

**Role of Democracy in Shaping Pakistan's Foreign Policy Towards India -
Navigating 2008 Onwards Era**

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Abstract

There is general conception that democratic values are reflected in the behavior of democracies' foreign policies, such as the fact that democracies strive to spread democracy to other parts of the world in order to make the world a better place to live, that democracies strive to keep peaceful relations with other democracies, and that democratic citizens and democratic institutions are always given a voice in the process of making decisions regarding foreign policy. However, there is considerable controversy as to whether democratic countries' foreign policy is actually conducted democratically or merely camouflaged in the name of democracy. Especially democracies like Pakistan's are unusual since they have never been liberal democracies. It vacillates between being a flawed democracy and an autocrat. This essay primarily seeks to explore whether 2008 onwards democratic transitions had any impact in Pakistan's foreign policy in particular towards India. By reviewing existing literature extensively, this essay concludes that liberal peace theory fails to describe Pakistan policy toward India that even throughout the democratic period after 2008, Pakistan's policy with India seemed to be purely guided by realist logic, with ideological affinities with democracy playing a minimal role only to the extent that it helped the state's interests. Moreover, paper concludes that it is because of the lack of consensus between military and civilian leaderships, the fact that foreign policy has not been an election issue in Pakistan, and the fact that Pakistan defense policy is almost inseparable from its foreign policy are the three main reasons why civilian governments have been unable to assert any significant control over countries foreign policy.

Key Words

Pakistan, India, Foreign Policy, Democracy, Security, Leadership

Introduction

According to Britannica, "Democracy is a system of government in which laws, policies, leadership, and major undertakings of a state or other polity are directly or indirectly decided by the people". (Britannica, 2019) Democracy offers a distinct political legitimacy. The person's assent to democratic governance is a reciprocal response to democracy's reliance on the individual. This government is

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consequently seen legitimate in the most fundamental political sense, as it is both lawful and proper. Nevertheless, if one conceptualizes democracy as a label for the parties and population strata that have political and social equality more or less accurately as their aspirational compass, it must be stated that foreign policy has been the most problematic aspect of democracy to date. Small, M. (1968). (Small, 1968) Nonetheless, foreign policy researchers, particularly those who adhere to the domestic structures approach, place a great deal of emphasis on the role that a state's constitutional structures and regime type play in establishing its foreign policy. These academics contend that a society's constitutional system specifies the "access points" between the general public and foreign policy decision-makers. (Hussain Z. Z., 2011)

Scholars who study democratic foreign policy contend that democratic values are reflected in the behavior of democracies' foreign policies, such as the fact that democracies strive to spread democracy to other parts of the world in order to make the world a better place to live, that democracies strive to keep peaceful relations with other democracies, and that democratic citizens and democratic institutions are always given a voice in the process of making decisions regarding foreign policy. (Hamilton, 2017)

However, there is considerable controversy as to whether democratic countries' foreign policy is actually conducted democratically or merely camouflaged in the name of democracy. The straightforward methods in which democracy established its vision of the rights of peoples repeatedly clashed with the complex conflicts of state interests, as conceived or understood by parties with decisive power over state policy, or with the entrenched prejudices of the masses. (Rizvi, 2020) As George Bush began his second term as president, he stated, "The best chance for peace in our world is the development of freedom around the globe." Bush's statements were a continuation of American political ideology, which, especially since the conclusion of the Cold War, has argued that the growth of liberal democracy is a prerequisite for international peace. Ironically, while Bush advocated for world peace, the United States was simultaneously engaged in military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, democracies like Pakistan's are unusual since they have never been liberal democracies. It vacillates between being a flawed democracy and an autocrat. Pakistan, the world's fifth-largest country, has an adversarial relationship with its neighbor, India. Since their division in 1947, ties between Pakistan and India have been tense due to historical and geopolitical developments on both sides. Each nation has engaged in four significant wars with the other, the most recent being 1999's Kargil battle. The security tensions between India and Pakistan have been rising recently due to a number of new factors. Therefore, Pakistan's foreign policy has been mostly security driven since its independence from India in 1947.: (Ahmed Usman, 2017)

Democracy in Pakistan is in place, albeit with some major flaws. The country's security and foreign policy are major areas of weakness because of the military's outsized role. However, since its election in 2008, Pakistan has successfully transitioned from one civilian government to another via elections, marking a shift from periods of military dictatorship in the country's past. (Anon) This essay seeks to refute the concept that democracy played any effect in determining Pakistan's foreign policy toward India. It begins with a discussion of the background literature connecting democracy and foreign policy. The section next briefly describes Pakistan's security conundrum with India and how it has influenced its

foreign policy throughout its history. It then examines Pakistan's stance toward India through the perspective of realism, while critiquing liberal views, and demonstrates that democracy has never been a significant component in Pakistan's foreign policy decision-making.

Background Literature Review

Recognizing that institutions determine patterns of political conduct and provide norms, standards, and expectations in decision-making, social scientists have rediscovered them in recent years. The assumption underlying the study of the relationship between domestic institutions and foreign policy is that a state's internal political structure can explain significant parts of its foreign policy behavior. In particular, democratic domestic institutions are regarded to be crucial for explaining a crucial class of results. Furthermore, democratic institutional arrangements in a number of ways, including whether they have a presidential or parliamentary system, whether executives are autonomous or constrained, and whether open or closed institutions are used to moderate the flow of information between leaders and citizens. Even within a country, democratic leaders may face a unique set of institutional restraints when pursuing any specific foreign policy instrument. And because of the checks and balances put in place by democratic institutions, democracies tend to have their own unique patterns of foreign policy. By taking this stance, a wealth of knowledge and information on democratic foreign policy has been uncovered. There is much to be learned about the interplay between domestic democratic institutions and foreign policy from studying these variances and their effects on policy processes and outcomes. (Pehe, 1998)

The idea of a peaceful democracy is another essential component of the democratic peace thesis. One of the few theories and concepts in international relations that a significant number of democratic states around the world, most notably those in the Western bloc of liberal democracies, have actually incorporated into actual policy decision making is the notion that democratic states typically have peaceful relations with one another. (Jackson, 2011)

Contrary to many other ideas and notions in the study of international relations, this one is. The mutually beneficial link between democratic peace theory and the foreign policy of Western democracies is shown by the fourteen principles of Woodrow Wilson, the ideological conflict of the Cold War, and the recent joint effort of democracies against global terrorism. (Abrams, 2016)

However, it is essential to determine how and to what degree the democratic component functions in other governments' foreign policies. The foreign policy of Pakistan toward India under its democratic governments from 2008 to the present will be examined in this article.

Pakistan, the world's fifth largest country, has a democracy that works, but with flaws. The country's security and foreign policy are major areas of weakness because of the military's outsized role. More than 30 years, or about a third, of Pakistan's history, has been under martial law, sometimes known as military dictatorship. As a result, democratic quality took an incalculable hit.

In 1958, the first military coup occurred in Pakistan. Since 1951, there have been countless effective attempts. Pakistan has been a nation since 1947, but the military has ruled it for the majority of that time (1958 – 1971, 1977 – 1988, 1999 – 2008). (Mamon, 2018)

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It has been stated that Pakistan has played a pivotal military role since gaining independence in 1947 due to the country's strategic location. The United States pursued Cold War era military ties with Pakistan in an effort to limit the spread of communism throughout South and Southeast Asia. The conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan is emphasised more in this literature. Without a solution, 'Hindu' India will continue to be able to exploit Pakistan's strategic location and weakness. The existing literature also tries to convince us that India posed an immediate and severe security danger to Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan was driven to enter into military pacts with the United States in the 1950s during the Cold War for the (physical) survival of the state. The research also suggests that the civilian leadership's lack of maturity paved the stage for military action. From 1947 to 1951, the civilian government of Pakistan controlled the direction of the country's foreign policy in consultation with the civil-military bureaucracy. Pakistan's politics and foreign policy were directed by the civil bureaucracy in close cooperation with the Ayub-led army from October 1951 till 1958. And, during the Ayub and Yahya years, the military directly defined our foreign policy. During the 1970s, Zulfikar Bhutto re-asserted our foreign policy though in strategic collaboration with the army. More importantly, though, the Pakistani military has been in charge of formulating and enforcing the country's foreign policy since 1977. Though during these years of flawed democracy, the civil leadership attempted to manage the country's foreign policy vis-à-vis India, Afghanistan, and the United States from time to time. However, they were unable to assert any significant control because of political instability, institutional imbalance, and a lack of strategic foresight. (Hussain, 2022)

India-Pakistan relations: A brief account of animosity

It is essential to understand the historical background in which both states operate in order to comprehend Pakistan's foreign policy actions towards India. As a result of several historical and geopolitical factors, relations between India and Pakistan have become increasingly tense. Conflict in Kashmir erupted shortly after partition, sparking four wars between India and Pakistan and confirming Pakistan's worst suspicions about Indian ambitions. Pakistan has spent a lot of money and time over many decades building a nuclear-armed national security apparatus to counter the Indian "threat" caused by India and Pakistan's competing claims to the territory of Kashmir. It also contributed to the development of a national security state in Pakistan, where the military has become a powerful political player with influence over the country's defense and foreign policies even during democratic administrations. (KUSZEWSKA, 2016)

In 2008, Pakistan elected its first civilian government after decades of military rule. Even though Pakistan has successfully transitioned from one civilian government to another via elections since its 2008 election, a break from periods of military rule, there is little scholarly treatment of the impact of democracy on foreign policy, let alone the influence of democracy on Pakistan's foreign policy behavior towards India.

In an effort to fill this void, this essay will examine whether or not Pakistan's continued transition to a democratic government since 2008 has altered the country's foreign policy-making process or its approach toward India, or whether or not security and military concerns continue to dominate these areas.

Main Argument

Since 2008, despite repeated attempts by democratic governments to impose control over foreign policy, the indirect influence of the military through constitutional and illegitimate means has remained so high that the civilian government of Pakistan is considered a pseudo-democracy. The military's effect on determining threat perception and defining national interests remains the most significant variable in Pakistan's India-related foreign policy. Furthermore, despite the change in regime, leadership, and political party since 2008, border skirmishes, military standoffs, rates of military expenditure, conventional and nuclear arms race, and mutual interferences have remained constant, and the military has taken the lead in relations with other countries, including India.

To examine the argument in greater depth, it is essential to examine the three primary elements that explain the absence of democracy in Pakistan's foreign policy in particular towards India.

1. Lack of consensus and the military establishment's dominance over security and foreign policy

Instability in Pakistan's foreign policy has led to worsening ties with neighbors like India. This is because the civilian government and the military cannot agree on how to handle Pakistan's relations with the rest of the world. Politicians in Pakistan have long sought to improve ties with India across the board, but especially in the areas of commerce, education, and cultural exchange. However, they have little say in shaping foreign policy because the army is the ultimate decision maker. Therefore, the civilian apparatus normally takes a hands-off attitude whenever a diplomatic difficulty develops. The military, on the other hand, is steadfast in its commitment to a more rigid approach to external security and would rather build connections based on security concerns alone, to the exclusion of economic and political considerations. (Ahmed, 2012) Consider the two groups' opposing views on how to approach relations with India, a bitter adversary. Civilians, who are often viewed as peaceniks, push for tighter ties with Delhi. In addition to working together on regional projects like the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA) energy transmission line, they have advocated for granting India rail and road access to Afghanistan and Central Asia via the city of Lahore. They hope that by taking these measures, the trust gap between the two neighbors may be closed and tensions can be reduced, allowing for peace and prosperity to spread across the poor South Asian region. On the other hand, senior military leaders and hawks believe that New Delhi is hatching a master plan to destabilize Pakistan and establish its dominance in the region. Delhi's overtures to Kabul and Tehran are seen as part of this nefarious strategy, including India's strategic cooperation with Afghanistan and the building of Iran's Chabahar port. Military authorities in Pakistan reason that if the country's sovereignty and strategic interests are to be preserved, it is essential to keep India at bay.

2. Foreign Policy is Not an Election Issue in Pakistan

Few elections around the world are decided by foreign policy issues. The same holds true for Pakistan. To begin, foreign policy topics are rarely discussed by Pakistani political parties during elections. Beyond topics directly related to Pakistan's official ideology and identity, most voters know nothing about foreign policy. The general public views India and Israel as threats to Pakistan, and any political party that proposes changing or modifying the country's traditional

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foreign policy stance risks losing voters. (Center, 2011) Second, it's hard to have an open dialogue about foreign policy because the civilian leadership has so little say in it. Before 2011, the military claimed allegiance to democracy and civilian leadership, but it ignored civilian input on defense and international affairs. In 2008, for instance, President Asif Ali Zardari's nuclear no-first-use comments made on Indian television prompted the Chief of Army Staff, Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, to publicly criticize the new government. In a similar vein, Zardari's ambitions of mending fences with India were shattered by the Mumbai terrorist attacks, which were blamed on elements within the Pakistani security establishment. (Akhtar, 0117)

3. Pakistan's defense policy is inseparable from its foreign policy

Considering Pakistan's Indo-centric defense policy, it is clear that the country's foreign policy is inextricably linked to its defense strategy. One observer put it succinctly: "Military needs had to dictate international policy. Foreign and defense policies have a major impact on domestic policy for the new governments because they are a question of survival. Following this reasoning, the head of the Pakistani military would be at the center of all power, serving as arbiter and eventually monopolist. It has been argued by another expert that "defense strategy typically preceded rather than followed foreign policy." To fully grasp Pakistan's current predicament, it is necessary to get an appreciation for the country's primary defense and foreign policy priorities and the ways in which they intersect. Pakistan's defense strategy has always centered on India, and tensions between the two countries have been exacerbated by the Kashmir dispute. Due to India's status as a major security threat, Pakistan's foreign policy has focused on achieving military parity and diplomatically pressuring India to end the Kashmir conflict. (Pattanaik, 2000)

Pakistan's foreign policy towards India through the theoretical prism: Analysis of 2008 onwards era

No peace despite changes in government or leadership

Even throughout the democratic era that followed 2008, Pakistan's foreign policy toward India appeared to be solely determined by realist logic, with ideological affinities with democracy only having a limited impact on the state's objectives. Democracy was promoted to the degree that it did not conflict with Pakistan's requirements for India-related strategic interests. Liberal peace theory fails to describe Pakistan policy toward India since Pakistan has consistently engaged in sub-conventional warfare with India, rendering India-Pakistan equations inappropriate for analysis by liberal democratic peace theories, despite both countries being democracies. In 2020 alone, there were 4,645 violations, which translate to roughly 12.7 violations per day. (Jha, 2021) Border skirmishes, military standoffs, rates of military spending, the conventional and nuclear arms race, and mutual interferences have persisted since 2008 despite changes in regime, leadership, and political party (You, 2019), reflecting the contested terrain of power politics between the two countries.

External threat is what derives Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Neorealists contend that the structure of the international system, not the internal makeup of states, determines state outcomes. It believes in an outside-in strategy and hence rejects the other two theories. Neorealists contend that since

government behavior is decided outside, neither liberal nor anti-liberal beliefs drive government behavior. Both civilian and military officials in Pakistan see India as the biggest security danger to their nation. Pakistan's massive military spending and the development of a potent army have been conveniently justified by the perceived danger from its powerful neighbor, which has seriously damaged democratic institutions and civilian administrations and tightened the military's hold on state authority. Catastrophists claimed that India had always considered the subcontinent's divide to be a "historical aberration" and that its main goal was to undo it or at the very least reduce Pakistan to the status of a client state. As a result, Pakistan has always predicted its strategy toward India based on the external threat that India poses. Some even disagree with the claim that Pakistan's economic partnership with China, such as CPEC, is a result of its pursuit of liberal principles; instead, they view it as a geopolitical maneuver to challenge India's rising dominance in the region. (MEHSUD, 2017)

Trade is ineffective unless disputes are resolved

There has been a significant freeze in commerce between the two countries ever since India removed Kashmir's unique constitutional status in August 2019. However, Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce insists that the country's commercial stance toward India has not altered, suggesting that trade between the two countries will continue to be restricted. However, this lackluster performance in trade has not yet begun in 2019. Despite many people's claims and predictions of billions of dollars' worth of economic possibilities between the two countries, annual trade has seldom exceeded \$0.5 million. Even if both markets are competitive, there is only a small amount of bilateral commerce because of the tense ties between the two nations, until one develops to a degree of industrialization with a separate product base. Realists contend that the tense political climate and the competitive nature of the two economies make trade expansion and the ensuing peace a guarantee. (Amir, 2021)

Collective security and integration: still a dream for Pakistan and India

Realists also see integration and collective security theory as Eurocentric and unrelated to Asia. The fulfillment of agreements and the collective interpretation of an aggressive or conflict-causing behavior by its members are key components of any (global or regional) collective security effort. This degree of dedication and agreement is particularly missing in the India-Pakistan relationship. India purportedly rejects the SAARC ideals of non-intervention, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and a commitment against terrorism as well as routinely disobeying UN decisions over Kashmir. Actually, SAARC has performed poorly due to distrust and political differences between its two main countries. Realist reasoning holds that neither nation has ever missed a chance to exploit the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the United Nations as tools of power. (Muhammad Muzaffar, 2017)

Conclusion

Lacking a long history of uninterrupted democracy, civilians in Pakistan have had little influence over military decision-making. Given Pakistan's political history and the role of the armed forces in politics, it's easy to draw the conclusion that the military has been and will continue to be the ultimate arbiter of defense decisions and foreign policy and security matters relating to Indo-Pak relations, nuclear

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issues, and Kashmir. Pakistan's defense strategy has always centered on India, and tensions between the two countries have been exacerbated by the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan's foreign policy has focused on countering the Indian threat because of India's prominence as a security issue, while giving less emphasis to fostering regional cooperation, trade, or integration. Lack of civilian control over foreign policy, absence of foreign policy discussion from public forums and juxtaposition of defense and foreign policies explain the absence of democracy from foreign policy decision making.

Moreover, Pakistan's foreign policy behavior towards India defies the logic of liberalism and still lends itself to the explanations being put forward by realism in many aspects. Any gesture of cooperation and CBMs initiated by Pakistan were held hostage by the lack of trust on the other side hence ending up Pakistan in a constant act of balancing the threat from India.

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