials and conducts research on regional security issues.

Sports diplomacy has been an effective tool in India's public diplomacy efforts. In the 1980s, India engaged in cricket diplomacy with Pakistan to improve bilateral relations. India has also hosted major sporting events, including the Hockey World Cup, Cricket World Cup, FIFA Under-17 World Cup, MotoGP Championship, Formula One racing, and the 2010 Commonwealth Games, while the Indian Premier League is held annually.

PESTAL Analysis

Political

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) plays a major role in formulating Indian foreign policy. Its input is processed by the National Security Council and the Prime Minister's office, which also receive input from the Ministry of Defence, the Chiefs of the three armed services, and other specialized agencies dealing with nuclear, space, cyber technologies, trade, industry, and transport. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Pakistan. The Administrative Troika, now replaced by the National Security Council (NSC)—comprising the President of Pakistan, the Prime Minister, and the Chief of Army Staff—are the main actors in the formulation of Pakistan's foreign policy. Due to grave security and existential threats from India since 1947, the armed forces of Pakistan have always held a major position in foreign policy formulation. Although Pakistan's Foreign Office is involved in

formulating its foreign policy, its role is not as pronounced or significant. Opinions of other stakeholders, particularly the armed forces and intelligence agencies, are given more weight. Other stakeholders in Pakistan's foreign policy formulation include political parties, pressure groups, the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, and the Ministry of Finance.

Moreover, the highly volatile and unstable political situation in Pakistan leads to frequent changes in political governments. Different political parties have varying friends and allies, and none of the parties fully trust each other. Every new government often scraps the policies of the previous administration, leading to poor policy formulation and implementation. This political instability and lack of political will to establish a robust and realistic foreign policy have caused more damage to Pakistan than all other factors combined.

Economic

Although the political leadership in Pakistan has begun shifting its focus from geo-politics to geo-economics, a significant portion of our foreign policy is still driven by conventional determinants such as national security, the unity of the Islamic world, and the Kashmir issue. Our policymakers have yet to fully grasp that a strong military does not guarantee national security; rather, a strong, integrated economy does.

Pakistan can only realize its vision for an economics-driven foreign policy after implementing significant domestic economic reforms and rebranding itself as an open international market. For an effective, economics-driven foreign policy, Pakistan must address inconsistencies in economic approaches from one government to another and avoid internal shifts and frequent cabinet reshuffles. Frequent changes in decision-making hierarchies and rapidly fluctuating, unpredictable policies undermine investor confidence, making individuals hesitant to invest large amounts of capital and maintain investments for more than a couple of years (Tariq, 2021).

Another major threat to realizing Pakistan's geo-economic ambitions is the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). In June 2022, the FATF announced that Pakistan had substantially completed its two action plans, covering 34 items, and warranted an on-site visit to verify the implementation of Pakistan's anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorism financing (CFT) reforms. Although the reputational risks of being on the gray list are not as severe as those of the black list, the increased risk perception from the gray-listing threatens to keep investors out of the country.

In contrast, India began working on developing its economy long before Pakistan and remained focused on its goals. India achieved strategic autonomy by not adhering to the dictates of any single grouping, such as Western powers or their opponents. This was evident when, despite a Western embargo on Russian oil due to its unprovoked attack on Ukraine, India continued to purchase cheap Russian oil without fear of sanctions. When criticized for buying Russian oil, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar

stated that “if Europe manages to procure oil and gas from Russia in a way that ensures its economy is not severely impacted, that freedom should exist for others as well.” He further remarked that “today, Europe is buying oil and gas from Russia, and new sanctions are designed considering the welfare of the people, with timelines set for reducing Russian energy imports without immediate cuts. If you can be considerate of yourself, surely you can be considerate of others.” When asked if India was funding Russia’s war by buying oil, he questioned, “If buying Russian gas is not funding the war,” referring to various European nations procuring gas from Moscow (Reporter, 2022).

Pakistan also aims to develop a bold, independent, and flourishing economy. However, such confident positions and strong statements require robust political backing, a strong and export-based economy, and an environment conducive to investment and economic interdependencies with other countries.

Social

Pakistan’s internal social dynamics play an important role in the formulation of its foreign policy. It is therefore crucial for Pakistan to focus inward, aiming to improve its domestic socio-economic framework. The importance of Pakistan putting its own house in order cannot be overstated, as a country’s story is only as good as its reality. If Pakistan wants to be seen as a peaceful, investment-friendly country, it must eliminate all negative elements and practices.

To project a positive image and restore the confidence of the international community, Pakistan must make two key policy commitments:

- i. **Capitalize on Counterterrorism Gains:** Pakistan must leverage its successes in counterterrorism and avoid succumbing to radical factions. To attract foreign businesses, it must dispel the impression that it could capitulate to those who have, on numerous occasions, disrupted and damaged economic activity.
- ii. **Implement Structural Reforms:** Pakistan needs immediate structural reforms to create an environment conducive to greater economic activity. This includes removing barriers that stifle investment, such as inconsistent trade policies and bureaucratic red tape.

Additionally, Pakistan must prioritize internal stability. Balochistan, the largest province and rich in natural resources, has been neglected and is vulnerable to the detrimental designs of Pakistan’s adversaries. To address this, Pakistan needs to take extraordinary measures to ensure Balochistan's fair share of national income, infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and other societal reforms.

Technical

Indian economic diplomacy is driven by its economic growth and focus on the IT sector. Investment in Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) has given India an edge over Pakistan in fields such as IT, space industry, and manufacturing. For instance, while Pakistan produces around 2,000 international-standard graduates who can contribute to export-led growth, India produces approximately 16,000 such graduates. Establishing such institutions takes time; the first IIT was set up in 1951 in Kharagpur, and today there are 23 IITs. These autonomous public institutes are governed by the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961, and are considered premier engineering colleges in India. Admission to their BTech programs is highly competitive. In 2022, the total number of BTech seats across all IITs was approximately 16,053.

Pakistan's ICT sector is one of the fastest-growing sectors of its economy. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, during fiscal year 2020-21, Pakistan's IT exports increased by 47.4%, surpassing the US \$2 billion mark for the first time in the country's history. In the previous fiscal year, exports were US \$1.44 billion, and they grew from US \$2.1 billion to approximately US \$3.5 billion in the last fiscal year. The IT industry in Pakistan is expanding, and the government is taking steps to foster further growth. These steps include increasing the number of IT graduates from 25,000 to 50,000, establishing software technology parks in major and secondary cities, improving access to capital for IT companies, reducing tax disputes, enhancing the financial structure of IT companies, and listing them on the stock exchange. According to Pakistan Vision 2025 and the Digital Policy of Pakistan 2018, the ICT industry is targeted to reach \$20 billion by 2025.

However, the gap between Pakistan and India's IT sectors remains significant and requires comprehensive reforms and investments to bridge it.

Conclusion

Lessons Learned

The determinant of any country's diplomacy is its national interest, which depends on how that interest is defined. The focus of Indian and Pakistani foreign policy today rests upon security concerns, terrorism, mistrust of neighbors, and economic development. Due to internal and external security issues, both countries are modernizing their defense forces and systems. India tries to define its national interest in terms of economic benefit, political influence/stature, and the restoration of its cultural footprint from the past, even if it is somewhat mythical.

Security threats for India are mainly internal, while for Pakistan they are both internal and external. Currently, both India and Pakistan recognize the importance of presenting a positive image abroad to be influential in the

international community. Therefore, both countries are working on building their soft power.

Pakistan needs to learn from the following areas to improve its diplomatic performance and emerge as a significant regional and international player:

- i. **Economic Performance:** Pakistan has experienced lackluster economic performance since the 1990s.
- ii. **Instability and Terrorism:** Instability in Afghanistan and the resulting problem of terrorism have been significant issues.
- iii. **Human Resource Development:** There has been insufficient focus on human resource development, resulting in a lack of innovation, slow technology adoption, and limited value addition and diversity in exports.
- iv. **Ideological Approach:** An ideological approach to foreign policy has led to excessive focus on geostrategic aspects rather than geo-economic ones. Countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Thailand managed to focus on geo-economics despite their own geostrategic challenges. Pakistan's ideological foundation, coupled with the Iranian revolution, Afghan wars, and unresolved disputes with a major neighbor, has directed it towards geostrategy instead of geo-economics.

Pakistan has stated multiple times that it does not believe in zero-sum games in international relations. However, narrative-building involves more than just making statements. Pakistan's new foreign policy direction requires a robust and viable narrative. The country needs to effectively communicate to the world that it is safe, that steps are being taken to create an investment-friendly climate, and that it plays a role in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

Pakistan undoubtedly offers significant natural resources, scenic beauty, culture, history, human resources, and economic opportunities. However, these alone are insufficient given the tumultuous history and resulting image problem. There are still issues such as a weak justice system, a problematic culture of 'might is right,' and ongoing extremism and militancy despite notable successes by the armed forces.

Recommendations

Strengthen the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- i. **Increase Personnel:** Pakistan should enhance its Foreign Office by increasing the number of officers. Currently, Pakistan has almost 550 officers in around 125 diplomatic missions compared to around 893 Indian diplomats in approximately 193 missions. This numerical disparity limits the capabilities of Pakistan's Foreign Office.

- ii. **Allocate Resources:** Provide financial and infrastructure resources both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters in Islamabad and at Pakistan's diplomatic missions abroad. Modern diplomacy is resource-intensive, and the resource-constrained environment limits the effectiveness of diplomatic personnel.
- iii. **Empower Professionals:** Allow professionals to work in their field as India does with its Ministry of External Affairs. Those working abroad have valuable insights, and their input should be given due weight. Strengthen the role of the National Security Advisor to ensure effective coordination of foreign policy inputs from all stakeholders. Foreign policy makers should formulate policy independently, rather than at the behest of external powers.

Focus on Bilateral Diplomacy

Pakistan has overemphasized multilateral diplomacy, especially within the UN, assuming that it is where the most important international issues are adjudicated. Pakistan has failed to recognize that support in multilateral forums often stems from strong bilateral relationships. Countries vote based on bilateral relationships, not on morality or legality.

Pakistan needs to address its lagging bilateral relations with Iran, the GCC, and Afghanistan. These relations are crucial from both foreign policy and socio-economic perspectives. A peaceful Afghanistan is essential for stability in Pakistan. Closer collaboration with China, a long-time ally, is necessary to keep CPEC on track. Relations with Iran and the GCC are important due to economic interests and a large Pakistani diaspora. A balanced approach towards Iran and Saudi Arabia is crucial. Pakistan's stance on Yemen should guide future foreign policy. Relations with the United States will be influenced by Pakistan's role in the Afghanistan settlement. While relations with Russia are improving, they will take time to fully develop.

Focus on Geo-economics

For decades, Pakistan's foreign policy has been centered on its geostrategic value. This approach has resulted in significant losses, stifled human development, and turned Pakistan into a heavily indebted security state. A shift towards geo-economics would alter this trajectory. Regional integration and sustainable development in a peaceful environment are needed.

Strengthen Democracy

Pakistan's political leadership must allow democracy to function despite its imperfections. Democracy helps address domestic fault lines and builds consensus on key issues. Leaders should accept election results and continue developing policies in the national interest, improving them gradually despite the chaos of the democratic process. Clear and unequivocal messaging to the world is essential to counter disinformation campaigns.

Consistent Policies

Inconsistency in policies is a major impediment to Pakistan's growth. The country must ensure consistency and stability in policymaking. Avoiding policy dithering is crucial for presenting Pakistan as a state committed to turning a new page in domestic and foreign affairs. This requires coordination among policy actors at the highest level.

Invest in Academia

Recent massive propaganda and disinformation campaigns against Pakistan highlight the need for a strong narrative. Pakistan must enable and support researchers to produce high-quality, nuanced, and balanced academic work. This will reduce the influence of malign actors and control the information landscape.

Invest in Public Diplomacy

The reliance on military might and hard power is diminishing in favor of soft power and image projection. Pakistan must enhance its public diplomacy efforts. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has begun investing in strategic communications, more work is needed. Public diplomacy should be integrated with economic diplomacy, and Pakistan's culture, landscape, cuisine, and history should be marketed vigorously.

Focus on Human Resource Development

With 65% of its population under the age of 30, Pakistan has a significant young demographic advantage. Additionally, a large portion of this population speaks, reads, and understands English. Investing in the development of this resource and tapping into its potential can drive development both within the country and abroad, where these individuals can contribute to foreign economies and serve as virtual ambassadors for Pakistan.

Focus on Technology for Economic Development

Pakistan's Digital Policy 2018 and Vision Pakistan 2025 are steps in the right direction. Implementation of these policies must be consistent and independent of changes in government. The digital front is as crucial as other areas for national security. Digital diplomacy is a modern tool for propagating messages and agendas through traditional indicators such as culture, economy, education, and self-interpreted values.

Shun the Policy of Zero-Sum Games

Sometimes, Pakistan's policy objectives are overly romantic and unrealistic. Statements by Indian diplomats, like those of Natwar Singh, highlight the effectiveness of Pakistan's past diplomacy. However, both India and Pakistan often view each other's development as a zero-sum game, where any gain by one country is seen as a loss by the other. This perspective is misguided. Development in agriculture, space technology, and IT should have a positive demonstration effect on Pakistan. It creates an ecosystem for regional development, even if direct interaction in these fields is limited.

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